



The legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. lives through the many people committed to reducing the opportunity gap in education by engaging families as partners and advocates in children's learning. Although family engagement is a key predictor of children's school success, many families - especially those impacted by racial and income inequities and immigrant status - often lack genuine opportunities for engagement.

To honor Dr. King's vision of freedom and justice, we offer six family engagement action steps and principles to promote educational equity. They are transformative, broad, and far-reaching.

#### Action Steps:

- Underscore how family engagement benefits society as well as children
- Stimulate a social movement that engages parents for high student achievement
- Provide family and institutional guidance for children's learning in a digital world
- Develop policies that connect equitable in-school and out-of-school learning opportunities
- Build inclusive evaluation approaches to reduce privilege and racism
- Support ongoing and sustained parent advocacy

We are proud to share the voices of parents, researchers, and practitioners who keep alive the dream that **all** children will benefit from opportunities to learn, anywhere and anytime.

#### Principles:

# 1

**Families are fundamental for the well-being of children, communities, and society at large.**

#### Parents as Agents of Change

*"We must elevate our view of family engagement from something that is essential to a quality education and student success to something that positions family empowerment and advocacy as a key contributor to the health and progress of our beloved country. Imagine, for a moment, what our children's future would be if we had a parent-friendly, strength- and evidence-based, sustainable system of family engagement that helped close the opportunity gap and ensure that all children have what they need to succeed." --- Sandra Gutierrez*

[Este artículo también está disponible en español como [Padres de Familia como Agentes de Cambio](#).]

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# 2

**All community members, especially parents, can direct their strengths to mobilize a social movement for excellence with equity.**

#### Getting Serious About Excellence With Equity

*"In order to achieve our intellectual potential as a nation, we need both formal and informal reforms that target teaching, youth peer cultures, out-of-school time supports, and other influences that shape what children know, can do, and come to value. We need a social movement for excellence with equity, in which parenting for high achievement is an important component." --- Ronald Ferguson*

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# 3

Families, schools, and communities share the responsibility to work together to raise children with the digital media skills necessary for school and workplace success.

Family Engagement as a Shared Responsibility in a Digital Learning Environment

*"The growing use of digital media for learning often generates discussion about what it means for all children to have full and equal access to and participation with digital media. Access includes not only the availability of hardware and broadband, but also parental and institutional guidance and scaffolding so that youth make good choices in the use of digital media and have opportunities to use digital tools in and for learning."*

--- Heather B. Weiss

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# 4

Comprehensive educational policies on family engagement are necessary for all children to achieve success.

Reframing Family Involvement in Education: Supporting Families to Support Educational Equity

*"To be successful in school and in life, children must have access to multiple supports, including enriching early childhood experiences, effective schools, out-of-school time programs, and nurturing families. Emerging research suggests that these supports can be more effective when they are intentionally connected to each other." --- Heather B. Weiss, Suzanne M. Bouffard, Beatrice L. Bridgall, and Edmund W. Gordon*

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# 5

It is necessary to make a shift in evaluation efforts from an emphasis on perspectives from privileged institutions and "experts" to a deeper acknowledgment and active incorporation of different worldviews, including those from cultural/ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged communities.

How Can Evaluation Efforts Address Racial Equality?

*"People's ideas about what outcomes matter in evaluation are part of their worldviews, which are shaped by White privilege and internalized superiority and racism, by training and life experiences, and by the credence they give to different ways of knowing. Evaluations only rarely attend to incorporating these different worldviews. As evaluators, we help maintain the status quo unless we take into account these different perspectives."*

*We have tried to offer specific ways to reduce the privilege and racism in evaluation and to address the kinds of issues that communities often face with evaluation." --- Sally Leiderman*

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# 6

Parents need support and empowering experiences in order to become advocates and agents of change.

Creating Parent Advocates to Work Toward Educational Change

*"Success is seeing a parent or community member come to an event not thinking they could engage and then becoming totally absorbed. Success is when a parent leaves the meeting asking, "What are we going to do next?" Our goal is not just to get parents to attend any one event, but to support ongoing, sustained parent and community engagement." --- Zakiyah Ansari*

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**About Us**

Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) is a leading national organization whose purpose is to shape 21st-century education by connecting the critical areas of student learning. Our focus is on anywhere, anytime learning approaches that extend from early childhood through college and connect families, schools, out-of-school time programs, and digital media.

