

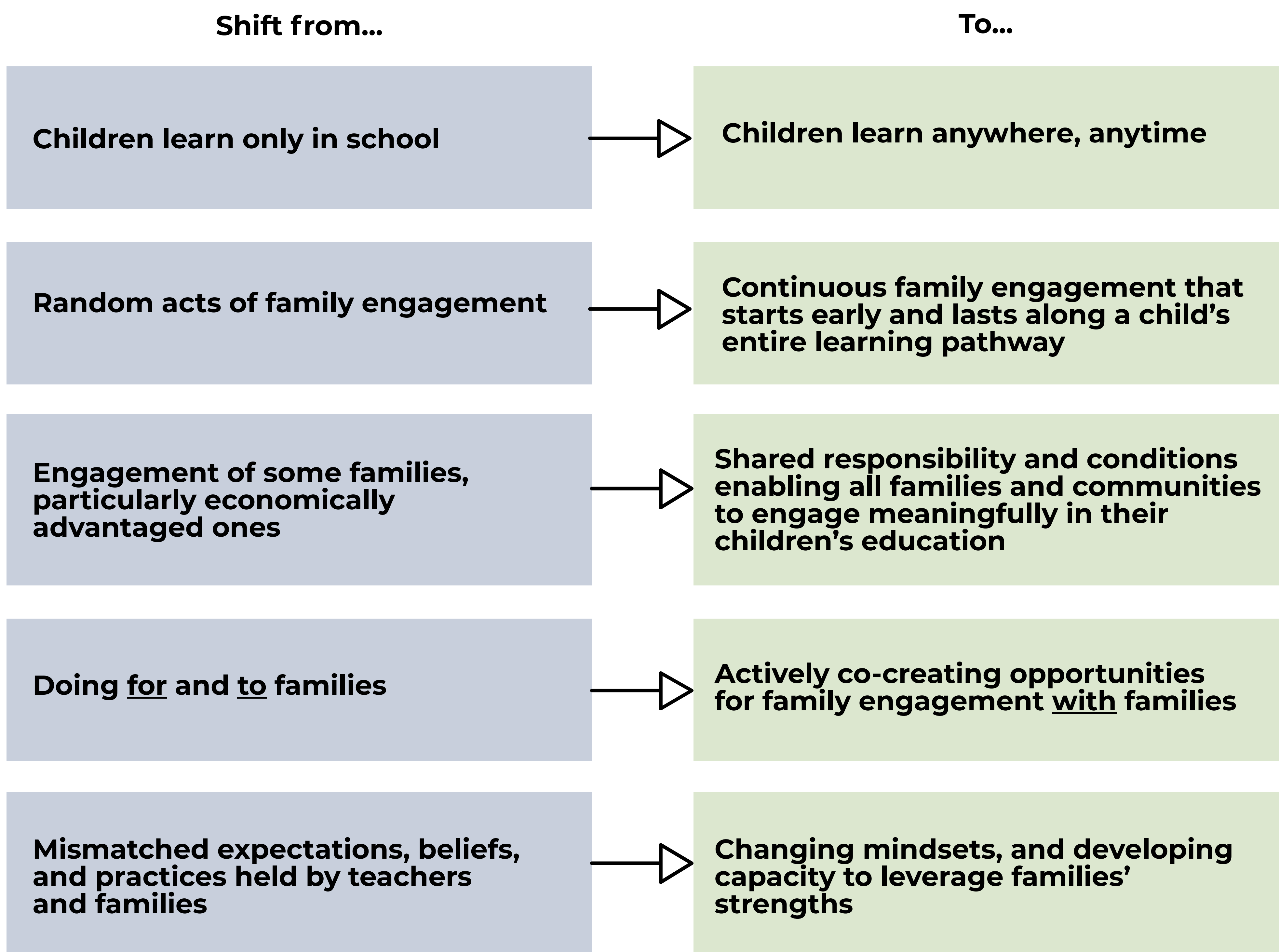
Joining Together to Create a Bold Vision for Next-Generation Family Engagement: Engaging Families to Transform Education

Executive Summary
by: Global Family Research Project

More than 50 years of research tells us that family engagement is one of the most powerful predictors of children's development, educational attainment, and success in school and life. If we hope to move the needle on greater educational equity and social justice, we must empower families to support their children's learning and ensure that all families and communities have what it takes to build equitable learning pathways for children.

