

Elevating Family Voice in Career Pathways

INTRODUCTION

To support the expansion and acceleration of high-quality and equitable career pathways, JPMorgan Chase & Co. in 2020 launched the *New Skills ready network*, a five-year national initiative supporting six sites, each consisting of state, regional and local partners. A key component of developing and implementing high-quality career pathways includes building meaningful partnerships that support learners by aligning policy and practice to ensure equity and access for learners. As such, this initiative calls on leaders to include families in the development of career pathways in a way that intentionally leverages the voices and experiences of their communities. Families and community members undergoing the lived experiences of the systems-change

work of career pathways know more, see more and can do more to support their learners and the system at large. Families are in position to uniquely understand the challenges and needs in their learners' education systems.

To ensure that career pathways systems have the maximum impact to shift our economies, it is imperative that state and local leaders understand the importance of family engagement, how meaningful family and community engagement can benefit not only learners but also the system as a whole, and promising practices that recognize family engagement as both an embedded and overarching strategy that touches each component of the work.

WHY FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT IN CAREER PATHWAYS

Research has shown that family engagement in education has short- and long-term benefits related to program quality and learner success including having a positive impact on learner grades, persistence and completion.¹ Families across socioeconomic status levels play a valuable role in helping learners navigate educational and career decisions, and they are influential in shaping learners' perceptions about their futures.² For example, learners who are well informed and engaged early on in college planning, with the help of their families, have higher college aspirations and are in a better position to secure the academic, social and economic resources needed to achieve their goals.³

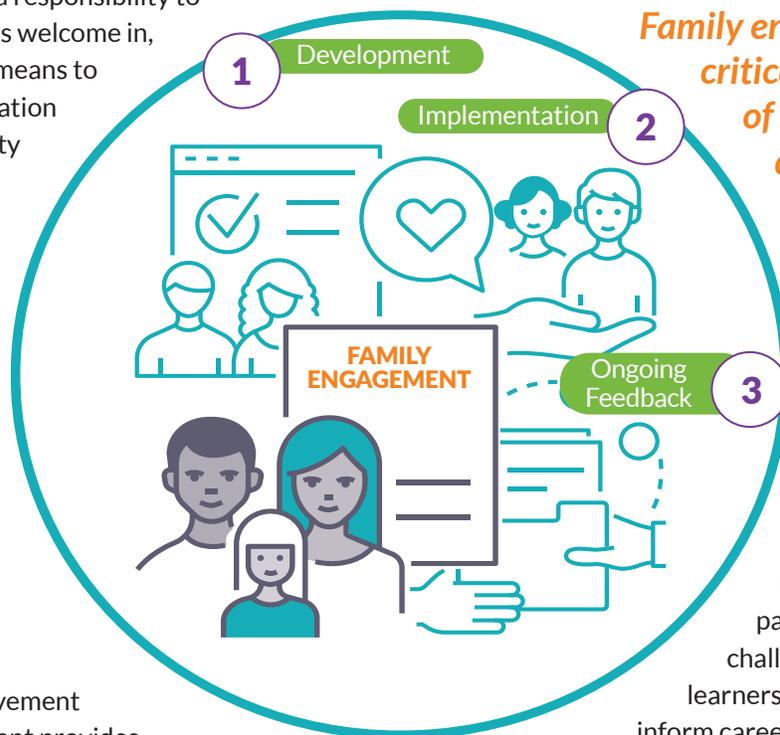
State and local leaders should recognize the critical role families play in career pathways. Whether at the state, district or local level, there are opportunities to deeply engage families in the development and implementation of career pathways to support learners. Family engagement is also a critical factor for equity in education; engaging diverse families has the potential to help close opportunity gaps among groups of learners.⁴ Realizing this potential requires a dedication to using an equity lens in all aspects of the work of meaningful family engagement practices.

