

Unreached: What Every Educator Wants to Know About Engaging Families for Equity and Student Achievement

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Book Study Guide

This guide is designed to help educators and school teams establish effective family partnerships that promote equity and student achievement. It can be used in a book study or professional learning community format on the school, district or community level. Participants will learn how to apply the four equity partnership recommendations and five leadership practices, to ensure family outreach and engagement efforts support student success.

Think about the students in your school or district that are not performing to their fullest potential but might become more successful, if you could engage them more effectively as learners. Consider the specific achievement outcomes you would like to impact (i.e., *improve attendance, assignment completion, increase the number of college essays and applications completed*).

1. Write the achievement-related outcomes you want to accomplish in partnership with your student's families. To increase your potential for success with this effort, reflect on what you know about the strengths, interests and cultural or community-based assets associated with the students and their families. Identify two specific ways you will go about discovering and expanding your knowledge around these student-focused characteristics for the students you would like to engage more effectively.

Identify the achievement outcome you would like to accomplish:

List two opportunities you might have to connect with families to find out more about their student's strengths, interests, cultural or community-based assets, as well as the outcomes they would like to help their children/teen accomplish.

1.

2.

Create one question you could ask during these connection opportunities that will help you learn about the outcomes that are important to the student's families.

1.

Create two questions you could ask during these connection opportunities that will help you learn more about the strengths, interests, cultural or community-based assets, associated with the students you would like to engage more effectively:

1.

2.

2. Review the four equity partnership recommendations (see page 2). Choose two you can use to start the process of making effective partnership connections with your student's families. Discuss one specific event or activity that will give you an opportunity to share your partnership interests with your students and families.

The two Equity Partnership recommendations I will use to help me build connection with my student's families.

1.

2.

One specific event or activity that will give me/my team an opportunity to communicate our interest in partnering with families.

1.

3. Review the five *Authentic Leadership Practices* (page 3) and select two that you will use alongside the equity partnership recommendations you selected above.

Two *Authentic Leadership Practices* that I will use alongside the equity partnership recommendations, to help our school/district or community build a sustainable, systemic approach to establishing effective family partnerships.

- 1.
- 2.

4. Read and complete the *Motivation & Engagement Preferences* chart (pages 6-7) and write the two motivation factors that are most important to you.

The top two motivation factors most important to me when I choose to join a project/partnership.

- 1.
- 2.

5. Think about the student's you're trying to engage more effectively. Write one motivation factor that you did not include above, that your student's families might prioritize.

One partnership motivation factor that I did not select but may be important to the families of the student's I would like to reach more effectively.

Discuss how often you believe families experience the three (the two you selected and the one you added that may also be of special importance to families) partnership motivation factors when interacting with you, your school or district staff members. Discuss how often these factors exist before, during and after partnership discussions, activities and events at your school or in your district. Include any thoughts connected to the processes, policies and programs linked to these efforts.

6. Review the Lessons Learned (page 103-105) and select two suggestions under the ‘Learned’ section you will apply in your partnership practice with your student’s families. Discuss your reason for choosing the two with a partner or in your table group. Add both items to the Authentic & Improved Practice Summary Chart (page 107) and list them below.

Two suggestions I can put into practice from the ‘Learned’ column (pages 104,105.)

- 1.
- 2.

7. Go to the ‘*Authentic Partnership Self-Assessment Chart*’ (pages 99-102) and fill out your responses to each statement. Highlight three or four of the responses you answered with ‘Not Yet’.
- Find a partner that highlighted one of the same practices you selected and exchange insights on ways you might be able to strengthen that aspect of your or your team’s partnership approach. Select one of the ‘*Not Yet*’ practices to add to your ‘*Authentic & Improved Practice Summary Chart*’ (page 107) and list it below.

One ‘*Not Yet*’ partnership practice listed in the ‘Assessment Chart’ That I can implement in my partnership action plan.

8. Review ‘*Engaging Families for Equity & Achievement; Is & Isn’t*’ on page 106. Identify which of the attitudes and routines in the chart are most common in your environment. Think about how your team can support and reinforce the attitudes that promote alignment with the ‘*Is*’ section and list two ideas in the section below.

Attitudes and routines in the “*Engaging Families for Equity & Achievement; Is & Isn’t*”, that I/we can support to enhance our family partnership efforts.

- 1.
- 2.

9. Refer to the two Equity partnership recommendations you selected earlier in question #2. Choose one recommendation and review the questions within that equity recommendation section. Select one of the corresponding *Tips and Practical Scenarios* that goes with the question. Write your response to the question and any aspect of the tips or scenario that might be helpful to include in your *'Authentic & Improved Practice Summary Chart'* (page 107).

Ideas and tips from the question, tips and scenario section that may be helpful for our team's next steps.

1.

2.

10. Read the questions and answers in the Appendix section titled *'What You Want to Know But May Be Afraid to Ask'*. Select one of the questions that may come up for you or your team in the future, as you collaborate with others in your school community. Find someone in your group that selected the same question and work with them to create an answer that might be useful, besides the one provided in the book.

A question that our team may be asked during our efforts to establish effective family partnerships.

Question # _____

Our response:

Review the "Authentic & Improved Practice Summary Chart" and the answers you've filled in the chart so far. Find a partner to help you refine and complete your chart and ask the following questions;

1. At what phase of my/our plan do you think I/we should begin co-creating agendas and co-facilitating meetings for the activities that will go into our next steps?
2. The specific student achievement outcome my team and I are hoping to accomplish is (refer to your answer in question #1)

_____.

What should I/we set as a milestone for sharing credit and celebrating progress with students and families?

Next Steps: Moving Toward Action & Expanding Partners Within the Collaborative Teamwork Process

After you have gotten familiar with the concepts in the book, make a connection with the parents (guardians or family members) that represent the students you are seeking to engage more effectively.

Discuss ways you and a colleague can work with the parents to collaborate around the equity partnership recommendation you selected earlier in the study. Collectively complete the multilevel response section that coincides with the equity partnership recommendation(s) you selected.

Once the multilevel responses are completed, work with families to review and answer the questions listed in the *Recommendation Summary for School Teams* at the end of the section. Ask families to help identify the most effective ways to communicate the summary information to the broader school and community stakeholders. Place a priority on sharing information that showcases the cultural and community assets discovered earlier in the process.

Discuss how often conversations will take place to review progress and student outcomes connected to the equity partnership recommendation(s) and objectives.

Continue to co-lead discussions and co-create meeting agendas that focus on earning trust early, sharing responsibility intentionally, balancing expectations transparently and measuring efforts meaningfully.

Consistently model and develop authentic leadership practices that invite families to share information about their student's and their cultural and community-based assets. Share the stage and credit when celebrating progress and use parents preferred communication methods as often as possible.

As you continue to implement practices like these, you should see an increase in the existence of motivational factors that help you engage previously unreached families, in support of equity and student achievement.