



Building Capacity using the Dual Capacity Framework



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Tennessee Technical Assistance Network (TN-TAN)

TN-TAN provides school districts, administrators, educators, and families access to free high-quality training, resources, and supports designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities, ages 3-22. See below for more information about our areas of support.

Intensive Behavior

TRIAD at Vanderbilt University Medical Center provides technical assistance for complex behavior support needs and associated training. Supports include direct instruction for staff on behavior assessment and intervention implementation, as well as ongoing coaching to help students engage within their least restrictive environments.

RTI²-A+RTI²-B

Tennessee Tiered Supports Center assists districts and schools as they build and implement an aligned student support system. The center provides training, coaching, and resources for building an aligned framework for tiered academic and behavioral supports.

Assistive Technology

The Assistive Technology Project for Education (ATP) assists districts and staff in building capacity to provide assistive technology supports for students with disabilities. Supports include strategic action planning, professional development, direct coaching for staff, and access to AT equipment-lending libraries for assessment trials.

Autism

TRIAD at Vanderbilt University Medical Center provides training, consultation, and coaching services designed to support educators in their classrooms and develop school and system-wide supports to address needs specific to students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Secondary Transition

Transition Tennessee provides a range of services to transition stakeholders to improve in-school and post-school outcomes for transition-aged students (14-22) with disabilities. Supports include tiered technical assistance for in-school transition stakeholders and resources and services specific to educator and family needs.

Family Engagement

The Arc Tennessee partners with schools and caregivers of students with disabilities. Family Engagement provides educator training and technical assistance to schools, integrates family supports into existing school networks and strategic plans, and connects families to available services and family-friendly special education resources in order to ensure a successful school experience.



Regional Family Engagement Specialists

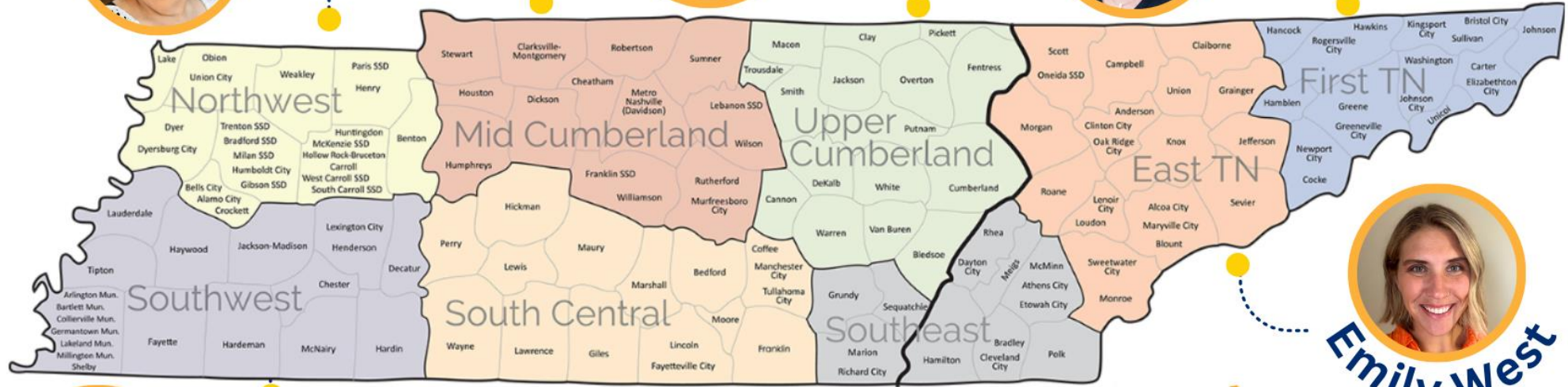
Annette Graves



Megan Cobb



Kristie Irvin



Emily West



Sandra Hawkins



Beth Harrison



Angie Cutrell



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Purpose and intent of the series

- Build educator capacity for family engagement
- Learn skills to strengthen meaningful and sustained family-school partnerships
- Demonstrate understanding of involvement vs. engagement
- Participants will leave with specific strategies they can implement immediately after each session
- Participants will be able to create an implementation plan sustaining capacity



