



Topical Brief

STATE APPROACHES TO PARENT/FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Parent/Family Engagement

In recent years, the federal Department of Education (ED), and state and local educational agencies (SEAs and LEAs, respectively) have been increasing the emphasis on the need to engage parents and families of students in their children’s education. Initiatives have sprung up across the fifty states and Washington, D.C. to help officials at the state, school district, and school levels establish two-way communication with parents, provide information transparency, and better incorporate family feedback into decisions that will affect their children’s education.

Academic research on parental engagement in education also provides evidence for the effectiveness of engaging families in open dialogues with their children’s schools. For example, according to the CDC, “Research shows that parent engagement in schools is closely linked to better student behavior, higher academic achievement, and enhanced social skills.”¹

The R5CC team carried out a 50-state scan to examine state parent/family engagement approaches. This topical brief provides examples of state approaches to parental engagement, highlights federal efforts in this area, and includes a summary of parental engagement initiatives in Region 5 states: Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Federal Government Approaches to Parent/Family Engagement

Title I

Under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, any school that receives Title I funds has to create and implement a parent and family engagement policy. ED has created a dedicated website for parents to support this requirement and provides additional resources for families and parents looking to engage with their children’s schools: <https://www.ed.gov/parents>. Additionally, ED has provided funding to states through the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC) program.

Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC) Program²

ED’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education provides a grant program for organizations to create family engagement centers that promote and support parent/family engagement practices throughout the state. Centers are also required to provide technical assistance and training. As of 2023, four cohorts have had 32 awards for centers in 24 states.

Region 5 States

The table below displays the different approaches employed by the states Region 5 supports.

Kentucky	Tennessee	Virginia	West Virginia
The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence is a 2018 SFEC grantee. It partners with the Kentucky Department of Education and other partners through the Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools. The collaborative “is a network of families, schools, and community partners supporting local innovation and collaboration to meet the unique needs of each and every Kentucky child to improve learning outcomes and student success.” ³	The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) offers several resources for districts and schools, including Developing a Written Parent and Family Engagement Policy and Make the Connection: Creating an Effective School-Parent Compact . On its dedicated Family & Community Engagement page, TDOE also provides links to resources targeting parents, educators, and communities.	The Virginia Department of Education’s Office of Parental Engagement was created in 2022. The office reports to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and includes parent engagement specialists.	The EdVenture Group is an SFEC grantee that received two awards (2018 and 2023) and manages the West Virginia Family Engagement Center (WVFEC). The WVFEC works with the West Virginia Department of Education and other partners. WVFEC seeks to “strengthen family-school partnerships, leading to increased literacy and numeracy of West Virginia students.” ⁴

¹https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/parent_engagement.htm#:~:text=Research%20shows%20that%20parent%20engagement,risk%20behaviors%20and%20substance%20use





²<https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/school-choice-improvement-programs/statewide-family-engagement-centers-program/>

³<https://www.prichardcommittee.org/familyengagement/#>

⁴<https://theedventuregroup.org/family-engagement/>

States' Approaches to Parent/Family Engagement

The R5CC team expanded their search outside the Region 5 states to see what the rest of the states and Washington, D.C. are doing to address parent/family engagement. The table below outlines noteworthy approaches.

Approach	Description
Frameworks, toolkits, or models 	<p>Six states (CA, IL, LA, MD, MI, NE) have frameworks, toolkits, or models to address parent engagement. These resources are developed by SEAs or State Boards of Education for districts, schools, families, and community members and highlight the need to create a welcoming environment.</p>
Parent Advisory Councils 	<p>Four states (GA, NV, ND, WI) and Washington D.C. have Superintendent Parent Advisory Councils that can provide feedback on SEAs' policies and share their experiences. Across the states, council member terms can range from 1-3 years. In Georgia, parents are nominated by LEAs and are selected "based on their capacity to lead, current levels of involvement in their child's school, and responses to application questions."⁵ This approach differs from the frameworks, toolkits, or models because it allows for two-way communication between the SEAs, parents, and families.</p>
Family Engagement Offices 	<p>Two states (NV, VA) have dedicated family engagement offices. These offices are situated outside of the Title I, Special Education, or other departments. Nevada's Office of Parental Involvement & Family Engagement helps schools and districts develop family engagement strategies, plans a biennial summit, and works with the advisory council.</p>
Family Engagement Grant Awards 	<p>North Dakota awarded family engagement grants to 13 school districts "to increase family engagement in schools and communities by implementing and enhancing highly effective family engagement programs and activities to improve student academic achievement."⁶</p>

⁵<https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Partnerships/Pages/Parent-Advisory-Council.aspx>

⁶<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/family-engagement-grant-awards>