



Family Engagement Leadership Institute

Syllabus

2023-2024

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Introduction

The purpose of the Family Engagement Leadership Institute is to equip school principals and district administrators to lead family engagement strategies that directly impact student learning and well-being. We know that school leaders have high hopes and big dreams for building strong partnerships with their students' families, even if they have not always been supported in doing so. This Institute helps fill a void in credentialing programs that don't typically prepare educators for effective family engagement work.

You are joining the second cohort of this Leadership Institute. We see you as our colleagues and collaborators. We hope you will tell us what is working for you and what isn't, and that you engage with us as we build a network of leaders who are committed to this work.

Institute Goals & Key Outcome

Progressing through our three goals will prepare Institute participants in achieving the one key outcome: an equity-focused family engagement strategy for the next school year.

Three Key Goals — Institute participants should be able to...

1. Understand the most essential research on family engagement in schools.
2. Apply the best-practices and leadership moves that improve family engagement strategies.
3. Clarify their school or district's family engagement strengths and challenges, and develop a plan with safe-to-fail experiments in collaboration with families and staff.

The Key Outcome of the Institute — Institute participants will culminate the Institute with an equity-focused family engagement strategy for 24-25 that:

- Is integrated into existing priorities and plans (e.g. instructional goals, school climate strategies, etc.)
- Involves new and/or re-purposed investments (e.g. increased staff time to partner with families, PD funding, etc.)
- Applies existing management tools (e.g. hiring practices, policies, etc.)

Summary of Institute Activities

To support participants in achieving the goals and the key outcome, the Institute involves synchronous and asynchronous activities.

Synchronous activities are those where you will interact with members of the teaching team:

- Whole-cohort virtual training sessions are on October 25th, December 12th, February 8th, and May 9th (11am-2pm ET / 8am-11am PT).
- One-on-one coaching sessions to support you in progressing through Institute activities and codify your plans. You can schedule up to 5 sessions throughout the year.
- Small-group coaching sessions with a pod of Institute peers to provide and receive support on emerging plans. These will take place during whole-cohort sessions and can also be scheduled independently if groups choose to do so.

Asynchronous activities primarily involve the work of leading an Action Team (details in following section). It also includes a limited set of prep readings and videos, and completing a few planning documents along the way (details in the Key Materials section below).

Action Team Details

The rubber meets the road with the Action Team. It is the vehicle we use to support participants in applying what they are learning in the Institute. Our pedagogical approach is to encourage collaborative learning environments with staff and families that are directed toward collective action. Our approach is modeled on Paulo Freire's notion of a praxis – "It is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their reality. They must act together upon their environment in order critically to reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection." – [*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*](#).

Our [Action Team Toolbox](#) provides all the details you need to lead an Action Team. Here is the executive summary that provides a snapshot of each section of the Toolbox.

- *What is an Action Team?* It is a demographically representative group of families and staff, all of whom are interested in building trust with one another and working together to: (1) determine strengths & challenges of current family engagement strategies, (2) design and implement a few safe-to-fail experiments that build off existing family engagement efforts, and (3) support the design of a new family engagement strategy for the following year. Action Teams can take on a formal structure (like a committee) or a more informal structure (like ongoing casual conversations with a consistent group).
- *What are the Action Planning Pathways?* They are designed to help you consider the various approaches you can take in launching and facilitating your Action Team. Your coach will work with you to consider options and pick the pathway that best aligns with your needs and priorities. The three pathways are: 1) “Build Anew” Pathway (create a new team), 2) “Build Upon” Pathway (start from an existing team), and 3) “Build Your Own” Pathway (a customized approach).
- *What does the work of an Action Team look like?* In the fall you will focus on recruiting a team, building relationships, identifying strengths/challenges, and designing a few safe-to-fail experiments. You’ll document your progress by working with your coach to complete an Action Plan by winter break. Throughout the winter you will focus on implementing safe-to-fail experiments with your team, and will share an updated Action Plan by spring break. In the spring you and your team will develop a family engagement strategy for the next school year, and you’ll share it by the close of the Institute in May.
- *What is in the Appendices of the Toolbox?* You will find sample agendas and conversation starters to help you get started with your Action Team, as well as additional guidance regarding safe-to-fail experiments.

Key Materials

All of our materials are available on our Institute microsite (coming soon), which is a password-protected website that is open to current Institute participants and Alumni.

Anchor texts and primer video – Please know we are conscious of how much we ask participants to read. Our two foundational texts are intentionally chosen to be short enough to be manageable, while comprehensive enough to provide a strong understanding of the evidence on family engagement as well as examples of best practice from around the country. We recommend that participants read both before the first whole-cohort session on October 25th.