Series Roadmap

- Part 1 Foundations
- Part 2
- Part 3

Dual Capacity Series for Educators

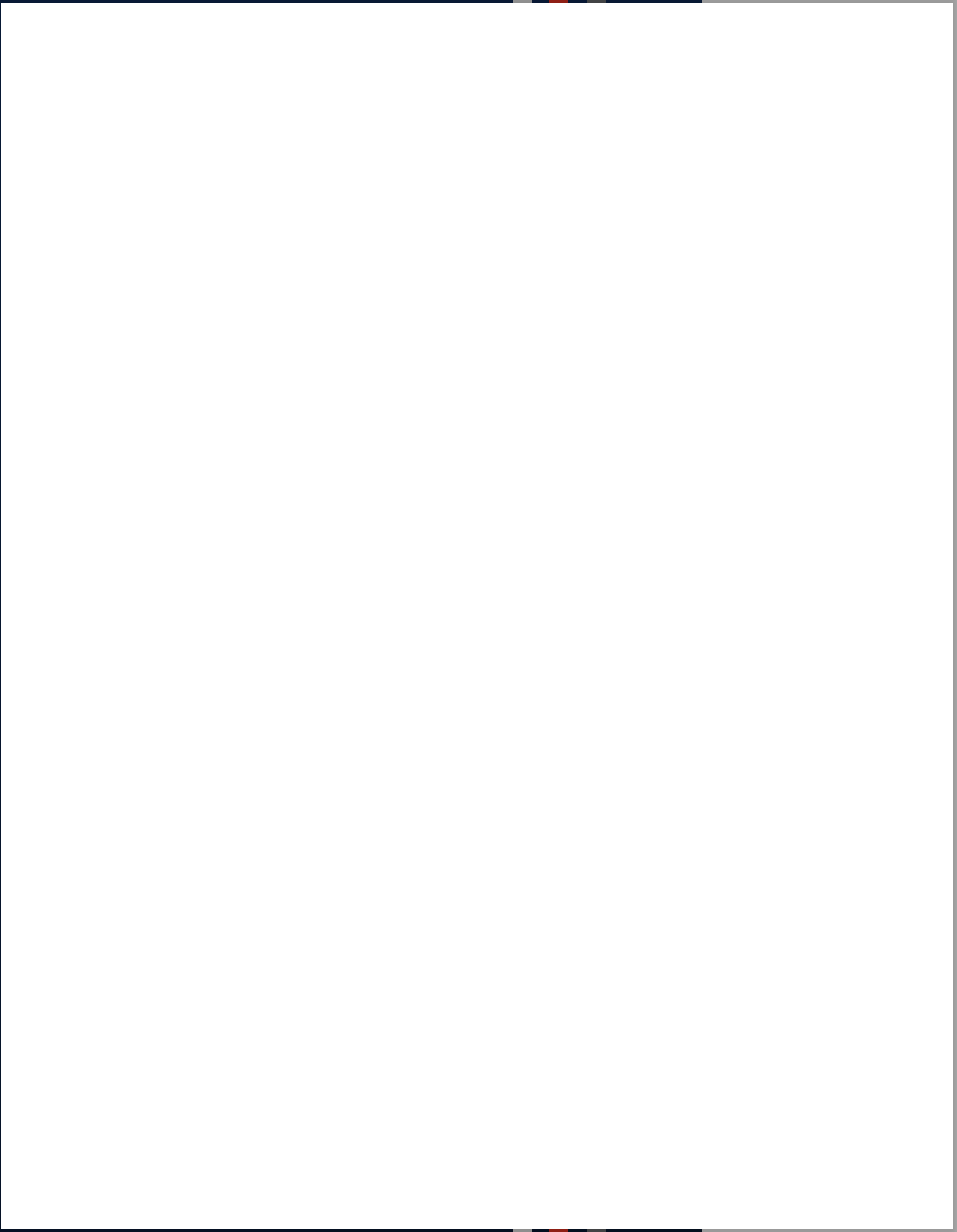
Part 1



Pre work

Series Objectives

- Increased educator self- awareness
- Improved trust and communication with families
- Stronger partnership- based engagement practices
- Alignment of family engagement with student outcomes





“

“Family Engagement is a *full, equal, and equitable partnership* among families, educators and community partners to promote children’s learning and development from birth through college and career.” (Mapp.)

Why Family Engagement Is Essential

Time with Students in One Year

- Families: 5,000+ hours
- Educators: 1,000 hours



Special Education Focus & Rationale

In special education, families are not optional partners—they are **legally, instructionally, and ethically essential**



Family Engagement Is Essential to FAPE

- Families are required IEP team members
- Family input shapes goals and services
- Without partnership, FAPE is at risk





Shared Responsibility

- Family engagement is a shared responsibility across roles and teams.
- Family engagement should be aligned across classrooms, teams, and schools.
- No single person or meeting owns engagement.
- Shared responsibility supports consistency and sustainability.

Why Family Engagement Matters

Students with engaged families are more likely to:

- Better grades/test scores
- Higher attendance
- Better behavior and attitudes

When is it engagement ?

Family engagement occurs when:

- The activity is explicitly linked to student learning or development
- Families learn something new, not just receive information
- Families practice or apply what they learn
- The learning is used beyond the meeting or event
- The activity builds family capacity (knowledge, skills, confidence)
- Responsibility for learning is shared between families and educators

If these conditions are not met, the activity is family involvement — not engagement.





Activity

List at least 5 current events or activities for families at your school or district

Engagement or Involvement?

- Raise hand/arm for family **engagement**.
- Leave hand/arm down for family **involvement**.



From Family Involvement to Family Engagement

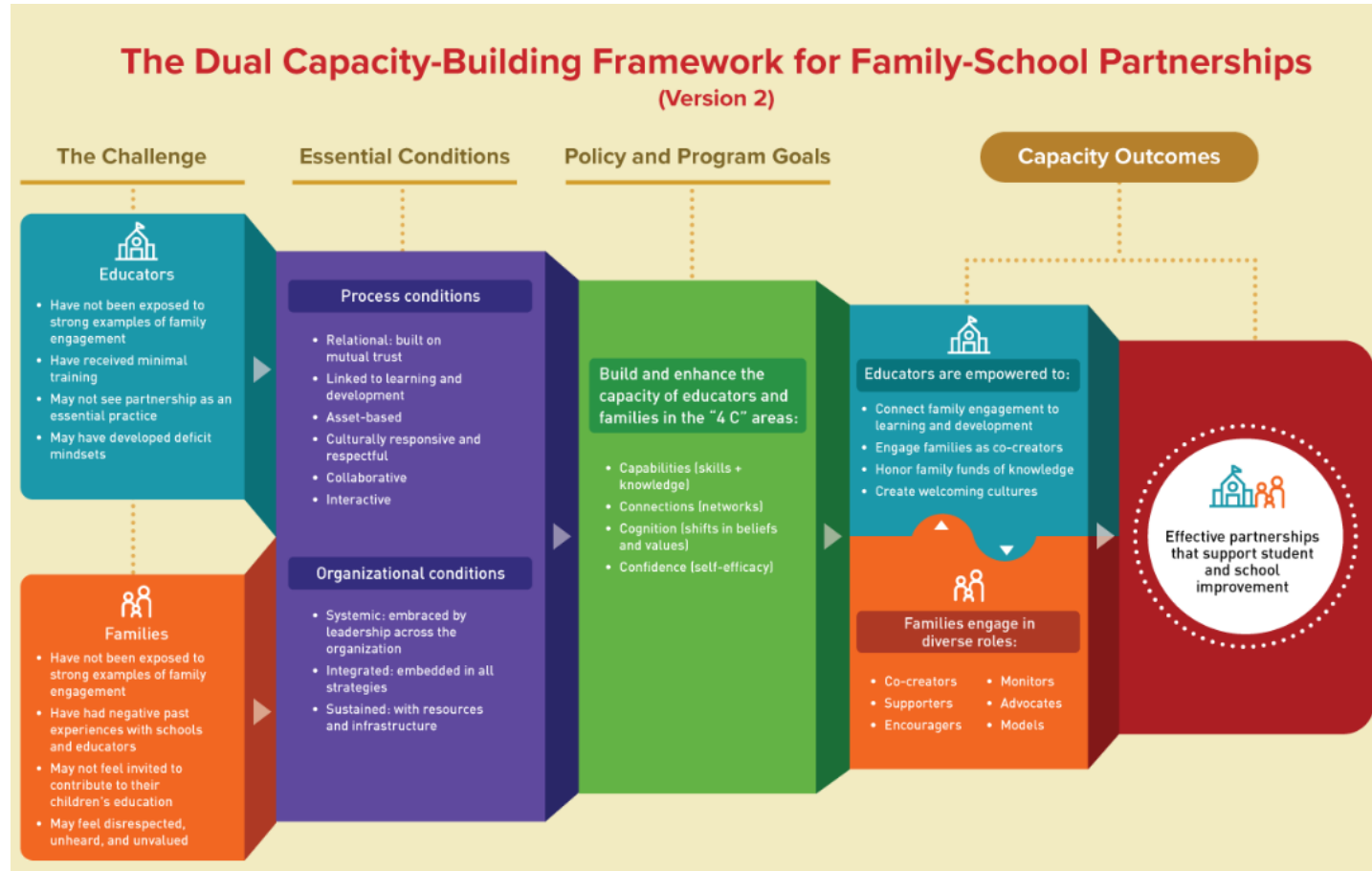
Family Involvement

- School directed
- Event based
- Compliance focused
- Families support school
- One way communication

