



# FAMILY and CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP



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## MISSION STATEMENT

The Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Washington, rooted in Gospel values and the teaching mission of the Catholic Church, are learning communities of faith and service dedicated to educational equity and excellence for all students.



# Family and Catholic School Partnership

**The Archdiocese of Washington Catholic Schools Office (CSO) is proud to present the Family and Catholic School Partnership (FCSP) framework to support our schools in their efforts to engage families in the education of their child.**

The Family and Catholic School Partnership is a framework designed to support our schools with formalizing an annual plan to engage families in the education of their child. We recognize that to be successful, our schools will need to think of family engagement beyond routine school events like parent/teacher conferences to a more thoughtful partnership model that envisions the relationship between families and schools as a tool to facilitate holistic faith formation, student learning and development.

The framework provides information about how to develop family engagement programs in a Catholic school and how family engagement benefits the development of children and the school. It also provides ideas and specific strategies, in alignment with the Four Pillars of Catholic education, that our schools can implement to strengthen their existing family engagement efforts.

**Catholic Identity**  
**Academic Excellence**  
**Accessibility**  
**Governance**

The FCSP framework is the first of many resources that will be provided to be utilized by schools to create a comprehensive family engagement strategy each year.

**We hope you reference this framework often and that it serves you well in your efforts to build stronger relationships and partnerships with families.**

*Therefore, you shall love the LORD,  
your God, with your whole heart,  
and with your whole being,  
and with your whole strength.*

*Take to heart these words  
which I command you today.*

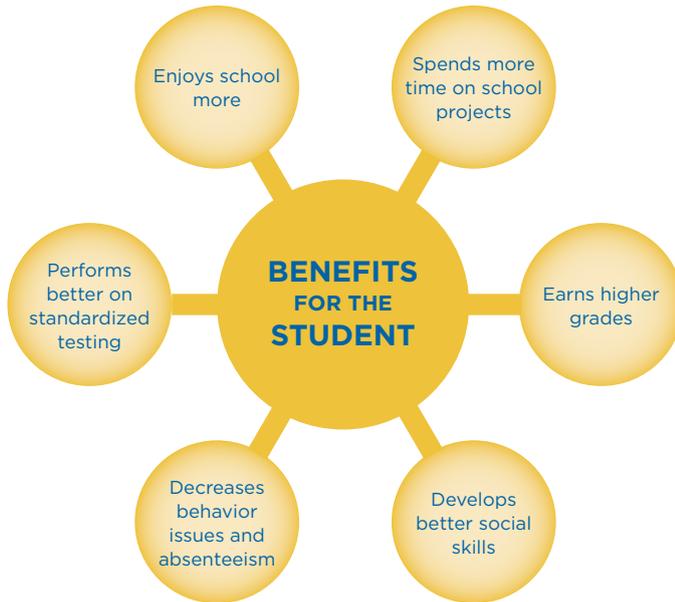
*Keep repeating them to your children.*

*Recite them when you are at home  
and when you are away,  
when you lie down and when you get up.*

DEUTERONOMY 6:5-7

## BENEFITS FOR THE STUDENT

Parents have been appointed by God Himself as the first and principal educators of their children. Effective Catholic schools prioritize parent engagement and have high levels of parental and community involvement. Research proves that parent engagement can have a major impact on student learning, regardless of the social, economic or cultural background of the family.



