



Family Engagement

21st CCLC Family Engagement Services during the Pandemic

All 21st CCLC programs are required to offer ongoing meaningful Family Engagement activities to support student success. This document has been created to provide support to program leaders during the pandemic. We understand that sites may want some ideas to help them build solid Family Engagement into their program offerings.

Surveys administered during the pandemic give a look into how parents, guardians and other adult family members are feeling during the pandemic. The survey responses shown below may give you information to consider when planning for your program. It is important to keep the momentum going of families feeling connected to their child's education.

- 81% worry kids miss social interactions (National Parents Union)
- 9 in 10 worry children are falling behind academically (The Education Trust)
- 72% say it's somewhat or very likely they'll find more time to talk to their children about assignments (Learning Heroes)
- 67% feel more connected with their child's day-to-day education (Learning Heroes)

Read on for some great Virtual/Remote Family Engagement ideas!

21st CCLC Family Engagement Framework



The Arizona Family Engagement Framework is an excellent reference to Arizona's model and program practices. Click below to see the 21st CCLC Family Engagement Framework.

<https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/2021/07/21st%20CCLC%20Framework%20-%20Family%20Engagement%2006.09.21.pdf>



Family Engagement Opportunities

21st CCLC programs want practical ideas that could be modified and offered any time, and this is especially true during a pandemic-impacted and a virtual world. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) 21st CCLC team strongly recommends that your site partners with outside organizations that already offer Family Engagement and Parenting services. Programs may contract with organizations to plan and offer opportunities to your communities. There are many experts out there with great programs. Tapping into them is a great way to offer services.

Regardless of the activities you choose to support your site objectives, all activities should include a way to take attendance. Attendance may be a response ticket returned to school, a survey completed online, attendance on a Zoom call, or any other idea you have to document participation.

Here is a list of great ideas for Family Engagement activities. Many are Social Emotional Learning (SEL) activities as this type of support is in high need during the pandemic.

- ✓ Organize **neighborhood activities** like chalk-the-walk or bear hunt
- ✓ Share **student art** or program exhibits in a virtual art gallery
- ✓ **CHECK IN** with families you haven't heard from • CONSIDER a handwritten note or phone call • ASK what they need • CONNECT them to community resources • OFFER webinars, video calls, conference calls & town halls to discuss distance learning, mental health, budgeting, COVID-19 updates – See the **Flamboyant Education** template on chart in the **Additional Resources** section.
- ✓ Offer **virtual story times** using books
- ✓ Provide **supplies and manipulatives** for learning at home
- ✓ Offer **yoga or mindfulness workshops** for mental wellness
- ✓ Plan a **virtual social** (Planned by students! For SEL.)
- ✓ Host **virtual office hours** either by phone or online so that students and families can reach out with questions, comments or concerns.
- ✓ **“Super-Dad, Super-Mom” Strategy** - Another family engagement idea is to provide workshops that support parents, sharing what's working for families during COVID-19. Empower them.
- ✓ **“Game Show” Strategy** Game shows are fun! It doesn't matter the game show, but I challenge you to pick a game show that you love and adapt it to a virtual environment for your community. Own it. Ask questions that are specific to your community, teachers, students, and families. Have fun. If you put tremendous creative energy into this, it will pay off.



- ✓ **“Zen Den” Strategy** - Humans are stressed to the max during the pandemic. Start with a minute of mindfulness. This is science-based approach to increased productivity, better work-life balance, and a reduction in stress. Many communities probably have a mindfulness teacher or yoga instructor who would be glad to lead your parents in a family engagement activity centered on wellness. If those experts don't exist, turn to YouTube and share your screen.
- ✓ **“Pen Pal” Strategy** - In a COVID-19 reality many of us are experiencing withdrawal from basic human connectedness. I believe the “Pen Pal” strategy would be a fun family engagement activity to offer. Here's how to do it — gather your parents online. Tell them to bring five index cards (or pieces of paper) and something to write with. Next instruct them to identify five people they want to reconnect with from their personal or professional lives or people they want to express gratitude to. After explaining the point of the “Pen Pal” strategy, set the timer for 20 minutes. Tell parents they can leave their cameras on or turn them off and that you'll play some music during the next 20 minutes while they write their pen pals. After the 20 minutes, put parents in [breakout rooms](#) and share who they were writing to and why. I guarantee that families will appreciate this activity and the positivity that you generate will be long lasting.
- ✓ **“DIY” Strategy** – Present DIY projects that families do together. It may be as simple as creating a homework area. This would be an experience of having a dream, making a plan, and competing it. It can be very simple ideas like creating a family game, redesigning a homework area, quality time ideas, etc.
- ✓ **“Media Company” Strategy** - The “Media Company” strategy challenges schools to produce media content that will engage their families.

Start interviewing your staff and students to capture the best stories happening in your community. This could be produced through a blog, vlog, or podcast.

What if you started a *Humans of AZ* “School Site” style Instagram account? Snap a simple pic and write a wonderful story of the staff, student, or family portrayed.

Note: this doesn't have to mean more work for you. Put this out to the staff, the community, and of course the students and let them take the lead.