Family Engagement

- Partnership-driven
- Communication is two way
- Ongoing & relational
- Capacity-building
- Schools and families share responsibility

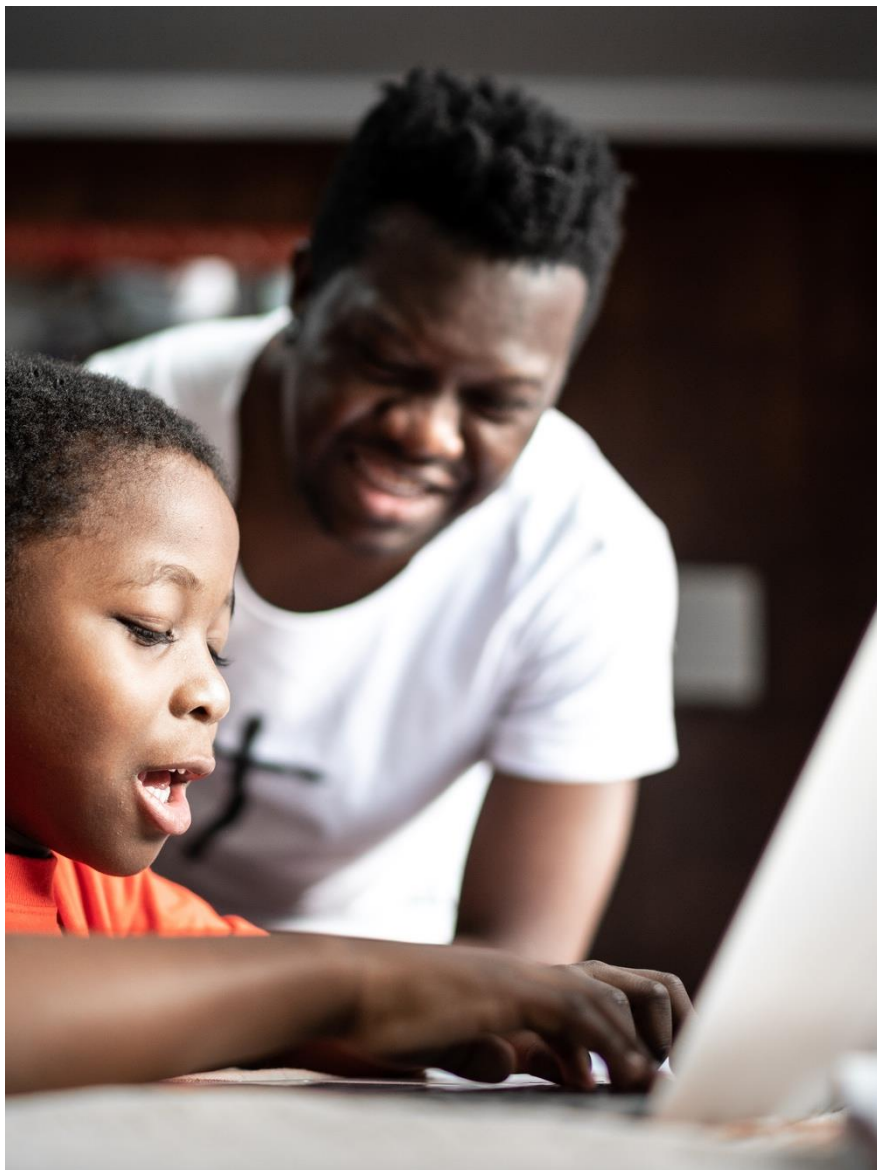
Intro to Dual Capacity-Building Framework



Building Capacity

- **Educator capacity** to collaborate, communicate, and share power
- **Family capacity** to understand systems, advocate effectively, and support learning

Engagement succeeds when schools teach skills, not when families are expected to already know them.



Why Focus on Capacity?

- Family engagement challenges are often not motivation problems — they are capacity problems.
- Families are expected to understand complex systems
- Educators are expected to build relationships without sufficient time or tools
- Engagement fails when capacity is assumed instead of intentionally built

Essential Conditions

- **Process** Conditions
- **Organizational** Conditions



Everybody Wins



Parents and
Guardians

Students

Educators

Schools and
Communities

Building Capacity Through the Four Cs

The Dual Capacity–Building Framework focuses on strengthening practice through four interconnected areas:

- Connections – Relationships and trust
- Capabilities – Skills and knowledge
- Cognition – Beliefs and mindsets, understanding and clarity
- Confidence – Ability to act and engage

Head-Heart-Hands: How Capacity is Built



HEAD



HANDS



HEART



Indicator 8- How parents experience the process

Indicator 8

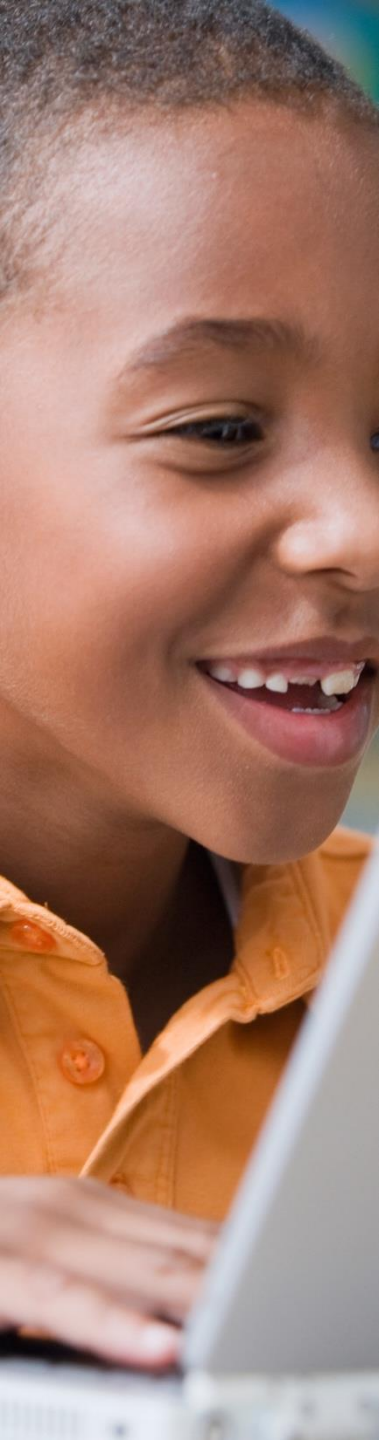
- Measures whether parents report being treated as **equal partners**
- Emphasizes communication, respect, and meaningful involvement
- Reflects how the process feels — not just whether it occurred



A vertical decorative image on the left side of the slide. It features a blue background with a white ruler at the top showing markings for 90, 200, and 15. Below the ruler are two circular microscope slides, one partially overlapping the other, containing a light-colored substance. The ruler has a green section at the bottom.