- [Embracing a New Normal: Toward a More Liberatory Approach to Family Engagement](#)
- [Unlocking the How: Designing Family Engagement Strategies that Lead to School Success](#)
- [Anchor Text Primer Video](#) – a 10-minute video that summarizes the two texts

Planning templates – These forms help to codify the work you are doing with your Action Team:

- [Action Plan](#) documents the composition of your Action Team, as well as the strengths, challenges, and safe-to-fail experiments determined by your team. You’ll share your initial plan by winter break and an update on your progress by spring break.

- [Integration & Allocation Plan](#) documents your equity-focused family engagement strategy for 24-25. You'll share it by the time our Institute closes at our final whole-cohort session on May 9th.

Some notes on documentation – Coaches are available to support participants in developing their plans because we want to reduce the writing burden on busy leaders. The purpose of the planning templates is not to complete paperwork but to help track your team's plans, progress, and learning. While your coach will share the responsibility of documentation, the plan itself is yours, and you should feel a complete sense of ownership. Practically speaking, we advise that participants start by filling out templates on their own and come to coaching sessions to help flesh them out. We also encourage you to share your completed plans with your school community so that colleagues and allies can support the team, and so that everyone in your community knows this work is a priority for you.

Participant & Co-participant Definition

Leadership Institute participants are school principals or district office directors. We invite participants to work with a co-participant (eg. Assistant Principal, Community Schools Coordinator, Deputy Director, etc). Co-participants are invited to attend most of the Institute activities, but we ask participants not to delegate their own participation. In other words, a co-participant can join alongside the participant, just not instead of the participant.

Having a co-participant is optional. If participants would like to identify a co-participant, please share their name, email, and role/position with us.

Learning Arc: The 9-month Agenda At-a-Glance

This section provides an overview of what participants can expect as they progress through the Institute.

Fall 2023 – Understanding What Works in Family Engagement

We begin the Institute by getting to know each other and building trust. An initial one-on-one with your coach will give you a chance to ask questions, get oriented to the Institute, and consider your options for building an Action Team. Following that meeting, 1-2 hours to read the anchor texts will help you prepare for our first whole-cohort session on October 25th.

At the first session, we will dig into the research on family engagement, hear from participants in last year's cohort, begin receiving support in peer coaching pods, and prepare to launch Action Teams. Following the first virtual session, participants will begin working with their Action Teams to determine strengths/challenges, and identify some safe-to-fail experiments.

At the second virtual session on December 12th, participants will continue to deepen their understanding of what works in family engagement by hearing from successful principals and

district leaders from around the country. We'll also work in peer group and whole-group consultancies to receive support on developing Action Plans, and we'll provide quiet working time to finalize plans ahead of winter break.

Winter 2023/2024 – Applying What Works in Your Context

The focus of the Institute shifts from learning about what works to applying what works in your context. Participants will lead their Action Teams in implementing their safe-to-fail experiments, and will receive support from their coach as needed throughout the winter.

At the third whole-cohort session on February 8th, participants will be invited to bring their Action Teams so they can also receive the benefit of our training experience. We'll share examples of successful safe-to-fail experiments and give teams a chance to plan and troubleshoot. As we start pivoting toward planning for next year, participants and Action Team members will also hear from leaders across the country about the moves they've made to elevate family engagement. We ask that participants provide us an update on their progress implementing safe-to-fail experiments by spring break.

Spring 2024 – Redesigning Systems to Promote What Works

Participants and their teams will shift from action mode to planning for next year. The focus of the Action Team activities and the coaching will be on the development of the 24-25 family engagement strategy. At the final virtual session on May 8th, participants will share their plans, receive support from peers and coaches to tweak their plans, reflect on their learning, and explore ways to continue their engagement as Institute alumni.

Teaching Team

We have an amazing teaching team. Two Learning Heroes staff manage the day-to-day operations of the Institute. Dr. Karen Mapp, a pre-eminent scholar and leader in the field of family engagement serves as a special advisor. She attends a few Institute sessions and provides specialized coaching support to district directors. We have a robust evaluation process known as our Knowledge-Capture Process (KCP), which is led by a PhD student at Harvard. Our incredible team of coaches all have experience leading schools and systems. Most of them have full-time jobs and work with Learning Heroes as independent consultants.

You can read our teaching team beliefs and bios for each of us on our microsite (coming soon).



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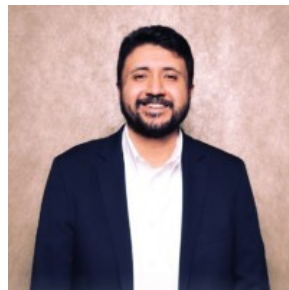


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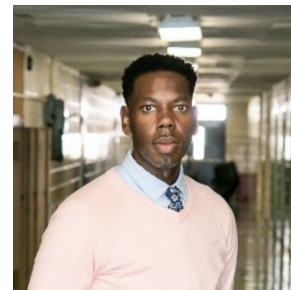
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