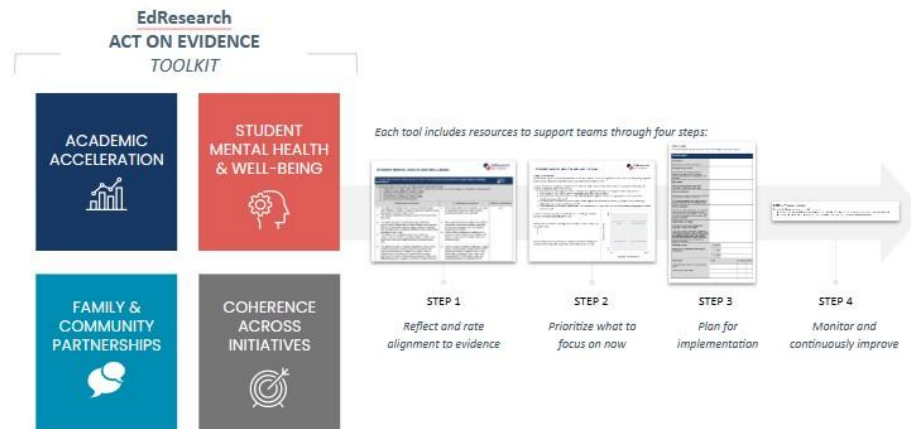# FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

This tool is part of the *EdResearch Act on Evidence Toolkit* which was created by EdResearch for Action[1] in partnership with DeliverEd[2] to support education leaders to assess the degree to which their existing programs are aligned with the relevant evidence-base and determine a pathway towards improving alignment and student success. While the toolkit is designed primarily for school and district leaders (e.g., Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Chief Academic Officers, and Principals), leaders at other levels of K-12 education (e.g., SEA leaders, policy-makers, advocacy groups, etc.) may find this tool helpful to understand the most critical, effective, evidence-based strategies to promote stronger family and community partnerships.

This tool takes approximately 2 hours to complete. Remember very few (if any!) programs will meet all of the expectations for "strong alignment" so don't be discouraged - strive to reflect as honestly as possible to best understand and plan for impactful next steps.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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STEP 1: Reflect and rate alignment to evidence

Use the rubric below to capture reflection ratings and rationales based on the team's assessment of your current alignment to evidence:

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Strategy (*click to be taken to rubric*)	Rating	Rationale
1. Encourage voice and feedback		
2. Family support and engagement		
3. Support for specific families and student groups		
4. Community partnerships		

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1. To what extent does district engagement **encourage voice and feedback** from the entire community - especially those most directly impacted by the initiative as well as those traditionally marginalized?[3]		Strategy: ▮▯▯▯
To arrive at a rating for this area, consider evidence from these sources: ● Stakeholder engagement plan ● Committee / engagement rosters, mapping or tracking ● Stakeholder perception (esp. families) on quality of engagement opportunities (disaggregated) ● Observation of family event		
(4) Strong alignment looks like…	*(1) Weak alignment looks like…*	*Rating (4-1) and rationale*
● The district proactively engages and solicits participation from a wide variety of stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, and families) during planning and implementation of key priorities; decisions are made in partnership with the people they affect. ● The district intentionally employs strategies to meet stakeholders where they are - going beyond invitation to engage in authentic ways that overcome past injustices and remove potential barriers (e.g., transit, translation). ● The district engages in stakeholder mapping and analysis to encourage more perspectives, voices, backgrounds and experiences - especially those traditionally marginalized - to collaborate on, inform, and have agency over district decisions. ● The district supports schools to build educators' ability to authentically engage with students, including how to recognize and respond to implicit bias, and ways to authentically leverage student voice.	● District engagement around development and implementation of initiatives is concentrated to the same group of engaged people or groups; there is little to no effort to expand engagement to different voices and perspectives or prioritize involvement of those most impacted by the initiative. District decisions are often made without including student and community input. ● The district does not monitor or review stakeholder engagement to identify opportunities for expanding engagement. ● The district does not proactively support schools and educators to identify and address potential biases in their engagement of students - especially those historically marginalized.	