Family engagement improves the quality of career pathways and supports regions' workforce development needs

State and local leaders have a responsibility to ensure that each learner feels welcome in, is supported by, and has the means to succeed in the career preparation ecosystem. This responsibility requires leaders to provide meaningful and ongoing mechanisms for elevating learner voice, and the voices of learners' families and communities, to share their unique experiences with the Career Technical Education (CTE) system and have direct and ongoing input into the design and delivery of CTE programs, including career pathways.⁵

Family and community involvement in career pathway development provides the opportunity for program leaders to understand which career pathways and sectors of industry are of interest to communities and how the career pathways should be structured to engage and support learners and – most importantly – close equity gaps. By engaging families and communities, leaders can learn more about the various challenges, barriers, needs and priorities of

different learner groups – particularly historically marginalized populations, who encounter the most barriers to access and success in high-quality career pathways and work-based learning.⁸



Family engagement is critical in each stage of career pathways: development, implementation and ongoing improvement

Meaningful family engagement in the **development** of career pathways provides leaders with insight to guide the supports they provide learners navigating career pathways. Understanding the challenges faced by families and learners in career pathways can

inform career pathway components to ensure that they are accessible and meet the needs of learners as they navigate to and through career pathways. Parents and families know their children and have greater insight into their learning experiences; sharing this knowledge with leaders can help to strengthen the relationship between families and the CTE ecosystem while improving the educational experiences for learners.

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) requires states to develop four-year state plans in consultation with representatives of secondary and postsecondary CTE programs including parents, students and community organizations.⁶ Secondary and postsecondary CTE leaders at the local level are also required to consult with a

“diverse body of stakeholders” to ensure a rigorous and meaningful needs assessment process in Comprehensive Local Needs Assessments (CLNAs). The law specifically names parents and students, among others who should engage in the needs assessment, local application development and ongoing consultation.⁷

During the **implementation** phase of career pathways, engagement with families ensures that families are aware of the opportunities that are available to their children. Bringing families into the fold of career pathways and articulating career pathway options both strengthens the perception of career pathways and mitigates barriers that families face when attempting to support their learners' educational choices. Exposing families to career pathway opportunities creates awareness and conveys the sense of urgency and importance of pursuing career-focused education to meet workforce development needs.⁹

The practice of engaging families must be **ongoing** after the development and implementation of career pathways to address anticipated barriers and support continuous improvement. State and local leaders must meet families where they are in every stage of the process to understand the experiences, needs and challenges faced by learners and families. The capturing, valuing and elevating of family voices must be evidenced by leaders taking action. Families are spending precious time to share their experiences, and their engagement should be reflected — and communicated — back to them through improvements to career pathways based on learners' and families' experiences. Leaders must have clear feedback loops in place to gather ongoing input about career pathways systems and programs and share how that input has shaped career pathways and related supports.

Sample Questions to Ask Families in the Development Stage of Career Pathways

State and local leaders can learn from CTE learners' families to guide the **development** of career pathways to ensure quality and equity by partnering and getting answers to questions such as:

- What would influence your decision to encourage your learner to engage in career pathways?
- What has made you and your learner feel uncomfortable, marginalized or discriminated against in career pathways?
- What would make you and your learner feel welcome, supported or valued in career pathways?
- What supports or services would make participating and being successful in career pathways easier for your learner?

Sample Questions to Ask Families in the Implementation Stage of Career Pathways

State and local leaders can learn from CTE learners' families to guide the **implementation** of career pathways to ensure quality and equity by partnering and getting answers to questions such as:

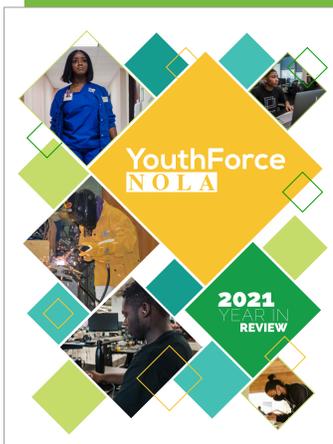
- How did you learn about career pathways?
- Why did you encourage your learner to pursue career pathways?
- What messaging or marketing materials about career pathways resonated with you?
- What aspects of career pathways are helping your learner?
- What aspects of career pathways are barriers for your learner?
- What would you like to see to improve the career pathways experience for your learner?