Other Indicator Data

- **Indicators 3 and 7** – Assessment and Preschool Outcomes
- **Indicator 13** – Secondary Transition
- **Indicator 14** – Post-School Outcomes



Scenario

Student: Trinity – 5th grade

Family Situation

- Trinity lives between two homes
- School communicates primarily with her mother

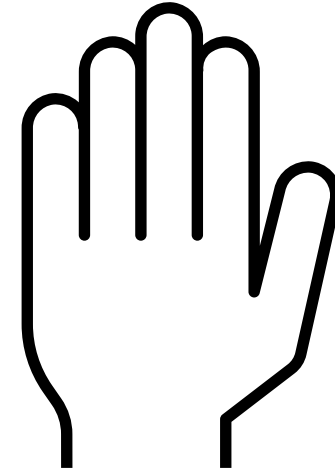
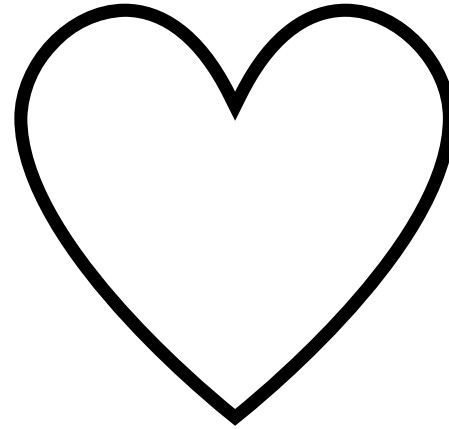
School Perception

“Dad never participates and does not seem involved.”

What Is Really Happening

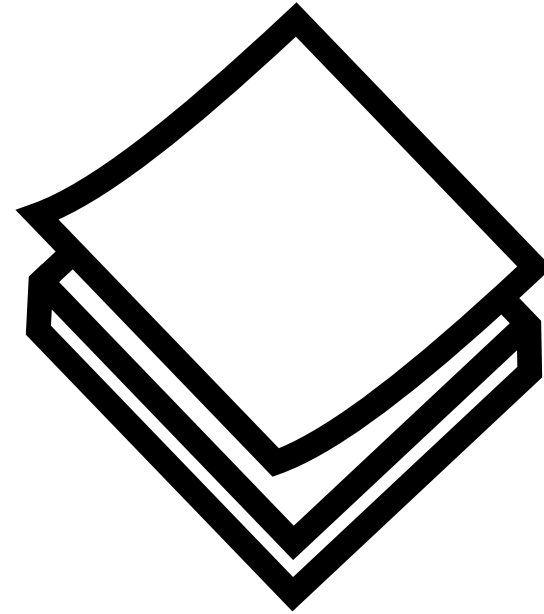
- Dad has asked for updates
- He is not included in communication
- He feels excluded from decisions

Practice using the three domains



K.W.L Activity

- K – What do you already know?
- W – What do you want to learn?
- L – What did you learn?



References (section 1)

- Education Commission of the States. (2018). *High-impact family engagement: A core strategy for school improvement*.
- Mapp, K. L., Henderson, A. T., Cuevas, S., Franco, M., & Ewert, S. (2022). *Everyone wins!: The evidence for family-school partnerships and implications for practice*. Scholastic.

Dual Capacity Series for Educators

Part 2



Pre work

Objectives

Core Beliefs, Bias, and the Family Experience

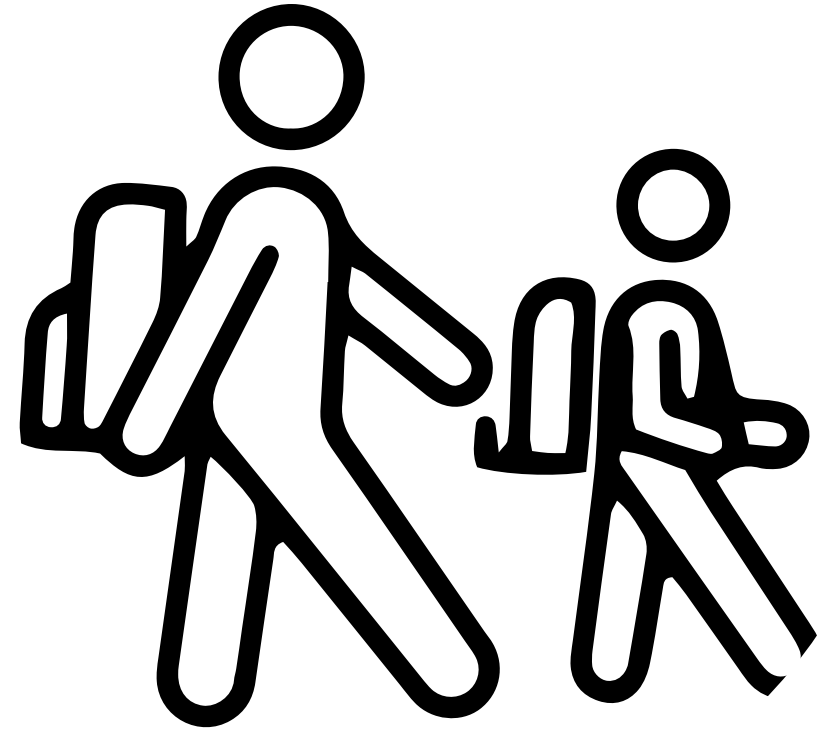
How the Family Experience Begins

- It starts with a referral.
- Emotional impact of special education



What impacts the family experience?

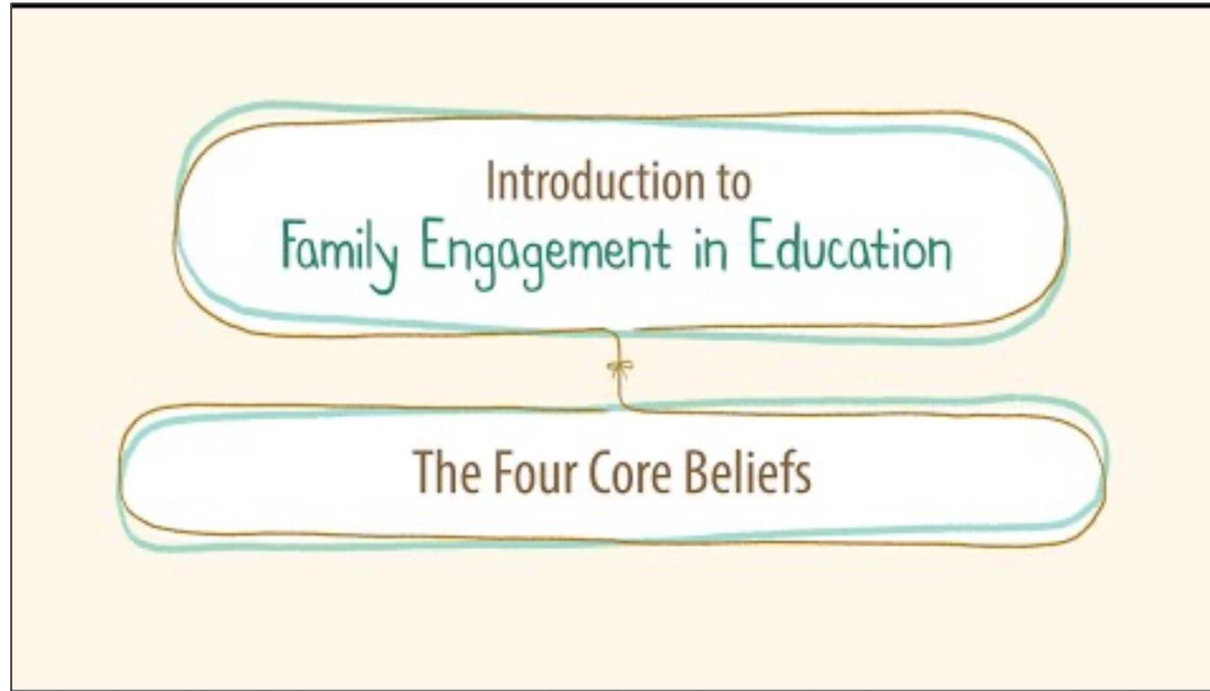
- Previous experiences with schools
- Generational trauma
- Bias