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[3] BPS Racial Equity Planning tool

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2. To what extent does the district provide **family support and engagement** to enhance student learning?[4]	Strategy: ☐■☐☐

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3"><i>To arrive at a rating for this area, consider evidence from these sources:</i>
● Family perception data on support, comms, engagement, trust (disaggregated)
● Family engagement strategies and protocols
● Focus group with families
● Sample messages to families (in multiple languages)
● Family contact information complete in databases
● Survey data on technology access, disaggregated</td></tr>
<tr><td><i>(4) Strong alignment looks like…</i></td><td><i>(1) Weak alignment looks like…</i></td><td><i>Rating (4-1) and rationale</i></td></tr>
<tr><td>● The district supports schools to embrace and incorporate the diversity of languages, identities, cultures and family practices represented in their communities including through culturally relevant learning opportunities, culturally responsive pedagogies, and teaching about students' histories and cultures.
● The district ensures all schools consistently offer meaningful opportunities for family engagement and provide additional support structures as needed to build trust (e.g., home visits). Families are treated as valued partners, contributors, and leaders of district and school efforts in service of student outcomes.
● Schools systemwide provide clear guidance to families on how curriculum will help students stay on track, and ensure clear ongoing feedback on students' progress against standards. Parents are involved to support their students' good work habits and time management, but aren't expected to be responsible for teaching content.</td><td>● The district does not proactively embrace inclusive support for and engagement of families, defaulting to implicit endorsement of dominant languages, identities, cultures and family practices.
● The district does not consistently support nor ensure school leaders meaningfully engage families; there is low trust between families and schools.
● Adults throughout the district hold stereotypes and deficit perspectives about families' willingness and ability to help children succeed academically. When faced with the need to accelerate student learning, schools lower academic expectations or workload to alleviate parental anxiety, or enlist family members to provide supplemental instruction.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>● The district engages in regular, well-timed, high quality family communications with actionable support strategies, access</td><td>● Communication with families within and across buildings is unclear, ineffective,</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

[4] For more see EdResearch for <u>Recovery Engaging Parents and Families to Support the Recovery of Districts and Schools</u> brief

to student information, and opportunities to provide feedback. Quality of communications is prioritized over frequency. ● To improve two-way communication and engagement, the district continuously confirms families' contact information and preferred forms of communication as well as uses culturally relevant communications with students and families in multiple languages and formats.	infrequent, or one way without opportunities for feedback. District communications strategies prioritize frequency over quality. ● Communication is not provided in culturally relevant ways, multiple languages, or a variety of formats.
● The district ensures families have the technological connectivity to remain engaged with schools - particularly in times of pandemic or economic downturn - to allow families to stay abreast of students' progress, school events, and increase awareness of their rights and access to resources.	● The district requires online access to education resources or activities (e.g., during school closures and virtual instruction) without ensuring all families have the necessary technological connectivity to remain engaged.
● System-wide norming ensures staff are aligned on practices and expectations and building routines are predictable.	● School routines are lacking or unpredictable, resulting in anxiety and stress for families.

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3. To what extent has the district supported schools to target **specific families and student groups** that have historically been underinvested in and may require more support as a result of the pandemic?[5]		Strategy: ☐☐▊☐
To arrive at a rating for this area, consider evidence from these sources: ● Policies and practices for identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness ● Stakeholder perception data, disaggregated ● Attendance data, disaggregated ● Instructional resources for EL students ● Sample culturally-relevant curriculum and assignments ● PD plans around teaching ELs ● Achievement data for certain student groups (e.g., homeless, EL, etc.), disaggregated ● Focus groups with families from specific student groups		
(4) Strong alignment looks like…	*(1) Weak alignment looks like…*	*Rating (4-1) and rationale*
● The district and schools prioritize proactive identification of students experiencing homelessness - including through collaboration and data sharing with community providers, regular opportunities to update housing forms, and/or proactive outreach to families. When identified, the district and school staff broker access to resources and support for families experiencing homelessness including access to community mental health professionals, consistent mentorship, and providing supplemental academic aid. ● The district has fostered a climate where students and families can self-identify and receive needed homelessness supports by framing policy supports (e.g., those of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act) as rights for students, proactively building relationships with students and families (ideally through student-identified networks of trusted adults), and training instructional and non-instructional staff on trauma-informed practices, available SEL resources, and anti-racist, critical pedagogical	● The district does not meaningfully prioritize proactive identification or supports to students experiencing homelessness, relying on "visible" homelessness or faulty assumptions of homelessness as irrelevant to their population (e.g., only occurring in large cities). ● District practices and policies include deficit oriented and stigmatizing practices (e.g., separate bus routes, homework assignments asking students to draw their houses, marginalizing the role of race and its complex interactions with social class, and one-size fits all solutions for students experiencing homelessness) resulting in adverse consequences for students experiencing homelessness and their families.	

