# NJTSS Parent and Family Engagement Assessment Tool

Family engagement in student learning and achievement is a central element that enriches and improves a student’s ability to apply the knowledge and skills gained in the classroom across all facets of their personal, academic, and social life. The New Jersey Department of Education recognizes the significant role of family engagement; it is one of three essential components of its district support and intervention framework – New Jersey Tiered System of Support (NJTSS). NJTSS provides a foundation for strong district and school leadership, a positive school culture and climate, and family and community engagement to give schools a structure to meet the academic, behavioral, health, and social/emotional needs of all students.

Specifically, the **NJTSS Parent and Family Engagement Assessment Tool** is available to New Jersey schools to strengthen family engagement practices. The tool offers an opportunity to assess a school’s practices across five domains and initiates a roadmap to build and strengthen educators’ and families’ dual-capacity to create the types of learning partnerships that will provide life-long benefits to all students.

The following steps outline how to use the tool.

## Step 1: Stakeholder Team

Create a team that is representative of the school community and includes members that bring a valuable perspective to the family engagement assessment process.

Suggestions for team members include:

* Teachers (e.g. various grade levels and content areas, including teachers of English language learners and teachers of students with special needs);
* School and district administrators, including Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads;
* Non-teaching staff such as counselors, nurses and front office staff;
* Parent and family representatives; and
* Other district policy makers, as appropriate, including board members, after-school programs, etc.

Note: To facilitate team meetings, members may collaborate through online forums and other methods that enable a high participation rate. To ensure authenticity, it is important to create safe spaces that are linguistically and culturally appropriate and include ways to provide anonymous feedback.

## Step 2: Using the Tool

The tool is divided into 5 domains: 1) School climate; 2) Parent/family engagement in student learning; 3) Communication with parents/families; 4) Parent/family engagement at school; and 5) Parent/family engagement in decision-making. Schools completing the Annual school Plan (ASP) are also encouraged to use this tool as a resource when completing the Needs Assessment Rubric. Each domain has multiple indicators.

All team members should:

* Answer all indicators in each of the domains;
* Indicate whether the indicator is present (Y) or absent (N) from the school’s current policies, programs, and/or practice; and
* Mark whether the indicator should be a priority or not (Y/N).

Note: Schools can build organizational capacity to effectively and authentically engage families in the support of their children’s learning and development by building a culture of respect and inclusion, supporting and coaching families on their competence and confidence in their role as an education partners through two-way communication and recognition of family assets, engaging families in decision making processes such as program design and other leadership roles, and addressing the whole student through connections to the community and other supplemental services.

## Step 3: Assess Priorities and Create an Action Plan

Once the assessment tool is complete, as a team, look closely at which questions are denoted as ‘Y’ on the ‘Priority’ column. Next, review school’s current policies, programs, and practices related to the priority indicators. Then, develop practical and relevant recommendations based on the team’s review to address each indicator marked as a priority. Finally, develop an action plan which includes detailed tasks, timelines, and persons responsible for completion of the tasks. The action plan should focus on addressing two to three priority indicators at a time.

Note: The team should consider a presentation of the tool findings to district leadership, board members, and parent/family to gain support for implementation.