Dual Capacity Core Values Survey

- All families have dreams for their children and want the best for them
- All families have the capacity to support their children's learning
- Families and school/program staff should be equal partners
- The responsibility for building and sustaining partnerships between school, home , and community rests primarily with the school/program staff, especially school/program leaders

Four Core Beliefs



- The resources and opinions shared have not been vetted by the Tennessee Department of Education and are not an endorsement on the quality or content of these materials or any vendor.

Educator Beliefs and Mindsets

- Core beliefs as educators- what are they?
- Educator views of the family
- Mindset matters

Beliefs impact practice



Beliefs shape how partnerships are formed and maintained



Beliefs influence decisions, communication, and follow-through



Core beliefs must be reflected in everyday practice

Potential Barriers for Educators

- Implicit bias
- Cultural differences
- Limited time
- Competing demands
- Lack of training



Types of Schools



Partnership
School

Open-Door
School

Come-if-We-
Call School

Fortress
School

School Conditions and the family experience

- Policies, procedures, practices
- How different schools affect the family experience
- Why families appear disengaged

Trust as a Foundation

- Impacted daily
- Communication is key
 - Daily logs
 - Weekly logs
 - ParentSquare
 - Progress Reports
 - TN Pulse Connect
- TDOE

Trust Exercise



Scenario

- Jerome is a 7th grade student who is being raised by his aunt who never graduate high school. Jerome has a history of behavioral concerns and spent 45 days in an alternative academic setting at the end of 6th grade. Upon his return, he transferred to another middle school where he doesn't know anyone. His aunt attended middle school here and is recognized by some of the staff.



Steps to improve the family experience

- Identify potential roadblocks.
- Acknowledge *why* they exist.
- Strategize a plan **with** the family.
- Implement the plan!



Scenario

- Jerome is a 7th grade student who is being raised by his aunt who never graduate high school. Jerome has a history of behavioral concerns and spent 45 days in an alternative academic setting at the end of 6th grade. Upon his return, he transferred to another middle school where he doesn't know anyone. His aunt attended middle school here and is recognized by some of the staff.

- Steps
 - Identify potential roadblocks
 - Acknowledge why
 - Plan with the family
 - Implement



How to impact the Family Experience

- Utilizing family strengths
- Cultural assets
- Supporting families where they are



K.L.W. exit activity



What I already knew



What I Learned



What I wonder or want to learn



References (section 2)

- Bellamy, T., Krishnamoorthy, G., Ayre, K., Berger, E., Machin, T., & Rees, B. E. (2022, March 28). *Trauma-informed school programming: A partnership approach to culturally Responsive Behavior Support*. MDPI. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/7/3997>
- Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V. R., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The Essential Guide to family-school partnerships*. New Press.
- Mapp, K. L., Henderson, A. T., Cuevas, S., Franco, M., & Ewert, S. (2022). *Everyone wins!: The evidence for family-school partnerships and implications for practice*. Scholastic.

References cont. (section 2)

- Mapp, K., Carver, I., & Lander, J. (2017). *Powerful partnerships: A teacher's guide to engaging families for student success*. Scholastic, Incorporated.
- Student, family, and community involvement. (n.d.).
<https://www.tn.gov/education/districts/health-and-safety/family-community-engagement.html>



Building Capacity for Family Engagement

Pre-Work

Objectives



Ticket Exchange





Building Capacity: Turning Engagement Beliefs Into Practice

Family engagement improves when educators intentionally build:

- Relationships
- Understanding
- Skills
- Confidence

These elements shape how families experience the school partnership.

What Does Capacity Look Like in Practice?

Families:

- Understand the process
- Ask informed questions
- Participate in decisions
- Apply strategies at home

What Does Capacity Look Like in Practice?

Capacity is visible in everyday interactions with families.

In practice, educators:

- Communicate in clear, family-friendly language
 - Invite and use family input in decision making
 - Explain processes, timelines, and next steps
 - Create opportunities for questions and feedback
 - Follow up and maintain ongoing communication

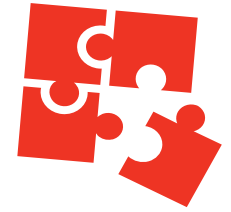


The Four C's

- Confidence
- Cognition
- Connection
- Capabilities



How the Four Cs Work Together



Connection builds trust



Cognition builds understanding



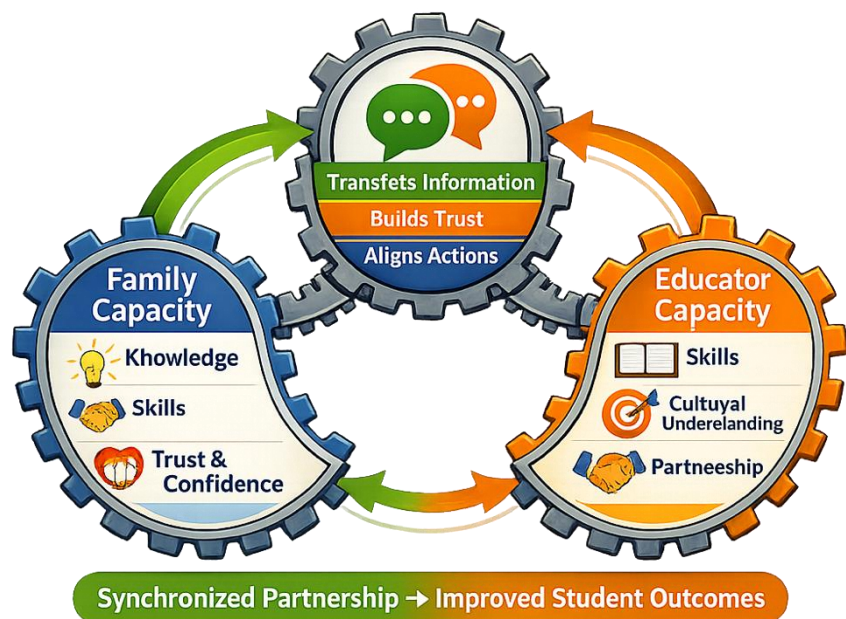
Capabilities build skill



Confidence builds participation



Communication: The Mechanism That Builds Capacity



Capacity grows when communication is intentional. It can build connection, understanding and skills.