Sample Questions to Ask Families for Ongoing Improvement of Career Pathways

State and local leaders can learn from CTE learners' families to guide the **ongoing** improvement of career pathways to ensure quality and equity by partnering and getting answers to questions such as:

- How are career pathways supporting your learner's future?
- What has been the most valuable aspect of career pathways for your learner?
- What supports are you and your learner receiving to assist their completion of career pathways?
- If you could change anything about your learner's career pathway, what would it be?

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION: THE YOUTHFORCE NOLA INITIATIVE



YouthForce NOLA is an education, business and civic collaborative that prepares New Orleans public school students to pursue high-wage, high-demand career pathways in three industry clusters: health sciences, creative media and technology and skilled crafts. To prepare learners for career pathways in these clusters the initiative focuses on engaging families and communities by supporting conversations to foster a mutual understanding of opportunities and pathways to student success.¹⁰

The Urban League of Louisiana, a member of the YouthForce NOLA collaborative steering committee, held focus groups with families throughout the city to better understand barriers to family engagement and developed a toolkit focused on strategies for helping schools remove those barriers.¹¹

The leaders of the YouthForce NOLA initiative demonstrate a deep commitment to family engagement by requiring that schools that wish to join the YouthForce NOLA network include a family engagement plan in their application to become either an affiliate or a partner. More than 5,000 individuals, including families from the network, have joined the YouthForce NOLA listserv.¹²

CHALLENGES WITH AUTHENTIC FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Whether at the state, local, postsecondary or secondary level, for myriad reasons career pathways leaders face challenges engaging with families in a consistent, authentic and meaningful way. Common barriers include recruitment, scheduling, accessibility and financial needs.

Often, **recruitment** efforts for families are limited to a few methods and channels. Leveraging evidenced-based communication, multiple times and through multiple channels, can help ensure that families of diverse backgrounds are included in engagement activities.



Reaching All Families: Understanding which messaging most resonates with families can improve recruitment efforts for family engagement practices. Bringing families into the fold to understand their reactions to messaging can inform future messaging strategies to best reach families of all backgrounds. Recruitment of diverse family members for meaningful engagement requires leaders to lean into the community in locations families frequent. Community-based organizations and centers, community agencies, and faith-based organizations/places of worship are key places to start.

National organizations such as the [National Parents Union](#) bring together a network of highly effective parent organizations and grassroots activists from across the country to channel the power of parents and families. They have family advocates and delegates in regions nationwide that can assist with connecting to families for comprehensive and authentic engagement. The [National PTA](#) website offers a portal to find local parent teacher associations and can help state and local leaders connect with parents and families across regions. Some states, including California, have statewide parent organizations such as the [Parent Institute for Quality Education](#) (PIQE). PIQE leverages parents and family members to serve as ambassadors to help advance local, state and federal policies that support learners and families. Connecting with organizations such as the National Parents Union, the National PTA or PIQE can help to engage families.

Additionally, reaching out to families to recruit them for engagement efforts can be as simple as sending a text message. A research study in 2021 found that sending even short text messages to families helps learners to feel more supported in their education. Families also felt more trusting of the school system and more connected to their child's education.¹³

Schedules for family engagement events or meetings are often created without the input of families, which can cause conflict with their availability and restrict family members from participating. Opportunities for engagement must be designed with intentionality and inclusivity in mind to ensure that families of all backgrounds have opportunities to meaningfully take part without added strain on their schedules. Leaders should strive to have points of engagement that adhere to families' availability with multiple, flexible meeting times at neutral locations with various options for engagement such as in-person and virtual events.



Making Time for Families: Research studies and focus groups of family members have found that one of the greatest challenges for engagement is conflicting schedules.¹⁴ Many engagement events or opportunities occur during work hours, and families are hindered from being present. Research has also found that the addition of siblings requiring child care can prevent family members' engagement as well.¹⁵ Lastly, lack of timely communication that does not allow family members to rearrange their schedules also exacerbates disengagement among family members that want to be involved. Addressing barriers to engagement by listening to family-provided solutions is one action available to leaders to more effectively engage families.

