

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LEARNING SERIES

# Family Engagement to Support College and Career Pathway Success

Welcome to the Family Engagement Learning Series briefs! These briefs summarize a six-part webinar series of conversations designed to Raise the Bar for family engagement practices between school and home. The 2023 series produced by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with Carnegie Corporation of New York and Overdeck Family Foundation, provided an overview of evidence, highlighted bright spots in the field, and shared resources and evidence-based strategies to support student success with education leaders and practitioners.

## Introduction

“[Raise the Bar: Lead the World](#)” is the U.S. Department of Education’s call to action to transform public education and unite around what truly works — based on decades of experience and research — to advance education equity and excellence. Achieving academic excellence for all students by supporting the conditions to [accelerate learning](#) and offering a [comprehensive and rigorous education](#), as well as [boldly improving learning conditions](#), are key focus areas under Raise the Bar, with a focus on assisting states and districts in achieving these goals for every student. Creating pathways to global engagement is another key focus area that aligns directly to this webinar’s content. The [Unlocking Career Success](#) initiative focuses on streamlining the connections between K12 education, postsecondary education and training, and the world of work to ensure that every student finds a career that they are passionate about and provides them with a family-sustaining wage. Every student deserves an onramp to postsecondary education and training.

The Department is leading efforts with other federal agencies, community organizations, and workforce leaders to help prepare students to thrive in their future careers. Family engagement is essential in supporting students as they navigate the multiple pathways to career success. Research suggests that 70% of jobs will require education or training beyond high school by 2027. The Unlocking Career



Success component of the Raise the Bar Lead the World initiative is one of many ways that education and workforce systems are coming together to equip students and families with resources to prepare this generation for the workforce of the future.

We believe parents, families, and caregivers are essential partners in supporting student success. Research finds that strong partnerships between home and school lead to increased academic success and engagement for students. Thus, the U.S. Department of Education is committed to [Raising the Bar for Parent Partnership in Our Schools](#).



## Evidence: Family Engagement to Support College and Career Pathway Success

The sixth webinar in the series, [Family Engagement to Support College and Career Pathway Success](#), was moderated by [Farhad Asghar](#), from Carnegie Corporation of New York, with evidence from the field presented by [David Park](#), Learning Heroes.



Scan to access the webinar

In this webinar, David Park from Learning Heroes presented evidence from the field and highlighted the following:

- Family aspirations are high when it comes to pursuing college, but schools do not always meet these aspirations due to lack of supports and programmatic elements.
- Many parents, particularly Hispanic and African American parents, prioritize college as a pathway to a successful career. These families also hold a higher-than-average belief that their child will graduate from college, while facing more challenges in attaining an equitable education.
- According to Learning Heroes, 74% of parents are extremely or very confident that their kids will be prepared for entrance and success in college.
- There is a disconnect between parent perceptions of their child's achievement and their actual achievement. This discrepancy seems to be linked to parents relying on report cards, which represent just one data point, not the culmination of the child's overall student performance.
- Families need practical tools and actionable steps to help their child prepare for high school and beyond, including how to partner with their child's teacher and counselor, choose the right classes, consider career and technical education (CTE), start the financial aid process early, and advocate for their child.
- Historical inequities in attaining higher education worsened during the pandemic. According to 2021 National Student Clearinghouse data, 46% of seniors from high-poverty schools enroll in college compared to 72% in low-poverty schools in 2021.
- With effective interventions, many contend schools can boost these national averages.



### Learnings from Bright Spots

This webinar featured education leaders and practitioners sharing how family engagement helps young people navigate educational options after high school and unlock career opportunities. Panelists included:

- [Jon Roure](#), Student Leadership Network;
- [Devon Eisenberg](#), Young Women's Leadership School of the Bronx;
- [Jose Enriquez](#), Latinos in Action;
- [Angela Puertas](#), Latinos in Action;
- [Heather Justice](#), Education Strategy Group; and
- [Marsha Inniss-Mitchell](#), Boston Public Schools (Massachusetts).