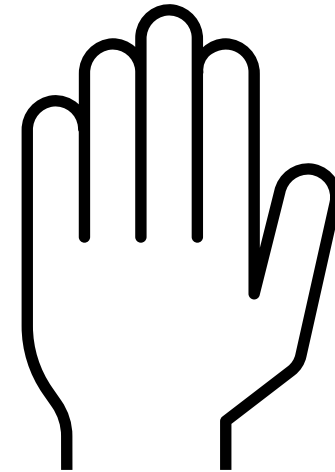
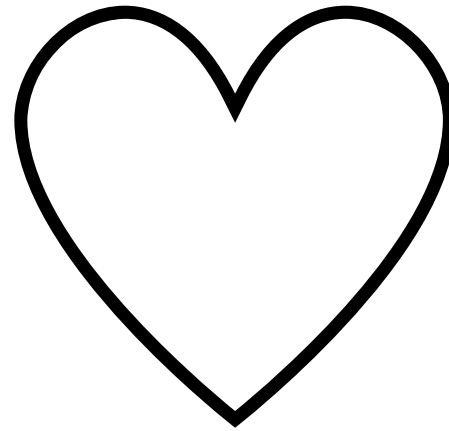
Capacity is built across the entire IEP process

**Every stage
builds one or
more Cs.**

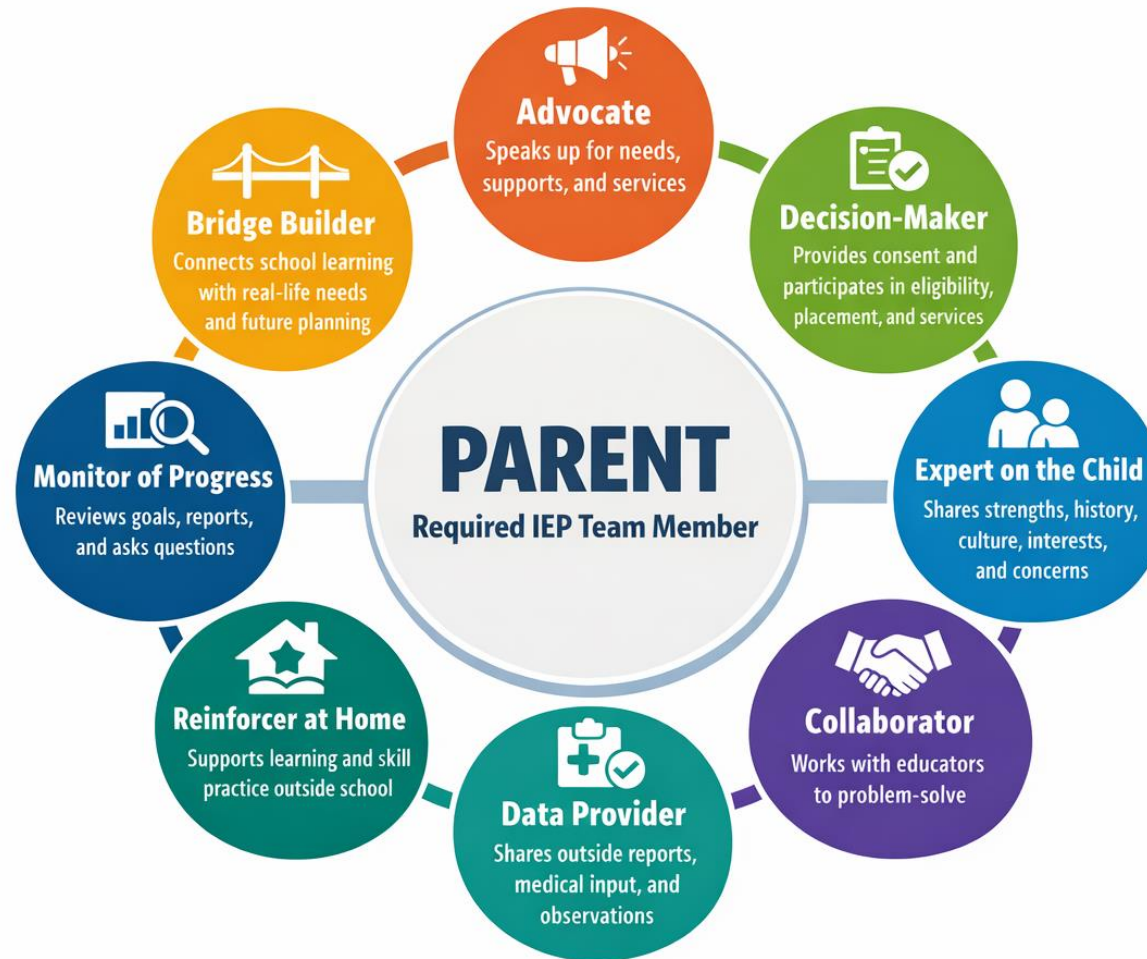
**Before →
Connection +
Cognition**

**During →
Cognition +
Capability +
Confidence**

**After →
Capability +
Confidence**



Parents play multiple roles



IEP Process Walk Activity



Connections: Relationships as the foundation

- Connections help our families feel known , respected and welcome.
- Connections are the relationships that support ongoing family school partnerships

Relationships **ARE** instructional tools

Connection Building Strategies

- Introductory phone calls
- Explain the process and what to expect
- Ecomaps / “All About Me” tools
- Follow-up and follow thru
- Learn about the family dynamics
- Who’s Who list
- Share drafts early
- Provide timelines showing what happens next and why

Role Play





Scenario

Student: Malik is a first- grade student with Autism

School Challenge: No one signs his paperwork and his homework is rarely completed . Malik has had some behaviors in class lately. He has an upcoming IEP meeting. Malik is often late for school. Notes are sent home but it seems like no one cares.

Family Situation: Malik lives with his maternal grandmother, who unexpectedly became his guardian when Malik’s mother was incarcerated.

Reflection

What built connection?

What built confidence?