As far as a family engagement activity, what would your families create if they had to tell *their* story answering a specific prompt. Prompts could be:

- The hardest part of the pandemic.
- What we learned about our family in the past 6 months.
- We are thankful for ...
- Here is something we wish you knew about our family ...
- Our family switched chores for a week, here's what happened ...



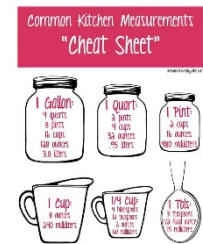
- ✓ **“Positivity” Strategy** - This strategy is about gratitude. Simply note three things you are thankful for each morning. The results will be profound on family attitudes. Make a “Gratitude Wall” and have families share. The “Positivity” strategy challenges your school




to engage your parents by collaboratively working on a gratitude list. In a virtual setting, you can choose your digital tool where you can visit and purpose what the community shares and present that back during different school events to engage your families.

The “Positivity” strategy builds on the “Media Company” strategy. If you commit to finding the best stories embedded in your community and tell them consistently, you will experience an outcome you’ll be proud of. Resist the urge to package the gratitude in a newsletter or something else. Send it out on it’s own. Gratitude is *the message*.

- ✓ **“Game Night” Strategy** - The “Game Night” strategy is just like the “Game Show” strategy except you adapt board games to an online environment. Maybe there is a trophy that travels around the community?
- ✓ **Family Health Night** – Cooking kits sent home with instructional activities to complete.
- ✓ **At Home Science Kits or other Academic or SEL Activities** – Create a monthly Bingo card challenge of academic or fitness activities. Returned Bingo cards are your attendance.
- ✓ **The “Good News” Strategy** - In a pre-pandemic school a “good news call of the day” was an increasingly popular strategy innovative principals were using around the world. Everyone knows that often when your principal is calling home it’s because your child has gotten into trouble — this is not good news! So principals around the world flipped the script and committed to finding the good in their students. Staff would nominate students for positive contributions to the school community and the principal would bring that student to the office and call home to tell their parents how wonderful their child was. Some schools would even flip this idea and turned it into a family engagement activity. Here is how to do the “Good News” Strategy. Bring your parents together and instead of telling them how amazing their children are at school, ask them to contribute how their children have surprised them during the pandemic. What have they learned or what have they done that parents didn’t realize their kids could do? You can take it a step further and ask parents to also share how the staff have been helpful during this time and build on the “Positivity” strategy.
- ✓ Give Families the **Red-Carpet Treatment!** Get a team of families together to do a Welcoming Environment walk thru of the school, website, etc. All families should feel like they are offered the Red Carpet. What better group to do the assessment! Identify ways the school can make a more welcoming environment. Have that team do other type of assessment “Walk Thrus” to bring in their lens, empower them, and give them a voice.
- ✓ Activity - **Shine-A-Light Night** - Shine a light on all of the opportunities for students and families to get involved. Examples include sport team demos, cheer groups, band, chorus, clubs, robotics, dance, drama, after school programs, and community partnership services and resources



- ✓ **Questions Mania** – Support families with giving them guiding questions to become active listeners with their children. Some question prompt charts are shown below.
- ✓ **Family Fitness Night** - Join with families to identify health promotion projects in the community that could involve parents. For example, invite family members to participate in [physical activities](#) at school or in the community, such as runs or walkathons.
- ✓ Ask Families to Take the **Volunteer Pledge** (5 hours a month or semester at school or at home)! 
- ✓ **Kick off National Parental Involvement Day & Public-School Volunteer Week** with a [special welcome](#) for new students and families in the community. Host discussions about how parents can support [healthy behaviors](#) at home. Such discussions might be held at [open houses](#) and [back-to-school nights](#), at parent meetings, and during [parent-teacher conferences](#).
- ✓ **TikTok Competition** - Join in on the TikTok fun by creating content for an existing TikTok challenge or creating your own challenge and trying to get students at your school to join your challenge. Share on your campus community platform and create a hashtag for them to follow on TikTok.
- ✓ **Family Video “Ted Talk”** - Use this time to share your talents or share your knowledge! Invite group members to record and upload their own instructional videos to share something they care about with the community. Make a quick tutorial of your best recipe, workout session or guitar lesson and share it with your pals on the group feed. Need more inspiration? Teach self-defense strategies, make a time-lapse video creating a piece of artwork, perform your senior piano recital or put together a 3-minute PowerPoint presentation on your favorite topic (black holes, anyone?) Create a library of enriching videos for members to add to and access at any time!
- ✓ **Livestream a Virtual Speaker Event** - Gather members in your community together at the same time by hosting a live session, presentation or webinar, a virtual speaker event, or set up a video conference – Parenting topic and support groups are helpful.
- ✓ **Virtual Field Trip** - Organize a virtual field trip based on your group’s interests: Art, science, history, archeology and more! Many of the world’s most famous museums are offering virtual museum tours to share their incredible collections while promoting social distancing. As a group leader, you can simply pick a deadline, create a virtual field trip and encourage members to attend the tour either at the same time or explore at their own convenience. Depending on museum regulations, you might share and discuss photos, insights and comments on your group feed, or alternatively set up a follow up webinar to host a discussion about the tour.
- ✓ **Virtual Home Visit to check in with families.** Ideally, this would happen by video – seeing a familiar face can provide a source of comfort. If families don’t have the internet bandwidth for a video call, a phone call can work as well. The goal of this conversation is to build and strengthen relationships, so save the academics for a more formal conference. Use this



time to assess family needs on a social-emotional level and check in on their physical needs, such as food, utilities, or other urgent challenges that might be met with support from your school district.