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[5] EdResearch for Recovery brief Identifying and Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness; EdResearch for Recovery brief Supports for Students in Immigrant Families; EdResearch for Recovery brief Supports for Students Who Are English Learners

practices.	
● Schools regularly examine attendance data for trends and possible explanations and purposefully reach out with targeted efforts in students' native language to follow up as needed.	● Attendance data is reviewed infrequently, and when issues arise they are handled without follow up and understanding of the students' circumstances.
● The district supports schools to foster strong ties with immigrant families and help immigrant parents become more effective advocates for their children either through direct supports (e.g., taking active roles in schools, workshops on topics chosen by parents, easily accessible information and guidance about immigrants' legal and educational rights and available services) or partnered supports with community-based organizations. ● The district takes seriously anti-immigration hate and ensures school personnel are prepared and empowered to intervene if issues arise and address associated student trauma. ● School level staff utilize assignments that do not demand an unrealistic level of academic English proficiency, and allow students to build on prior knowledge and cultural and linguistic resources and learning styles.	● District policies around school enrollment or accessing materials are burdensome and likely dissuade participation for children in undocumented families (e.g., requiring in-person submission of forms or government-issued IDs, unclear online privacy settings). ● There is little attention to the needs of children in immigrant families who may experience stressors given immigration or undocumented status. Anti- immigration hate is not taken seriously and educators are not empowered to intervene. ● Assignments often demand unrealistic levels of academic English proficiency.
● The district supports schools to embrace the cultural and linguistic assets of EL students, families, and communities. ● School staff efficiently identify and provide EL students with language development services, academic supports (e.g., 1:1 or small group supports designed around common EL learning needs, high quality resources designed specifically for EL students), and appropriate accommodations. ● The district positions all educators as language teachers with shared responsibility for EL student's learning. Schools encourage continuous professional learning, inquiry, and collaboration between EL and general education teachers to plan for, and implement instruction with specifically designed resources and carefully-selected technologies to support EL students.	● The district diverts already sparse funding earmarked for EL students to other uses when faced with budget constraints. ● Educators engage in mere translation of content rather than scaffolding learning through modeling and explicit efforts to develop academic language in content-area classes. ● Most educators do not receive the necessary instructional knowledge and support to effectively understand and meet the needs of EL students, with most assuming this role is the job of "someone else."

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4. Has the district established robust and aligned community partnerships to provide necessary services?[6]		Strategy: ☐☐☐▮
To arrive at a rating for this area, consider evidence from these sources: ● Asset analysis / identification of available supports ● Community partnerships - descriptions, agreements, data and comms ● Partner & stakeholder perception data (disaggregated) ● Focus group with community members		
(4) Strong alignment looks like…	*(1) Weak alignment looks like…*	*Rating (4-1) and rationale*
● The district proactively leverages existing resources through community partners to provide extended learning time programs, afterschool opportunities, community learning hubs, and/or comprehensive school-site supports (e.g., full service community schools, wraparound services).	● The district often addresses new identified demands (eg, related to mental health support needs) without assessing assets already available in the broader community.	
● Identified community partnerships are responsive to local needs, integrated into the school setting, and engage family and community members in meaningful ways. ● Engaged partners represent and are trusted in the community, and utilize cultural responsiveness, anti-racism, and equity and trauma-informed healing-centered approaches.	● Community supports aren't always aligned to needs or integrated into the school setting. Partnerships have unspoken or misaligned expectations and desired outcomes; partners do not always have the full knowledge, skills, capacities, and resources needed to execute.	
● The district has a robust system-level infrastructure to coordinate community-based assets using existing data and funding to provide aligned resources. Mechanisms are in place to ensure ongoing and effective communication between school leadership/staff and partners.	● The district lacks system-level coordination re: community-based assets, resulting in ineffective or inefficient communication and minimal data and analysis on impact.	

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[6] For more see EdResearch for Recovery Leveraging Community Partnerships for Integrated Student Support brief

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STEP 2: Prioritize

Prioritization is key for successful implementation of recovery initiatives. Teams should prioritize where to focus on strengthening alignment based on what will provide the greatest impact, opportunity, and results for students.

