



OUR LISTENING PHILOSOPHY

At Flamboyant Foundation, we envision a world where all children can thrive, particularly those most impacted by inequity. In our Washington, DC office, we chase that vision by supporting deep partnerships between educators and families that support student success inside and outside of the classroom. We call our approach **REAL Family Engagement**.

To embed and sustain REAL Family Engagement in educational communities, we employ multiple data-informed strategies and listening approaches to deeply understand the nuances of family engagement in both Washington DC and communities across the nation. Flamboyant encourages educators to listen to external and internal stakeholders as well as create a space to listen and learn from one another. This ensures that systems and practices remain adaptive to the unique needs of each school community.

Use this resource to learn more about our Listening Philosophy and how to build listening into your practice.

WHY DO WE LISTEN?

REAL Family Engagement is grounded in continuous listening to and learning from our partners. When we opened our DC office in 2008, we started by asking educators and families: **“What would you do if you had a little more time and a little bit more money?”** Resoundingly, the answer was family engagement, but each educator and family had a slightly different definition. We know through our years of experience that deep listening fosters strong relationships and allows Flamboyant to continuously improve and customize our offerings to address the specific needs of school communities. By valuing the diverse perspectives of our families, educators, and school partners, we ensure that our practices are inclusive, relevant, and responsive to each community’s unique needs.

WHY SHOULD YOU LISTEN?

“Our school values parents’ input and actively seeks their input on school policies and decision-making. A parent advisory council meets regularly to discuss school issues and provide feedback. Additionally, parents are encouraged to participate in school committees and volunteer opportunities, allowing them to have a voice and impact in the school community.”

– Teacher, Hart Middle School, Flamboyant Partner School

Listening to families is paramount in educational communities, especially those striving to embed REAL Family Engagement. At Flamboyant, we emphasize the importance of educators listening to families’ aspirations and sharing information about academic milestones. This ensures high expectations for student performance on the part of both the educator and family. Active listening enables educators to monitor student performance effectively and provide relevant home learning support. Additionally, listening helps educators guide families through the educational system, connecting them with the right resources and activities. By maintaining open lines of communication and seeking family input, educators empower families to advocate for their children.

Listening and learning are central to forming strong, responsive partnerships that support student learning and ensure that families can access the information needed to play the [Five Essential Roles](#). Moreover, listening cultivates a sense of belonging and partnership among families, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. When we listen, we build stronger relationships, and stronger relationships lead to higher expectations from teachers and greater student achievement.

HOW TO MAKE TIME FOR LISTENING?

Incorporating listening into a busy schedule is essential for educators to engage meaningfully and understand the needs of students and families. Educators are constantly listening, from the moment a student arrives at school until dismissal. For example, a parent might share at drop-off that their family has recently moved, affecting their commute, or send a text about their child struggling with the arrival of a new sibling. This information is crucial for supporting the student's learning environment. While not all shared information requires action, educators need to discern what is important to address.

Listening, both formally and informally, is a low-cost, high-impact strategy for building strong relationships within school communities. By actively listening to students, families, and staff, educators can gain insights, build trust, and create an inclusive and responsive learning environment.

Here are **5 key ways** educators can integrate listening into their schedules:



Provide simple anonymous feedback forms – like school-based websites, mobile apps, or both — for students and families to share their thoughts and concerns with you at their convenience.



Utilize existing digital tools and social media to communicate with families. Emails, texts, and school-based apps like ClassDojo, Remind, or Google Classroom are efficient and can help you stay connected and gather feedback respectfully and succinctly.



Incorporate listening into daily activities. Use the first few minutes of class or staff meetings for check-ins with students or colleagues. Attend sporting events, cultural events, 'hallway conversations,' and learning events as opportunities to engage with stakeholders.



Share listening responsibilities with other staff members or school volunteers. Form a listening team to collect insights from various parts of the school community. Work with colleagues to conduct home or community visits with families so that they can share their hopes and dreams directly, as well as their needs to build strong academic partnerships.



Dedicate time for reflection on what has been heard, plan actionable steps, and create feedback loops. This keeps stakeholders engaged and shows that their input is valued in your community.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT
REAL FAMILY ENGAGEMENT + THE FIVE ROLES**