- ✓ **Table Talk** – See conversation starters below. Google more templates, there are a ton out there.

Rules:

- Everyone has a chance to answer.
- No talking when someone else is answering.
- There are no wrong answers.
- Have fun!

Additional Resources

Source	Overview and Activities	Resource
New York University Steinhardt Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools	Tools for Educators to Listen to and Learn from Families During the COVID-19 School Closures	Tools for Educators
Wellness Check-in Guidance from the Flamboyan Foundation	This guidance provides school staff with a framework to connect with families during this difficult time and to let families know that you are thinking of them, concerned about them, and are available as a resource.	Keeping Relationships Strong as Students Stay Home
Flamboyan Education	Resource for calling families. Includes a check for family wellness.	Phone Call- Family Wellness Check Questions
Culturally Responsive Education (CRE) Hub	Not sure how to initiate a conversation with families? This resource includes an open-ended script for calling families and conducting listening sessions.	Script for Calling Each Family- Brief Listening Session
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)	CASEL CARES: Social Emotional Resources During COVID-19- Support for children, families, and educators	CASEL CARES: Social Emotional Supports



50 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR KIDS AFTER SCHOOL INSTEAD OF “HOW WAS YOUR DAY?”

- What made you smile today?
- Can you tell me an example of kindness you saw/showed?
- What did you do that was creative?
- Who did you sit with at lunch?
- Was anyone in your class gone today?
- Tell me something you know today that you didn't know yesterday.
- Did you like your lunch?
- What was the hardest rule to follow today?
- If you could change one thing about your day, what would it be?
- What made your teacher smile?
What made her frown?
- If you could switch seats with anyone in class, who would it be? And why?
- What kind of person were you today?



conversation starters

WITH YOUR KIDS

1. What was your favorite part of today?
2. What was your least favorite part of today?
3. What is one of your favorite all time memories?
4. If you had \$20 to do anything you wanted with, what would you do with it?
5. What do you want to be when you grow up?
6. Describe your dream vacation.
7. What qualities do you think make a good friend?
8. Describe yourself with one word.
9. If you could be invisible for one day, what would you do?
10. What is your favorite book?
11. What is your favorite meal?
12. What is your favorite movie?
13. If you could make your own movie what would you call it?
14. If you had to give all your toys away, who would you give them to?
15. If you could only keep on toy, which one would it be?
16. What is your favorite word? Why?
17. What is the funniest joke you know?
18. If you could change one thing in the world, what would you change?
19. Who do you want to be most like when you grow up?
20. If you could build anything in our backyard, what would you build?

Your turn! What questions do you want to ask mommy/daddy?

The Realistic Mama



The Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Title IV-B program is funded by a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education and administered by the Arizona Department of Education. For more information visit: <http://www.azed.gov/21stcclc/>



WOULD YOU RATHER QUESTIONS FOR KIDS

www.mantelligence.com/would-you-rather-questions-for-kids

1. Would you rather have a dinosaur or unicorn pet?
2. Would you rather ride in a car with super speed or go bungee jumping on the highest peak?
3. Would you rather always need to shout whenever you speak or always have to whisper?
4. Would you rather in snow every single day or rain every single day?
5. Would you rather fly or breathe underwater?
6. Would you rather be a famous actor or a famous singer?
7. Would you rather have 10 siblings or only one sibling?
8. Would you rather forever be the youngest sibling or forever be the oldest sibling?
9. Would you rather take care of other people's kids or other people's dogs?
10. Would you rather do magic or read other people's minds?
11. Would you rather drink sour milk or eat your cat's food?
12. Would you rather have an extra toe or a unicorn horn?
13. Would you rather have the longest hair or be bald for the rest of your life?
14. Would you rather only be able to drink apple juice or milk for every meal of the day?
15. Would you rather have purple hair or green hair.?
16. Would you rather have a tail or a horn?
17. Would you rather your toes be your fingers or your fingers be your toes?
18. Would you rather be a student or do household chores for the rest of your young days?
19. Would you rather live in a pineapple with Spongebob or under the rock with Patrick?
20. Chocolate bar or ice cream?
21. Favorite TV show or Favorite video game?
22. Be with your mom or with you dad on a trip?
23. Birthday party or granted birthday wish?
24. Snow skiing or amusement park?
25. Would you rather be the smartest person or the richest one?

21st CCLC Resources & Information

Also see Arizona's 21st CCLC Family Engagement webpage for more helpful resources at <https://www.azed.gov/21stcclc/family-engagement>

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