Analyze: Based on the ratings and look-fors from the reflection rubric, consider which areas should be top priority to better align with evidence. In particular, consider the following:

- Which areas are least aligned to evidence currently, and might benefit the most from progress in the coming months?
- Which areas are most aligned with internal strategic goals and existing priorities?
- Which areas have the greatest need or would allow the greatest improvements in reducing inequities in performance and experiences across subgroups?
- For which areas or aspects do you already have district capacity and resources to execute (e.g., people, money, technology, stakeholder buy-in and or system momentum)?
- Which areas would you need to cadence first - either as required to be in place for others or would enable faster progress on others down the road?

If needed, map your top ideas on a chart like the one to the right based on the level of importance and difficulty of each.

Prioritize: Based on above, select up to three priorities to focus on for at least the next 6 months:

1.

2.

3.

Review: Reflect and revise priorities as needed based on how well they will contribute to more equitable opportunities and/or outcomes for students.
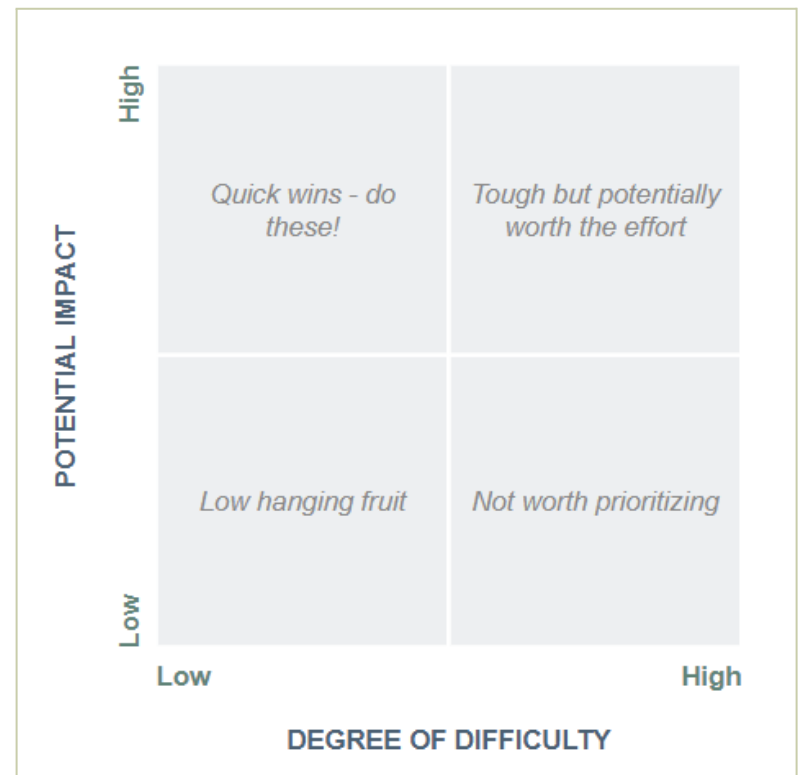
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STEP 3: Plan

For each priority listed above, work with your team to complete the planning roadmap:

PRIORITY NAME	
Description *What is this you are focused on doing?*	
Rating and opportunity *What is the current rating of alignment to evidence (per reflection rubric, above)? What opportunities exist for strengthening this over time?*	
Root cause *What is currently standing in your way? Why haven't you achieved this to date?*	
What it would take *What would the district need to commit to, secure, or build to be successful in this work?* **E.g., resources needed ($, tech, people); policies or practices to establish; skills or knowledge to acquire…*	
Reduce inequities *How will this priority contribute to more equitable opportunities and/or outcomes for students?*	

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What specific equity considerations will be taken into account to ensure this work results in more equitable outcomes?		
Stakeholders to engage *Who needs to be informed, engaged, and supported to make this successful?* **Make sure to consider stakeholders throughout the chain of people required to do the work: those involved in the design and decision making, those implementing and supporting, those possible or likely to block or resist the initiative, those with relevant expertise and/or resources, and the end users or recipients most affected by the initiative.*		

Defining success *What could you realistically and meaningfully accomplish in…*	…6 months	
	…1 year	
	…3 years	

Action plan *What specific action steps will you take to get there?* **Add more rows if/as needed*	Action	Timeline	Owner

STEP 4: Progress monitor

Periodically (ideally each quarter), revisit this tool to:
- Reflect on progress and alignment of this priority using the reflection rubric above to determine if/how rating has changed.
- Revise the plan in Step 2 accordingly to further advance the work and ensure even stronger alignment.