Accessibility for families, including access to technology, access to transportation and access to native spoken language, is also a component of engagement that is regularly overlooked. Leaders can mitigate these accessibility barriers by providing temporary or permanent access to broadband for virtual meetings or events and/or providing devices to facilitate engagement. Leaders can support engagement among families without transportation by hosting events in easy-to-reach locations.

 **Meeting Families Where They Are:** Determining easy-to-reach locations for family engagement opportunities can look different in every state. Leaders can be mindful of public transportation and stops that are most accessible to families. Leaders can also incorporate family-provided recommendations and input on locations that work best for them.

Meetings or events often do not acknowledge the **native language spoken by families** that wish to engage. Engagement with families who are not English speakers can be supported by providing materials and resources in additional languages, leveraging screen readers that are translated into different languages, or using translators during events to ensure that the engagement is inclusive.

 **Engaging Families of All Backgrounds and Cultures:** A 2019 survey of English language learner (ELL) families found that many face barriers to engagement due to a language and/or culture challenge.¹⁶ When asked about better ways to engage and involve ELL families, responses included providing more bilingual events and communications that are concerted efforts toward collaborative partnerships and leveraging more personalized connections that focus on heritage and culture.¹⁷ Celebrating and acknowledging the diverse backgrounds of families while meeting their needs to ensure that they can engage helps to build trust with families and provides a greater incentive for their participation.

Financial barriers are prevalent for some families that may be unable or unwilling to engage without compensation for their time, effort or loss of income. Providing compensation to families for their engagement is a direct benefit for them and signals that their time and engagement is valued.

 **Recognizing the Value of Families' Engagement:** Families who serve as partners bring different skill sets and perspectives to this work. Fair compensation for their work and contributions can take many forms to demonstrate to families that their time, input and expertise is important. Leaders can offer compensation in ways such as providing gift cards, bus fare/public transit fare, free child care, food or other resources or services.

ENGAGEMENT DESIGNED WITH AND FOR FAMILIES IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

The Nashville, Tennessee, *New Skills ready network* site is piloting family-facing projects to understand effective ways to reach families of all backgrounds. One project will provide multilingual events for families by partnering with community organizations to host a series of workshops to provide information on postsecondary transitions for learners. Each workshop will build on the content from the previous session, and at the close of each session families will work with agencies that offer continued support.

Another project will focus on sharing more information about work-based learning opportunities. The work-based learning informational events will be targeted by, and include leaders from, industry based on the learners' interest a aptitude assessments. The Nashville, Tennessee, *New Skills ready network* team hopes to glean from these projects how it can more effectively provide information about career pathway opportunities to learners and families.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS LEADERS CAN TAKE TO PROMOTE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Adopt an Asset-Based Approach to Family Engagement

Most family engagement initiatives, particularly those aimed at historically marginalized families, are designed with a deficit-based lens. Even well-intentioned efforts often define families by what they do not have or do not do. Dominant and hierarchical programs and activities keep families at arm's length, deny them access to power, and do more to discourage engagement than to encourage meaningful partnership.¹⁸

Families from historically marginalized communities have felt unvalued and unheard for generations.¹⁹ The impact of generations experiencing exclusion from schools, and the education system as a whole, has led many families to believe that it is best to stay away from any type of educational engagement because they fear possible retaliation against themselves or their children if they raise a concern or because they believe nothing will change.²⁰ Families also mistrust the CTE ecosystem because of the history of learners participating in low-quality CTE programs with poor outcomes.²¹ Meaningful engagement with families involves their voices being included *and* heard to help shape the educational experiences for their children. Families are more likely to engage if they are affirmed in their voices being heard, valued and included in decision-making affecting their learners.

Authentic relationships with families and communities must be developed through an asset-based approach and mindset. Families of all backgrounds must be seen and celebrated as they are, embraced by education systems as equal partners and recognized as experts on their children and communities.²² Education systems must work with families to improve educational experiences for learners. Engaging parents and families in policy and program development, implementation and assessment to ensure that programs and policies meet their needs and their expertise helps to guide the work.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH?

