

# Hiring for Family Engagement



*A Guide for Recruiting + Selecting Educators At All Levels*

School systems across the country are working to improve student outcomes, attendance rates, and school culture. Research and practice consistently demonstrate that when family engagement is prioritized and resourced as a core strategy for school improvement, systems see success.

Effective family engagement at the system level means:

- Families are positioned as assets, not problems to be solved.
- Family engagement is embedded into instructional practice across the district, not limited solely to events.
- Family engagement is seen as everyone's job and is a shared responsibility across the system, from classrooms to central office to senior leadership.

For school systems who are committed to reaching all students, this means that hiring is a strategic lever for continued improvement. If family engagement is central to your system, it must also be central to recruitment and selection processes.

This resource is designed to help Human Resources teams and hiring panels signal that family engagement is a core expectation of all system staff. The questions and look-fors will help to assess candidate mindset and skills to select school leaders and teachers who can help foster authentic family-school partnerships.

## How to Use This Resource

- **Use the look-fors and embed family engagement into all job descriptions.** Job descriptions across school-based and central office staff should clearly state that family engagement is a shared system-wide responsibility.
- **Include family engagement questions in every interview step.** Having each panelist or interviewer ask questions related to family engagement ensures that candidates understand the importance of family engagement to your overall system strategy.
- **Listen for the mindset.** Skills and practices can be coached, but deficit beliefs are much harder to shift. Make sure that you are pushing candidates to provide concrete examples of these beliefs, not just a general philosophy.

# School Leader Interview Questions + Look-Fors

Note: These questions can be used for Principals, Assistant Principals, Instructional Coaches, and Central Office Staff.

Question	Look-For
<b>How do you define effective family engagement at your school? How will you share this vision with your staff?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Defines family engagement as ongoing partnership, not events or compliance</li><li>• Centers families as assets and collaborators, not problems to manage</li><li>• Names that family engagement is a shared responsibility across staff, not just the responsibility of a family liaison</li><li>• Describes clear, concrete ways this vision is communicated (PD, modeling, expectations, feedback loops)</li></ul>
<b>How do you see family engagement as a part of meeting student achievement goals- such as academics, attendance and school culture?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Makes explicit connections between family engagement and student outcomes</li><li>• References data or examples (attendance improvements, academic gains, behavior shifts)</li><li>• Describes families as partners in problem-solving, not recipients of information</li><li>• Avoids framing engagement as “nice to have” or separate from instruction</li></ul>
<b>How do you share information with families about policies or decisions that you might not agree with?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrates professionalism and integrity, even amid disagreement</li><li>• Explains policies clearly and respectfully without undermining trust</li><li>• Names strategies to listen to family concerns and surface feedback</li><li>• Avoids blaming “the system” or positioning families as adversaries</li></ul>

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Question	Look-For
<b>Talk about a time when you worked in partnership with families to achieve something you could not have done alone.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describes families playing an active role, not just showing up</li><li>• Shares a specific challenge and how collaboration changed the outcome</li><li>• Demonstrates humility and willingness to share power</li><li>• Reflects on what they learned from families</li></ul>
<b>Talk about a time when feedback from families changed your planned course of action.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gives a concrete example (not hypothetical)</li><li>• Shows openness to being challenged or corrected</li><li>• Explains how feedback was gathered and acted upon</li><li>• Reflects on how the change improved outcomes or trust</li></ul>
<b>What would be your approach if you heard a staff member speaking negatively or making assumptions about families?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Names direct, timely intervention (not avoidance)</li><li>• Balances accountability with coaching and learning</li><li>• Demonstrates commitment to shifting mindsets, not just behavior</li><li>• Avoids excusing deficit-based language as stress or venting</li></ul>

# Teacher Interview Questions + Look-Fors

Note: These questions can be used for Classroom Teachers and Support Staff, such as Educational Aides.

Question	Look-For
<p><b>What strategies do you/ will you employ to engage families? Which ones do you think have the greatest impact? Why?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Describes multiple, two-way strategies (not just newsletters or apps)</li><li>• Explains why certain strategies work for their families</li><li>• Adapts engagement based on family needs and preferences</li><li>• Focuses on relationship-building, not just information-sharing</li></ul>
<p><b>What, if anything, do you think the teacher's role in engaging families should be?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sees engagement as a core part of teaching, not an add-on</li><li>• Takes personal responsibility rather than deferring to administrators</li><li>• Articulates appropriate boundaries while maintaining connection</li><li>• Avoids framing engagement as optional or burdensome</li></ul>
<p><b>Tell me about the families of the students in your current/last classroom. Are they engaged in their students' education? Why (or why not) do you think that is?</b></p> <p><b>Follow-up: What did you do to engage them? How successful were each of your efforts? If you could go back, would you do anything different?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speaks about families with respect and specificity</li><li>• Avoids generalizations or deficit language</li><li>• Recognizes structural barriers to engagement</li><li>• Describes intentional efforts to engage families and assess effectiveness</li></ul>

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Question	Look-For
<p><b>Tell me about a time when you contacted a parent to tell them something about their child or to ask for help? Please give me some examples.</b></p> <p><b>If a novice teacher: Imagine you are contacting a parent to share something about their child related or to ask for help? How would you share this information?</b></p> <p><b>Follow-up: How did the conversation go? Why do you think it went the way it did? If you could do it again, what, if anything, would you do differently?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides specific, authentic examples</li><li>• Initiates contact before problems escalate</li><li>• Uses families' knowledge of their child as a resource</li><li>• Demonstrates comfort and confidence reaching out</li><li>• Reflects honestly on successes and challenges</li><li>• Takes ownership rather than blaming families</li><li>• Shows willingness to adjust approach or communication</li><li>• Demonstrates growth mindset</li></ul>