**Many of our family's aspirations are around pursuing college; sometimes the aspirations and the realities in their school buildings do not necessarily align to that aspiration because the supports and programmatic elements are not necessarily equally distributed across schools.**

**- JON ROURE**

## Key Takeaways and Strategies

- Allocate the right resources to engage schools, communities, and parents, which increases students' potential and positions them for a viable pathway for postsecondary success.
- Use family workshops to share what college looks like and what career readiness means through personal stories and with alumni parents working with parents.
- Make sure that all students feel like they belong in their school, regardless of their background, in order to maximize their potential.
- Provide opportunities for high school students to share their experiences with elementary students, including through tutoring relationships.
- Create leadership opportunities for all students, such as student government, school clubs, etc.
- Build durable skills and information for postsecondary options into school courses and curriculum with intentional engagement with families.
- Engage effective family engagement practices in postsecondary planning with parents that can include:
  - › Early outreach (e.g., middle school);
  - › Parent/guardian workshops;
  - › Individualized counseling;
  - › Family nights/college fairs with school alumni, parents, and current college students;
  - › Parent-teacher conferences;
  - › Centralized online resources and communication;
  - › Parent ambassadors and mentors; and
  - › Collaborative partnerships.



---

**We really try to instill in them the importance of continuing their education. We've brought parents in whose children have been successful and talk about the process and what it was like for them.**

**- JOSE ENRIQUEZ**

---

- Align education systems with workforce needs when establishing career pathways by establishing strong partnerships with college and career pathway organizations in their communities.
- Create resource hubs for students and families to explore career options. Families need hands-on materials and resources to help them make informed decisions about occupational markets and career pathways.
- Engage career opportunities for parents as they support their child in the college and career pathways process.
- Make career exploration events engaging and fun by partnering with local businesses (e.g., entertainment venues) to host the events for students and their families.
- Recognize technology can be an essential tool for school systems when compiling complex data for college and career pathways, as well as for ensuring language accessible resources. Technology should be a tool to support the relationships, and not replace them.
- Ensure that students have access to and participate in the four keys to [Unlock Career Success](#): dual enrollment, work-based learning, workforce credentials, and career advising and navigation.



---

**A lot of times the parents have lack of knowledge and don't really know how to be involved and then they wait until their kids are seniors in high school and say, 'I guess we are too late to do these things.' So, we try to teach them at a much younger age and just kind of hold their hand through this process.**

**- ANGELA PUERTAS**

---



---

And none of this will matter if the families in our care do not know about or cannot access the promise of postsecondary education. So, to realize this vision, we must work together with the families in our care and place our students in the center of opportunities needed to live a choice-filled life.

- FARHAD ASGHAR

---

## RESOURCES

- Family Engagement Learning Series [summary and videos](#)
- U.S. Department of Education's [website](#)
  - › Unlocking Career Success [website](#) and [resource library](#)
  - › Unlocking Career Success [Student and Family Playbook](#)
  - › [Resources for parents and educators](#)
  - › [Raise the Bar priorities](#)
  - ›
- [Overdeck Family Foundation](#)
  - › [2022 Grantmaking & Impact Report](#)
- [Carnegie Corporation of New York](#)
- [Learning Heroes](#)
  - › [Learning Heroes Paths to Success](#)
- GreatSchools' Transforming High School [website](#)
- Go Beyond Grades family videos
  - › [Marisela](#)
  - › [Ruben](#)
- [Student Leadership Network](#)
  - › Student Leadership Network [presentation](#) "Towards Parallel Frameworks for College AND Career Success"
- [Latinos in Action](#)
- [Education Strategy Group](#)
  - › Education Strategy Group's Communications Toolkit for [Postsecondary Pathways and The Shifting American Economy](#)
- National Student Clearinghouse Research Center [annual report](#)



This brief is one of a six-part Family Engagement Learning Series produced by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with Carnegie Corporation of New York and Overdeck Family Foundation. This webinar series provided an overview of evidence, highlighted bright spots in the field, and shared resources and evidence-based strategies to support student success with education leaders and practitioners. For more information, please visit <https://www.ed.gov/raisethebar/parents>.