Equitable learning pathways are made possible when families are engaged.

The challenge we put forth in this paper is to shift mindsets and encourage continuing innovation in family engagement by enabling families to be involved in their children's development and learning pathways from birth on. Strong research support and innovative practices show that family engagement is a key component of creating comprehensive learning pathways for children. In order for children to succeed, we must:



In short, the answer is hiding in plain sight:

"Families are key to ensuring equitable learning pathways for children that include high-quality in-school and out-of-school learning opportunities."

It is up to educators and communities to transform our collective mindset and co-create family engagement opportunities with families.

Maximizing Impact: High-Leverage Actions

To transform the learning experience and address equity, families and schools should focus on five high-leverage areas and the synergy among them: reducing chronic absenteeism; data sharing about student and climate indicators; the academic and social development of youth in and out of school; use of digital media; and the critical transition periods in a young person's learning pathway.

When families and schools are engaged together around these areas, they are more effective at building learning pathways and promoting children's success.

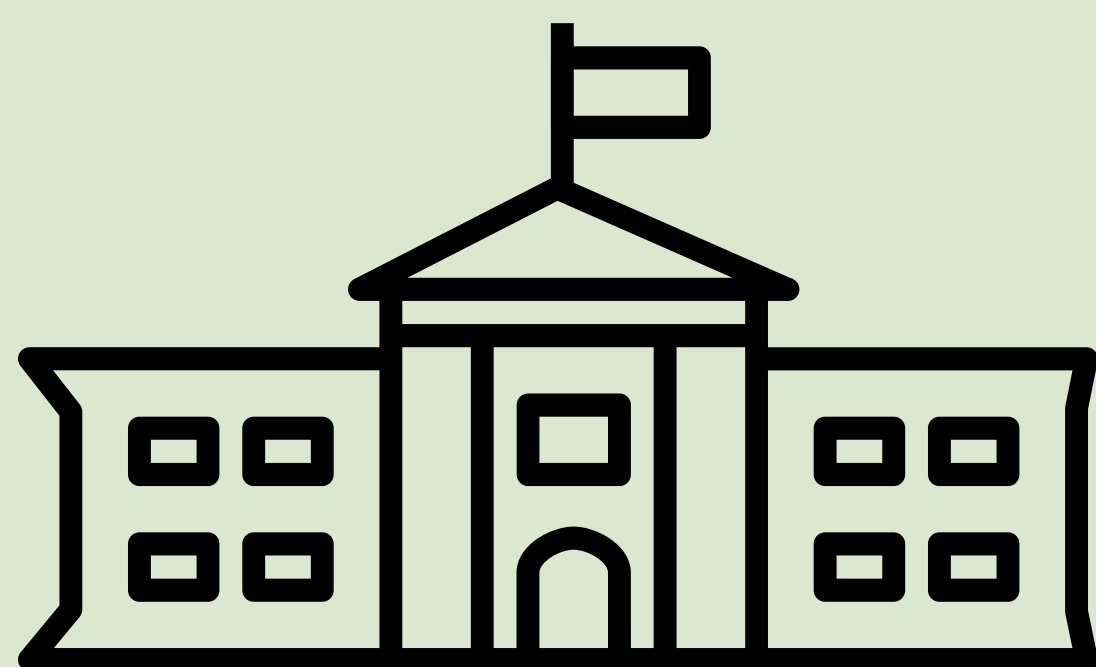
- **Attendance.** Families play a crucial role in combating absenteeism, first by making clear that they expect their children to attend school, and then by monitoring to make sure this expectation is met.
- **Data Sharing.** Data are the bedrock on which families can build their children's learning pathways, but data are useful only if that information is accessible, understandable, and actionable.
- **Academic and Social Development.** With the growing recognition that learning takes place anywhere at any time—not just in schools—family engagement strategies that focus on key content areas such as literacy and STEM enable families to play crucial, and multiple, roles in their children's education.
- **Digital Media.** Digital media and technology offer unprecedented opportunities for children and families to learn literally anywhere, anytime—on their tablets, smartphones, computers, and other tools—as well as for families and children to stay connected.
- **Transitions.** Strategies focused on reaching underserved students and families can play an important role in re-engaging families at crucial moments in their children's education, such as entry into kindergarten, middle school, and high school.