An asset-based approach focuses on strengths by viewing diversity in thought, culture and traits as positive assets.²³ Families and learners are valued for what they bring to the CTE ecosystem rather than being characterized by what they may need to work on or what they lack. An asset-based approach with families focuses on building relationships with and an understanding of families. This approach is central to achieving equity and providing all learners the educational experiences they deserve, and it helps to build practices that are culturally responsive and respectful of learners, their families and their communities.

Adopting an asset-based approach to family engagement requires a mindset shift. Leveraging professional development and training to unpack the implicit biases associated with historically marginalized learners and families can begin to build the foundation for an asset-based approach to family engagement. When adopting an asset-based approach, leaders actively involve families in ways that are culturally responsive and community sensitive.

Research states the importance of cultural responsiveness and raising awareness around the need to partner with families while taking into account different cultural norms.²⁴ These meaningful partnerships require leaders to build trust with families by effectively communicating about specific ways in which families can be involved and represented in their child's education as well as by creating inviting, welcoming climates in which families of all backgrounds feel comfortable engaging. Creating authentic partnerships with families also includes understanding and recognizing the particular social, economic and physical needs of families that can constrain engagement.



Example: The Sherburne-Earlville Central School District, a rural school district in **New York**, sought to engage families in ways that are both culturally responsive and sensitive to their local norms and priorities by attending to the economic and social needs that were preventing families from participating in engagement opportunities.²⁵ The superintendent implemented numerous initiatives that were aimed at collectively responding to the economic deprivation experienced by the families the district served. These initiatives included collecting information from parents to understand their challenges and hosting fundraisers to help alleviate the financial burdens faced by families. The school district also engaged learners and families by hosting community events featuring activities they enjoyed and were special to them. After building trusting relationships with families, the district leveraged the voices of family and community members to inform the development of programs available to learners. Noticing learner and family interests and then adjusting curriculum and staffing to prioritize their needs clearly communicated the message to families that local knowledge is valued.

Establish Family Engagement as a System-Level Priority

Family engagement is frequently discussed at the learner or school level, but families have long advocated for educational change at the system or state level.²⁶ Without systems-wide leadership support, strong family engagement practices and innovations will gain little traction and may evaporate with shifts in interest and personnel.²⁷ Family engagement should be embedded in systems, structures, policies and processes to build the capacity to form deeper partnerships that are integrated into all aspects of improvement strategies for career pathways.



Promising Approach for Family Engagement: Equity agendas are an opportunity to develop family engagement practices. Family engagement is equity work, and authentic family partnerships are a powerful lever for addressing inequities in career pathways and communities. Building relationships with families and communities of diverse backgrounds creates openings to address biases and assumptions, and equity agendas can help to elevate this type of work. This authentic family engagement helps those shaping the education system see all that families of different backgrounds do for their learners and helps to pave the way for them to recognize how racialized power imbalances between home and school influence their work.²⁸



Example: School districts such as Highline Public Schools in **Washington** and Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) in **Indiana** have equity policies guiding the strategic direction for the districts' efforts to reduce and dismantle inequities. These policies signal a district-wide commitment to equity, including recognizing the value and importance of family engagement to learner success. Both districts' equity policies include accountability measures and administrative guidelines instructing the superintendent to develop plans and procedures that accomplish the purpose and intents of the equity

policies. The IPS equity pledge specifically requires the district to lead a collaboration of families and other community stakeholders to improve outcomes for all students. An example of this effort is the IPS Ambassadors program, which consists of passionate IPS students, staff, parents, families and community stakeholders who provide meaningful feedback to district leadership.²⁹

Build Capacity for Family Engagement

To promote sustainability with effective and meaningful family engagement practices, funding must be allocated to these continued efforts. States and districts can leverage and combine different resources and streams of funding to support family engagement practices and strategies. They also can partner with organizations to support robust family engagement efforts. Many community or intermediary organizations have trusted relationships with families in their communities and can support educational systems more meaningfully. When developing and implementing career pathways, intermediary organizations can provide support, including leveraging family engagement that shapes experiences for the learners and communities directly affected by the creation of career pathways.