Cognition — Understanding Shapes Participation

Cognition refers to understanding and beliefs

Engagement depends on:

- What families understand
- What educators believe about families
- How both interpret the process

**Beliefs → Behaviors → Systems →
Outcomes**



Parent friendly language

Removes all jargon and acronyms

Explains what the decision is

Explains why the decision was made

Explains what this means for their child

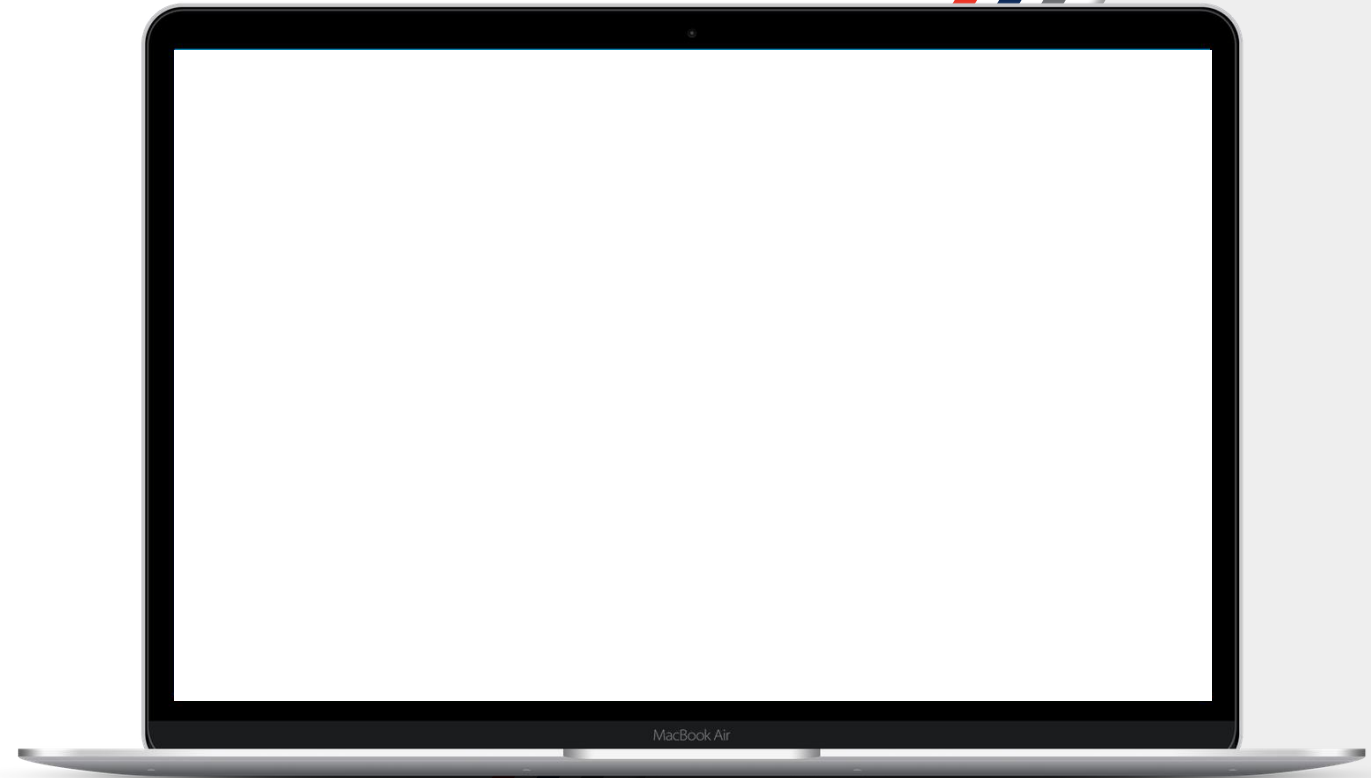
Explains what happens next

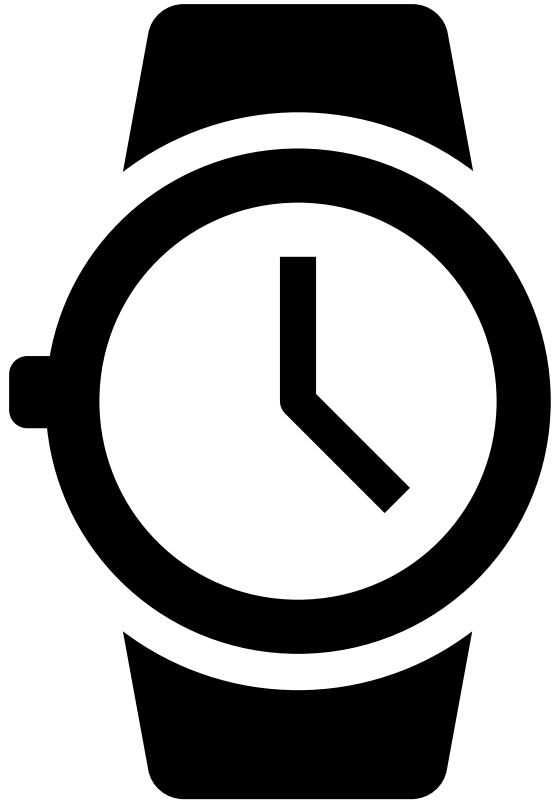


Translation Taboo

Translate this into parent-friendly language:

“The team determined the current placement is the least restrictive environment and removal from the general education setting is not warranted at this time.”





Plain Language Translation Challenge

Auto-Fail If You:

- Use acronyms
- Say “the team decided” without explaining who
- Do not explain what this means for the child

Capabilities — Skills Make Participation Possible

Families cannot participate meaningfully if they do not understand:

- The special education process
- Their role in decision-making
- How goals connect to services
- What actions to take next

Understanding builds confidence — confidence builds engagement

Voice Makes Partnership Real



Confidence is the belief that our voice actually matters.

Families participate actively when they:

- Feel safe asking questions
- See their input used
- Understand decisions and processes
- Know they influence outcomes

Confidence-Building Practices

Strategies

- Invite input before drafts
- Show input is their “present levels”
- Parent input and voice in goals
- Co- develop at least one goal
- Validate the family’s expertise

Participation becomes partnership when voice is welcomed.



Parent Input Activity



Find the parent input statement on your table. Use the highlighter to find information that can be used in the IEP .