## WHY ARE FAMILY-SCHOOL P

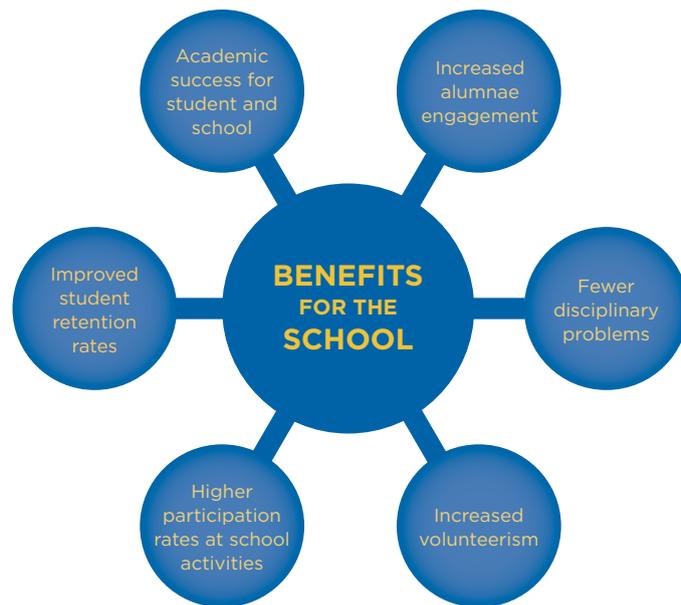


# PARTNERSHIPS IMPORTANT?



## BENEFITS FOR THE SCHOOL

Schools that engage parents in their children's learning are tapping in to a rich source of information and expertise that can help build communities. Parents that understand Catholic schools, and the opportunities and challenges that our schools face, are a valuable source of support.



## FCSP Partnership Dimensions

*Partnership between a Catholic school and the families of students must continue to be strengthened: not simply to be able to deal with academic problems that may arise, but rather so that the educational goals of the school can be achieved. It is not a question of convenience, but a partnership based on faith.*

THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF EDUCATION IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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### Catholic Identity

#### **STRATEGIES to engage parents in their child's faith formation and the Catholic identity of the school.**

- Bring families together for beginning of the school year Mass on the Sunday before school begins or within first two weeks of year, and ask pastor to incorporate a Blessing of the Backpacks.
- Establish School Mass Sunday (ideally monthly) where all students and their families come to a particular Sunday Mass at parish (and rotate parishes for regional schools) to strengthen family bonds with parish.
- Provide families with the religion standards for their child's grade level as well as printed copies of the prayers children should learn at that grade level.
- Incorporate faith formation activities as part of each meeting and schedule faith retreats on a regular basis.
- Consider quarterly or grade level events with parents like Pastries with Parents to coincide with liturgical events (i.e.: School Feast Day, Mardi Gras, May Crowning).
- Offer a family service project where everyone can participate in some way- neighborhood cleanup, sandwich making for shelters, etc. – followed by family fellowship at/in the school.



# PARTNERSHIPS IMPORTANT?



- Provide family education nights with guest speaker centered around sensitive topics that offers tips to empower parents to educate their children (i.e.: how to speak to children about chastity, pornography, peer pressure, suicide prevention, cell phone and internet safety, etc.)
- Create a prayer bulletin board near the front of the school for the month of November and encourage families to send in pictures of family members who have died to put on the board so everyone can remember them in prayer.
- Host Daddy/Daughter and Mother/Son activities to grow those relationships and incorporate elements of faith.
- Ask families if they would be willing to share cultural celebrations related to the liturgical year. Some examples would be posadas and Christmas Cloth around Christmas, alfombras during Holy Week, dia de los muertos at All Souls Day.

## Academic Excellence

### **STRATEGIES to engage parents in learning to support and improve academic outcomes for their child.**

- Connect and engage with parents as soon as possible at the beginning of the school year to develop positive rapport.
- Involve families in setting academic and personal goals and progress monitoring for their child each year.
- Ensure parents feel comfortable in communicating and emphasize the importance of keeping the lines of communication open.
- Provide parents with guidance and support about Catholic high school admissions (i.e.: 7th and 8th grade parent information night, 1:1 meeting with 8th grade parents, etc.).
- Provide information for families on required skills in all subjects at each grade.

- Discuss homework policies and how to monitor schoolwork at home.
- Provide regular communication about how the student is doing both academically and behaviorally.
- Enhance communication with parents through effective forms of school-to-home and home-to school communication about school programs and children's progress.
- Provide homework designed to guide parental support and provide tips for families on how they can monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.
- Ensure parental involvement in student's learning is a recognized topic of staff meetings, professional development and in the induction of new staff.
- Conduct year-end activities for parents and students to commemorate transition to the next grade level (i.e.: greeting from new teacher, classroom visit, information about curriculum, etc.)