Promising Approach for Family Engagement: Achieving equitable and authentic family engagement requires significant attention and investment from all levels of the education system.³⁰ Systems must create infrastructure for leadership to ensure that the appropriate processes are in place to develop, implement and coordinate key components of family engagement. State, district and local leaders should provide adequate staffing and strategically allocate funds to ensure sufficient oversight, capacity building and quality control to support effective policies and practices. Collaborating with other organizations to share research and best practices for coordinating family and community engagement with other initiatives can help to reduce duplication and maximize efficiency.

Building in reporting, learning and accountability to increase the use of proactive monitoring and evaluation can assist to ensure compliance with family and community engagement policies across the agency and to continuously improve policy and practices.



Example: The Denver, Colorado, *New Skills ready network* site's lead organization, The Attainment Network – an intermediary that seeks to transform education-to-workforce systems, erase persistent and pervasive equity gaps, and expand opportunities for learners to meet the economic demands for a highly skilled and educated workforce – is engaging in comprehensive learner and family engagement strategies. As The Network supports the development of career-connected pathways in Denver, it is strategically and intentionally centering on learner voice by creating a community practice for learners that helps to identify barriers to success and inform decisions around policies and programs. The Network has also made investments in Denver through a learner voice grant program that is supporting partners in the collection of qualitative learner experience data (e.g., focus groups, surveys, and roundtables) to inform the development and implementation of impactful career pathways and related policies at the local and state levels.



Embed Family Engagement in Policy

Infrastructure for comprehensive family engagement strategies includes policies and procedures that promote and reinforce expectations for effective family engagement. Many states currently have state board policies for family engagement that focus on engagement for the education system as a whole. To strengthen and enhance these policies, CTE leaders can prioritize engagement in career pathways and focus on expectations for improvement, not just compliance.



Promising Approach for Family Engagement: One approach to embedding family engagement into a state's or district's culture is to integrate it as an indicator or measure of career pathway quality. This strategy provides an opportunity to make family engagement part of systems of accountability.³¹



Example: The **Delaware** Department of Career and Technical Education has articulated a Program Advisory Committee policy and procedure for programs of study to be approved. The committee consists of parents, students, industry and postsecondary partners and is required to reflect the community and account for broad stakeholder engagement.³² The Program Advisory Committee helps to design, implement and support CTE programs of study. The practice of required stakeholder engagement can be adopted in the development and implementation of career pathways to ensure continuous engagement with families.

Offer Multiple Methods of Engagement

Systems need to move beyond seeking limited types of input from families, such as focus groups and surveys, and redesign planning and decision-making processes to ensure that those directly affected by decisions have meaningful decision-making power.³³ Centering families in the work requires leaders to partner with and include them in every step of the process. Families are aware of the needs of their learners and communities, and it is important that leaders do not make assumptions about those needs. Scheduling meetings that fit families' schedules, providing travel reimbursements if necessary, and finding ways to pay families to be consultants to agencies and partners are all ways to mitigate challenges commonly encountered when engaging families.



Promising Approach for Family Engagement: Ongoing feedback loops with family partners provide the opportunity for leaders to better understand the experiences and supports needed for learners to succeed in career pathways. Methods of engagement and feedback from families must be designed intentionally and with opportunities for family voices to be incorporated into decision-making. Local-level initiatives such as the Family and Schools Together organization provide examples of ways to create meaningful engagement with families by gathering family input at the start and end of each program cycle. This process includes engaging families to understand their perceptions of program goals as well as domains related to their learner's behavior, social relationships, social capital, access to community services and family and parent engagement. This practice can be scaled at the state level to support engagement in career pathways systems by intentionally incorporating feedback from families in every facet of the development and implementation of career pathways including program design, learner supports, messaging about career pathways, and communications that share opportunities for learners.