Discuss at your table how you would use this input in the IEP



Share



After the Meeting: Follow-Through

- A plain-language summary
- An explanation of next steps
- Ongoing contact information
- Clear action steps
- Timelines for any changes
- A plan for monitoring progress
- An invitation for follow-up questions

Other ideas

- Parent Resource Rooms
- "Office hours"



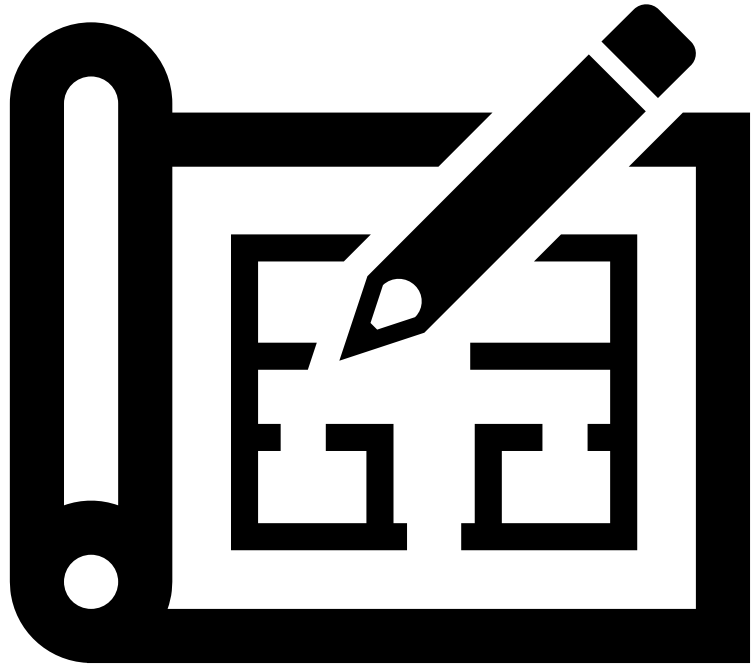
Observable indicators of increasing capacity

- Parent input appears in goals and plans
- Fewer clarification emails or calls
- Families initiate communication
- Parents are participating actively
- Parents ask more informed questions

Capacity growth is visible through participation and understanding.



Make it and Take it



- Take a " gallery walk" to review the ideas from the IEP process activity
- Create your own check list of before, during, and after strategies



References

- Mapp, K. L., & Kuttner, P. J. (2013). *Partners in education: A dual capacity–building framework for family–school partnerships*. Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- Mapp, K. L., Carver, I., & Lander, J. (2017). *Powerful partnerships: A teacher’s guide to engaging families for student success*. Scholastic.
- Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.). *Family engagement framework and resources*. <https://www.tn.gov/education>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2018). *Parent and family engagement provisions in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. <https://www.ed.gov>

- Mapp, K. L., Carver, I., & Lander, J. (2017). *Powerful partnerships: A dual capacity-building framework for family–school partnerships* (Version 2). U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.dualcapacity.org>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2017). *IDEA parent participation requirements*. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea>
- Henderson, A. T., Mapp, K. L., Johnson, V. R., & Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family–school partnerships*. New Press.
- Ferlazzo, L. (2011). *Involvement or engagement?*
<https://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/2011/08/30/involvement-or-engagement/>

Dual Capacity Series for Educators

Part 3



Sustaining Capacity & Moving to Action

Pre work

Objectives

- Apply the Dual Capacity Framework to current practice
- Commit to partnership focused action steps

From Compliance to Capacity

**Shifting from participation to partnerships and
From compliance to capacity**

- Family engagement in special education is not optional or event-based. It is a **required professional practice** embedded throughout the **entire special education process**, from referral through progress monitoring (IDEA, 2004; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013)

Using Data and Reflection to Guide Action

- Data provides insight into engagement practices.
- Reflection turns information into improvement.
- Action strengthens capacity.

Teacher Level



- Builds relationships
- Reflects on their own beliefs
- Reflects on current practices
- Uses plain language
- Invites input before drafts
- Connects goals to home practice
- Follow up after meetings

Team level

- Share information early
- Uses structured family input
- Co-develop goals
- Checks for understanding
- Provides written next steps



School level

- Clear communication systems
- Family resource access
- Flexible meeting structures
- Translation and accessibility
- Consistent engagement practices
- Supports teacher and team needs



District Level

- Training for educators
- Partnership policies
- Family engagement data monitoring
- Leadership expectations
- Resource allocation

Put it in Action!

Educator Action Plan

Administrator Action Plan

District Action Plan

References (section 4)

- Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J. Q. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. University of Chicago Press.



Office Hours for Educators

Have questions about Family Engagement in Special Education (FESPED) training? Want to connect with a specialist to talk about increasing family engagement to improve outcomes for students with disabilities? Join FESPED's office hours on the first Wednesday of each month from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. CST.



The 1st Wed



3 - 4 p.m. CST



Zoom

To join the Zoom scan the QR code or use the link.




<https://tinyurl.com/566374w2>

Questions?

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Connect with us!

 (800) 835-7077

 specialeducation@thearctn.org

 familyengagementtn.com

 www.facebook.com/fespedtn/

 www.instagram.com/fespedtn

 https://x.com/FESPED_TN

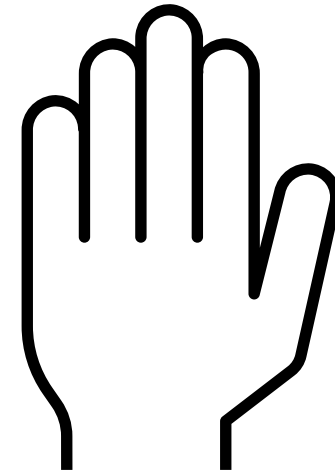
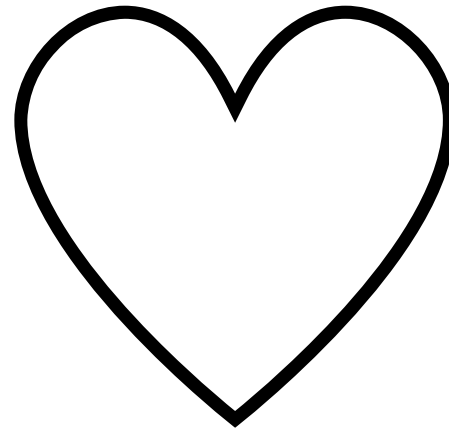


Activities

Capacity Requires Skill Development

- **Strategies**

- Explain *how* families can engage, not just *when*
- Teach the skills needed to participate and decide
- Provide clear next steps after meetings
- Follow up to support implementation
- Parent Resource Rooms



From effort to embedded in daily practice

When engagement is seen as a strategy :

- Families are engaged before decisions are made
- Reflection happens after implementation
- Adjustments are expected –not avoided

When engagement is treated as a task:




- Families are informed after the decisions
- Reflection is skipped
- Same issues repeat year after year

Connections

- **What Connection Means in Special Education**
- Families feel known, respected, and welcomed as equal IEP team members
- Educators intentionally reduce power imbalances and jargon barriers
- Relationships are built *before* challenges arise

Connection builds trust and shared responsibility between families and educators. In special education, connection is foundational to meaningful parent participation and legally required collaboration.

Desert Island Rescue

-  Scenario:
 - Your group has survived a plane crash and landed on a desert island. A helicopter can only take 5 people. Together, you must decide who gets rescued.
-  Rules:
 - - Each choice must have a reason (no random decisions).
 - - The group must agree unanimously.
 - - You have 7 minutes.
-  Debrief:
 - - What influenced your choices?
 - - How did assumptions shape your decisions?
 - - How does this relate to IEP meetings and ensuring all voices are heard?