

# Building Family-School Partnerships through Social Emotional Learning

ACTIVITY	AT HOME	AT SCHOOL	AFHK RESOURCE
<b>Create space during the day for active and unstructured play to help build social skills, foster creativity, reenergize and refocus.</b>	Play uses critical thinking and creativity to explore the imagination and turn the ordinary into the extraordinary. Turn household items or an arts and crafts project into homemade props before setting off on a make-believe adventure.	Incorporate active play into family events to help build social connections and promote physical activity. Use active storytelling games or invite families to share their favorite ways to play to kick off or break up meetings and family events.	<a href="#">Make Time to Play Today</a> <a href="#">Common Objects</a> <a href="#">Easy On-the-Go Play Activities</a>
<b>Practice daily mindfulness with exercises and activities that focus the attention on the present moment and help to explore both emotional and physical feelings.</b>	Explore how movement makes you feel both physically and mentally. Go on a family walk or express your feelings through music and movement to explore the mind-body connection while connecting as a family.	Start off parent-teacher meetings, staff meetings and school-held family events, with a gratitude practice or a quick mindful minute.  Create a newsletter or email with specific mindfulness activities that children can do with their families at home to explore the mind-body connection. Work to align these activities with those used in PE class and as classroom breaks to create an aligned at school and at home routine.	<a href="#">Mindfulness: Journaling, Breathing and More!</a> <a href="#">Creative Expression through Movement</a> <a href="#">Outdoor Exploration Activities</a>
<b>Create regular space to talk with children about how they are feeling, healthy ways to express those feelings and check-in about important relationships both in school and at home.</b>	Start a conversation with children about the management of feelings by role modeling how they can manage feelings of frustration by taking a deep breath. Take time at dinner or on a walk to check in with your child about relationships at school with peers and teachers and at home with family members. This creates space where children can open up if they are experiencing bullying or need help navigating a social situation.	Creatively integrate circle time and other community and relationship building practices into your parent-teacher conferences. Activities that foster collaboration and communication can be useful emotional management and conflict resolution tools which parents can also practice at home on their own and with their families.	<a href="#">Talking Through Feelings: Family Conversation Starters</a> <a href="#">Feeling through Colors</a>
<b>Set goals for health and wellness to help teach children how to confidently make responsible decisions for their health.</b>	Start off by creating a physical activity goal and a nutrition goal for the month as a family. Write your goal on a sticky note and tape it to the fridge. Hold all family members accountable and work together to walk, journal, cook, and live out other healthy habits that will help you achieve your goals.	Work collaboratively as a class to set fitness goals (e.g. participate in a certain number of classroom activity breaks per day/week). Invite children to set their own fitness goals and to take them home to share with parents and other family members.	<a href="#">SMART Goals for Health and Wellness</a>
<b>Create a calm down corner or other sensory space to build safe and supportive learning environments.</b>	Create a space in your home for children to explore and identify their emotions with a sensory bin, books, and other personalized items that support self-awareness and regulation.	Invite parents to share a list of specific items they suggest teachers have in their classrooms for children to self-regulate and balance their emotions. Creating familiarity between self-regulation tools at home and at school can help children maintain more control over their reactions and decisions.	<a href="#">Calm Down Corner</a> <a href="#">Sensory Play</a>
<b>Use mealtime as a time to connect, share stories and learn about others.</b>	Share a family breakfast or dinner on a weekend or prioritize a week night meal together on less busy days. Use this time to share stories from the week and learn more about each family member's lives.	Breakfast, lunch, and snack time all provide opportunities to connect and learn about other cultures and build social awareness. Host cooking classes and family night taste tests highlighting food from different cultures to give children an opportunity to reflect on their own culture while exploring others.	<a href="#">Eating Meals as a Family</a> <a href="#">Mindful Eating</a>

## Why Family-School Partnerships?

For kids to develop the lifelong habits necessary to become healthy, successful adults, schools and families must commit to working together to build a culture that supports the whole child. Effective family-school partnerships occur when families and schools actively partner to develop, implement, and evaluate effective and equitable practices to improve kids' educational and health outcomes.

# 5 TIPS for Developing Strong, Effective Family-School Partnerships

### FOR FAMILIES

- Get involved at your child's school, as you're able. Visit the school and learn about its culture and practices related to student health. Volunteer in the classroom and at school events. Attend Zoom meetings with teachers and school staff as possible.
- Introduce yourself to school leaders and ask questions. What are your school and district priorities and practices related to student health, and how would they like families to provide support?
- Talk to other parents. Gather perspectives and ideas from other families, especially those in your school community that may be dealing with different challenges than your own family, to understand and communicate your community's needs and concerns.
- As a parent, you have a powerful voice—use it as best you can. Speak up and speak with school staff, share your concerns and priorities, and let them know how to communicate with you and other families in a way that works best for you.
- Don't make assumptions—learn how things work. Take advantage of learning opportunities and ask questions, then communicate your concerns clearly in a constructive, non-judgmental way. Approach conversations in a spirit of collaboration vs. confrontation.

### FOR SCHOOLS

- Consider the demographics of your community. Learn about their values and the specific challenges they may face. Provide quality interpretation with meetings conducted primarily in the language spoken by the majority of participants.
- Create a warm and welcoming environment that shows families that their input is desired, respected, and valued. Ask families about their lives and their concerns and validate the challenges families have and their expertise. Don't get defensive—share the challenges you have so that families can help come up with solutions.
- Offer multiple two-way communication channels so families can ask questions and share opinions (e.g., texts, emails, phone calls, video-conferences, in-person meetings).
- Consider your own mindset. Get rid of pre-conceived notions about how parents think, the expertise they have, and how they want to be involved.
- Communicate the school/district vision and priorities clearly and transparently and provide families with clear information about how school and district departments function, set policy, and make decisions. Share school and district policies, goals and plans related to student health.

### FOR FAMILIES-SCHOOLS TOGETHER

- Find a way to meet that is accessible and agreed upon by staff and families and consider providing childcare for the meetings. If childcare cannot be provided, are there other ways this barrier can be addressed (e.g., children attend meetings with their parents, schedule meetings at different times, provide stipends for babysitters, etc.)?
- Recruit 1–2 committed parents to co-lead the partnership. They should care deeply about the work and have connections and credibility in the community.
- Recruit school or district staff with a strong belief in the partnership's purpose and value and a willingness to commit to the group and take actions to address family concerns.
- Work with established school parent groups (e.g., PTO, PTA, Parent Advisory Council, Parent Action Committee) to get their perspective and buy-in for the collaboration and to recruit more families to participate.
- Bring a solution-focused mindset to the work and find common values. Every person brings a different set of values to the table. Identify the core values you share and bring them to the forefront of how you collaborate as a committee.



## Additional Resources

### Building Family-School Partnerships

[Global Families Research Project: Family Engagement Playbook](#)

[Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#)

[Colorado Department of Education Family-School-Community Partnership Framework](#)

[National PTA – Standards for Successful Family-School Partnerships](#)

[CDC – Parents for Healthy Schools](#)

### Social Emotional Learning

**CASEL Resource Library:** [For School Staff](#) | [For Families](#)

**Edutopia Social Emotional Learning Library:** [For School Staff](#) | [For Families](#)

[Playworks Game Library](#)



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