We must create mutual responsibility for supporting students' academic success.

Not only do educators and policymakers need to understand the context in which families live, they also need to employ empathy based on the knowledge of what families desire and value. To do this, we must change the narrative to interrupt negative perceptions of low-income parents and parents of color, build public understanding of parents' essential role in achieving positive outcomes for their children, develop the professional capacity for family engagement, and help teachers overcome their own implicit biases.

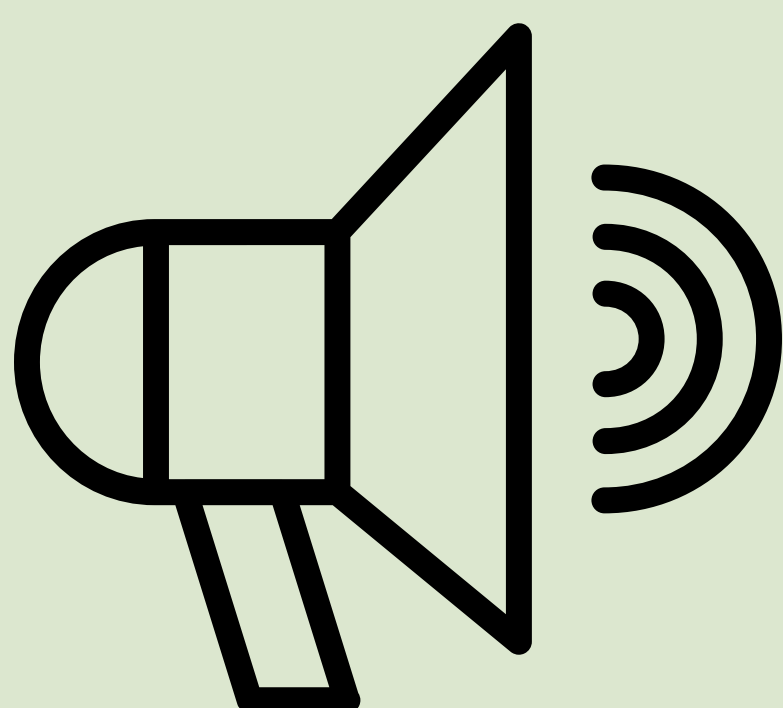
What Family Engagement Looks Like

Family engagement can take a variety of forms. Here are a couple of the many illustrations and examples of what effective co-creation of meaningful family engagement opportunities looks like in action.



Parents Leading the Charge in Turning Around a School

With the support of engaged parent advocates, Zavala Elementary School in Texas decreased teacher turnover, became the top-ranked school in the district for student attendance, and increased reading scores. Initiated by a local foundation, the turnaround effort involved learning about parents' concerns through conversations with families; building trust and strong relationships between parents and teachers, and including families in schoolwide policy changes; and increasing out-of-school supports for families.



Embracing the Voice of Families

During a design thinking exercise in San Diego, families shared their stories with educators in their native languages, and school personnel listened to translations of their discussions—a reversal of the more common practice whereby families have to listen while school personnel speak to them via translators. Families felt empowered, and educators left with a better understanding of students and their families.

To learn more about family engagement and creating equitable learning pathways, please download the full report, "Joining Together to Create a Bold Vision for Next-Generation Family Engagement: Engaging Families to Transform," [here](#).

We look forward to being part of a continuing conversation on family and community engagement. We invite you to share this important paper with your networks, and provide your feedback and ideas to us at info@globalfrp.org and to Carnegie Corporation of New York at education@carnegie.org.

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We also encourage you to look at a related [article that appears in The 74](#) and [companion essays](#) that Carnegie Corporation of New York has commissioned on ideas presented in the paper.