Example: The Columbus, **Ohio**, site for the *New Skills ready network* focused on creating messaging and materials to more effectively communicate to learners and families the opportunities and benefits of career pathways. The strategy focused on direct outreach to students and families through polling, focus groups and co-design sessions. The family engagement strategy is rooted in creating communications “not for, but with the end user” to ensure that materials meet both learners’ and families’ needs in how they digest and receive information.³⁴ The engagement included focus groups with families and learners and also leveraged post-focus group surveys to determine families’ communication preferences to better align future engagement.

This strategy resulted in updated materials, which have helped to reach diverse groups of students and achieve authenticity through messaging that is easily understood and able to be easily acted upon. The updated communications materials are one piece of a larger strategy to design and communicate about career pathways more clearly to families and learners so that each learner’s academic plans are aligned to their career goals beginning as early as middle school.

The Columbus, Ohio, *New Skills ready network* partners emphasize the importance of involving learners and families across the entire project cycle to ensure that the end product reflects the needs of the targeted audience. The team recently launched the communications and branding materials at a Family Resource Fair, which garnered interest in career pathways from many learners and families. The Columbus, **Ohio**, *New Skills ready network* partners will continue to leverage the communications plan to attract more learners into career pathways and will provide professional development to counselors to ensure that advising reflects the language vetted by families and learners.



CONCLUSION

Family engagement is not a program, it is a practice that must be seen as embracing the family as a partner that is an indispensable component of learner success and overall program and system improvement. Engagement of

families should be considered a pillar of effective program implementation and development of career pathways and supports as learners navigate career pathways.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS TO SUPPORT FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- **Engaging Families and Communities to Support Special and Underserved Populations in CTE:** This publication provides general strategies for family and community engagement in CTE programs with a specific focus on special and underserved learner populations.
- **Family Engagement Rubric:** This family engagement rubric was developed by Dr. Karen L. Mapp for California school districts in light of the Local Control Funding Formula that provided a window of opportunity for California school districts to invest the necessary energy and resources to cultivate and maintain meaningful relationships and partnerships with families. The rubric is designed to evaluate three broad categories of indicators for measuring both the engagement of families in the development process of programs and the practices systems are implementing to improve and grow their partnerships with families on a day-to-day level.³⁵ The rubric indicators and metrics can serve as an example of indicators that can be tailored to state and local career pathways systems to ensure that leaders at every level are prioritizing family engagement and monitoring their progress to improve this practice.

The development, approval and implementation of rubrics focused on family engagement can serve as a tool to evaluate strengths and opportunities in engagement strategies to inform the supports and assistance needed to meet state and local priorities. Family engagement rubrics can serve as a cornerstone for career pathway accountability and be leveraged to hold systems accountable for meeting family engagement goals and visions.

- **With Learners, Not for Learners: A Toolkit for Elevating Learner Voice in CTE:** This toolkit provides state and local CTE leaders with actionable resources, guidance and tools to ensure that CTE learner voices are elevated and heard to improve CTE policies and practices. These practices and strategies can lend themselves to increasing family engagement at the state, district and local levels as well.
- **YouthForce NOLA Family Engagement Toolkit:** This toolkit from the Urban League of Louisiana and YouthForce NOLA provides ideas and strategies that schools can implement to strengthen their existing career family engagement efforts. A useful resource for stakeholders interested in engaging families as partners, this toolkit provides information on why family engagement is important to the goals of schools and provides concrete tools to facilitate this work.

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New Skills ready network, launched by JPMorgan Chase & Co. in 2020, bolsters the firm's efforts to support an inclusive economic recovery, as part of both their \$350 million, five-year New Skills at Work initiative to prepare people for the future of work and their new **\$30 billion commitment** to advance racial equity.³⁶ Advance CTE and Education Strategy Group are working with sites to improve student completion of high-quality career pathways in six US communities.

The six *New Skills ready network* sites are: Boston, Massachusetts; Columbus, Ohio; Dallas, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Nashville, Tennessee. These sites are formulating new partnerships between local school systems, higher education, employers, and government entities to develop pathways and policy recommendations that give underserved students access to higher education and real-world work experiences that lead to high-wage, in-demand jobs.

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