

Building the Foundation for Student and School Success through Effective Family Engagement

The Carolina Family Engagement Center (CFEC) is currently accepting applications to fill up to 20 openings in its School Partner program. Any South Carolina public school with a poverty index of 60% or higher who shares our commitment to enhance family engagement in education for all students, especially underserved students and their families, is eligible and invited to apply. **The program focuses on family engagement as a key strategy to support recovery from the impacts of the pandemic on reading, math, behavior and mental health, and attendance.**

Participating schools and their districts will receive high quality training and technical assistance in family engagement from CFEC over a two-year period beginning Fall 2024 with the opportunity to renew their participation for an additional two years. As CFEC is a federally funded Statewide Family Engagement Center under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), we can provide these services at no charge. CFEC is housed in the SC School Improvement Council at the University of South Carolina's College of Education (USC COE).

THREE PROGRAM PILLARS

This second iteration of the CFEC School Partner program incorporates the most promising components of CFEC's work with schools and families over the last five years: (1) the Schoolwide Stakeholder Partner program, (2) the Teacher Partner program, and (3) the Parent Leadership Partner program. These three program "pillars" support family engagement capacity-building for both educators and parents. Specific strategies within each pillar will be selected in collaboration with individual schools to ensure that they align with priority academic and school climate goals and coordinate with the school's Title I or other applicable family engagement initiatives. All work is grounded in the SC Family Engagement K-12 Framework (SCDE 2019) and is culturally responsive, evidence-based, and informed by research and practice.

CFEC's highly qualified Regional Family Engagement Liaisons will lead this collaborative work in our partner schools with the support of CFEC's content area Specialists from the faculty of USC COE and our network of community partners across the state.

PRIMARY CRITERIA

The primary criteria for acceptance to the CFEC School Partner program is a high demonstrated level of desire and commitment by the school and its district to strengthen and sustain a systemic family engagement program that is integrated across all parts of the school. Preference points will be awarded to applicants who have successfully collaborated with CFEC between 2019-2023 as a school partner, host school for a teacher partner, or in other CFEC initiatives.

"We are a better school today than we were 3 years ago, especially when it comes to family engagement. Our students will only be successful when the school, the community, and families work together as one team to reach the same purpose of providing high levels of learning for all students, so they are college and career ready."

-Marshall Primary School,
Belton, SC (CFEC Partner
School 2019-23).

THE THREE PROGRAM PILLARS OF THE CFEC SCHOOL PARTNER PROGRAM

Pillar I: Schoolwide Stakeholder Partner Program

This first pillar focuses on school-level capacity building to support the development of effective family-school partnerships. This work is done primarily through an existing or new stakeholder team designated by the school and modeled after the National Network of Partnership Schools Action Team for Partnerships. (NNPS ATP) (Epstein 2019). The team is made up of administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders who represent the diversity of the school community.

The school stakeholder team meets monthly with its CFEC liaison, who provides ongoing training and technical support as the team plans and supports implementation and evaluation of the school's family engagement work, building on and strengthening existing Title I and other family engagement goals and activities. We use NNPS planning tools to ensure that the team's work aligns with the school's improvement plan goals.

With the CFEC Liaison, partner schools also engage in school-level capacity-building by (1) implementing and evaluating at least one family engagement practice involving personnel from across the school to help maintain a welcoming environment for all families, and (2) having all school personnel complete an annual one-hour CFEC professional development session. Renewal credits are available to teachers and administrators for the professional development session.

Pillar II: Teacher Partner Program

This second pillar focuses on strengthening the capacity of classroom teachers to develop effective parent-teacher partnerships. Partner schools, in consultation with CFEC, select a teacher or teacher team from among interested faculty to serve as the school's Teacher Partner(s). These teachers meet at least monthly with their CFEC liaison to develop, implement, and evaluate a classroom family engagement plan using a custom planning tool. In addition to providing ongoing technical assistance and support, CFEC liaisons also identify and connect Partner Teachers with local community resources that meet the unique needs of their classrooms. CFEC also offers Partner Teachers a chance to participate in additional opportunities for professional development and growth as leaders and champions for family engagement. Teachers receive renewal credits for eligible portions of the program.

Pillar III: Parent Leadership Partner Program

The third pillar of the School Partner program focuses on strengthening the capacity of parents to (1) more fully engage in their children's learning and development at home and in partnership with their school, (2) grow a supportive network of fellow parents, and (3) connect with resources available through their school and community.

CFEC's Parent Leadership Partnership (PLP) program brings together groups of up to 15 parents for an orientation and seven sessions that are built around modules in CFEC's PLP workbook. Parents also work individually or in groups to plan and implement a small project to address an education-related need in their school or community. Sessions are led by one or more facilitators designated by the school. The program concludes with a graduation ceremony for all parents who complete program requirements. CFEC's liaison works alongside the school and group facilitator(s) throughout the process to provide training, assistance, and support.

THE DISTRICT'S ROLE

CFEC requires, at a minimum, that a Partner School's district superintendent or designee (1) indicate their support for the school's participation in this program and (2) designate a district official or administrator to serve as the district contact for the program. CFEC also strongly encourages districts to participate in additional capacity-building opportunities available through the School Partner Program.

For more information, please contact CFEC Project Director Karen Utter at utter@email.sc.edu or call 800.868.2232
c/o SC School Improvement Council

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