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## Accessibility

### **STRATEGIES to engage parents in school activities, events and volunteering to help ensure operational vitality**

- Develop a protocol for recruitment, training, goal setting and recognition for parent volunteers.
- Ask parents how they would like to participate and respond in a timely manner to those indications.
- Be intentional about “asking” parents to attend events and volunteerism based on your knowledge of their interests - don't rely on emails or automated systems as a single form of outreach.
- Determine parent satisfaction with your current family engagement efforts.
- Provide numerous ways for parents to provide feedback about classroom and school level activities.





- Acknowledge, follow up and act on feedback received by parents.
- Establish a 24-hour follow-up policy for all school personnel.
- Identify numerous volunteer opportunities for families that allows for engagement that consider all of the tasks that must be accomplished to execute work in a school and identify ways that families can help.
- Establish a skills bank based on the skills, interests and availability of parent volunteers.

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## Governance

### **STRATEGIES that engage parents in school governance and consultative decision-making.**

- Develop School Advisory Board (SAB) and Home and School Association (HSA) boards that represent the diversity within your school, (i.e.: be mindful of grade level representation and parish representation, consider the non-Catholic population in your school, etc.).
- Establish clear guidelines, roles and expectations of being a member of the SAB or HSA, including the definition of an advisory board.
- Develop engaging meetings with well-planned agendas that are mindful of parents time (i.e.: meeting warm ups to encourage member discussion and collegiality, opportunities for parent learning and engagement, etc.)
- Facilitate group-generated norms for meetings to help create ownership and participation.
- Develop a procedure for consensus building over voting.
- Establish clear procedures for reflection and evaluation of meetings.
- Provide orientations and ongoing training and support for parent volunteers.

# Formation of a FCSP at your School

*§2 There must be the closest cooperation between parents and the teachers to whom they entrust their children to be educated. In fulfilling their task, teachers are to collaborate closely with the parents and willingly listen to them; associations and meetings of parents are to be set up and held in high esteem.*

CODE OF CANON LAW

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## Conditions for Successful Family Engagement

- Expectations for family and community engagement are clearly set and modeled by the school leader
- School faculty and staff understand the importance of family engagement and their integral role in successful partnership
- Families are regarded as partners with schools in the education of their children
- Family engagement efforts are linked to the broader Catholic identity and academic goals of the school
- A family engagement plan is in place with complementary evaluation protocols to assess its quality and effectiveness
- Adequate resources and supports are allocated for family and community engagement efforts
- School environment is welcoming and friendly to families



## Ten Elements of Best Practice

1. Identify and tap into the interests of parents.
2. Use personal contact to inform and encourage involvement.
3. Be a venue for, and agent of, parental self-growth.
4. Ask for, and value, the opinion of parents.
5. Emphasize the connection with the child's education.
6. Go out of your way to make parents feel welcome and valued.
7. Build bridges across cultural and language divides.
8. Be sensitive to parents' sensibilities.
9. Show leadership, be visible and available.
10. Acknowledge and celebrate parents' input.

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## Support Structure

- I. Action teams to plan, organize, implement and evaluate annual partnerships;
- II. School policies and procedures which explicitly state and clearly integrate the principles and practices of effective partnerships;
- III. Support networks, to enable school communities to share ideas, issues and best practice; and
- IV. Accountability to the community, to report on successes and drive improvement in partnerships.

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## FCSP Deliverables to Schools

The CSO will provide ongoing information, resources and professional development for schools to develop and sustain effective partnerships with families.

**Framework** – a foundational document that provides the FCSP framework

**Promotional Materials** – posters for use in parishes and schools to promote the benefits of Catholic education and the FCSP

**Parent Engagement Strategies** – recommendations and best practices examples to support schools with efforts to engage parents in their child's education and the school community

**Electronic Newsletter** (October, January, March and May) – to be disseminated by the ADW CSO and archdiocesan schools. The content will promote the FCSP framework, family and school partnership best practices, relevant articles, and resources for school personnel and parents.

**Social Media Content and Messaging** – messaging for use by schools to promote the benefits of Catholic education and the FCSP

**Professional Development** – information sessions, workshops and resources for school leaders and personnel to support parent engagement in a Catholic school.



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