

**What is the Difference Between Family Involvement and Family Engagement?**  
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Parent or Family INVOLVEMENT	Parent or Family ENGAGEMENT
<p>Involvement implies "Doing to"</p> <p>Definition: "to enfold or envelope"</p>	<p>Engagement implies "Doing with"</p> <p>Definition: "to come together and interlock"</p>
<p>A school striving for family involvement often <b>leads with its mouth</b>—identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute.</p>	<p>Interactive process of relationship-building built on listening. A school focused on family engagement will <b>lead with their ears</b>, listening to parents' and family members' ideas and learn about their hopes, dreams and worries for their children as well as what they believe works best for their child.</p>
<p>Invitations for parent involvement often come through <b>one-way</b> forms of communication—exchange of information about the child, offering advice or recommending resources to address challenges, notes home, automated phone calls, or requests for assistance for a particular project. Often <b>initiated by educators/programs</b>.</p>	<p>Engagement strives to utilize <b>two-way</b> conversation, through efforts like making home visits and phone calls that are not limited to concerns and problems.</p> <p>Communication is mutual, respectful, and <b>responsive to a family's language and culture</b>. We <b>partner with families</b> to share responsibility for the care and learning of children.</p>
<p>Parents <b>participate in activities, attend meetings and special events</b> and take advantage of opportunities at their child's early care and learning setting.</p> <p>Topics and goals for parent/family nights and events is often <b>pre-determined</b> by the school and led and taught by school staff or outside experts.</p>	<p>Curriculum for parent/family nights and events are responsive to the topics that families are interested in learning about. <b>Parents/family members take a leadership role</b> in planning and facilitating meetings and feel a sense of ownership in shaping the agendas and goals. Often, Parent Coordinators act as liaisons between the parent communities and the school or program.</p>
<p>Focus primarily upon improving what goes on <b>within the four walls of the school</b>.</p>	<p>School/program participating as an institution <b>within the larger</b> community (e.g., collaborates with local religious congregations, businesses, neighborhood groups and non-profit agencies to tackle community challenges (e.g., violence, housing, food insecurity etc.).</p>

Sources: (a) Ferlazzo, L. (March 27, 2012). The difference between parent "involvement" and parent "engagement". Education Week; (b) Ferlazzo, L. (2011). Involvement or engagement? Educational Leadership, 68(8); (c) National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement (nd). Parent involvement and family engagement for early childhood professionals.

**The words “parent” and “family” are inclusive and respect all adult caregivers who make a difference in a child’s life:**

**Parents** refers to biological, adoptive, and step-parents as well as primary caregivers, such as grandparents, other adult family members, and foster parents.

**Families** can be biological or nonbiological, chosen or circumstantial. They are connected through culture, language, tradition, shared experiences, emotional commitment, and mutual support.

Source: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/parent-involvement-family-engagement-for-professionals.pdf>