Self-Assessment: District Level

Section 1. Introduction and Purpose

This tool is intended to help school districts engage in collaborative reflection about their current family and community engagement practices. It is aligned to the Washington Statewide Family Engagement Center (WASFEC) community of practice series and draws on the dual capacity framework, Washington Family Engagement Framework, and SISEP District Capacity Assessment used by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). This tool is also informed by the work of Michele Brooks and colleagues from the Institute for Educational Leadership on systemic family engagement practice (2019).

What is systemic family engagement?

Systemic family and community engagement is a "full and equitable partnership among families, educators, providers, and communities to support learners' development from birth through college and career. It is a collective responsibility that means doing with—not doing for—families. Family engagement promotes equity and success for all families, achieving equitable outcomes by recognizing the diversity of family types, by using a multi-generational lens, and through cultural and linguistic competency and responsiveness."[1]

Who is this tool for?

This tool is intended to be used by a team of school and district leaders, in collaboration with families and community partners. An ideal team composition for this work includes four to six participants who represent diverse roles and perspectives. Potential participant roles could include, but are not limited to:

- District family engagement coordinator/liaison/director
- Equity director
- Multilingual or special services director or representative

- District teaching and learning representative
- School principal or assistant principal
- Family leaders
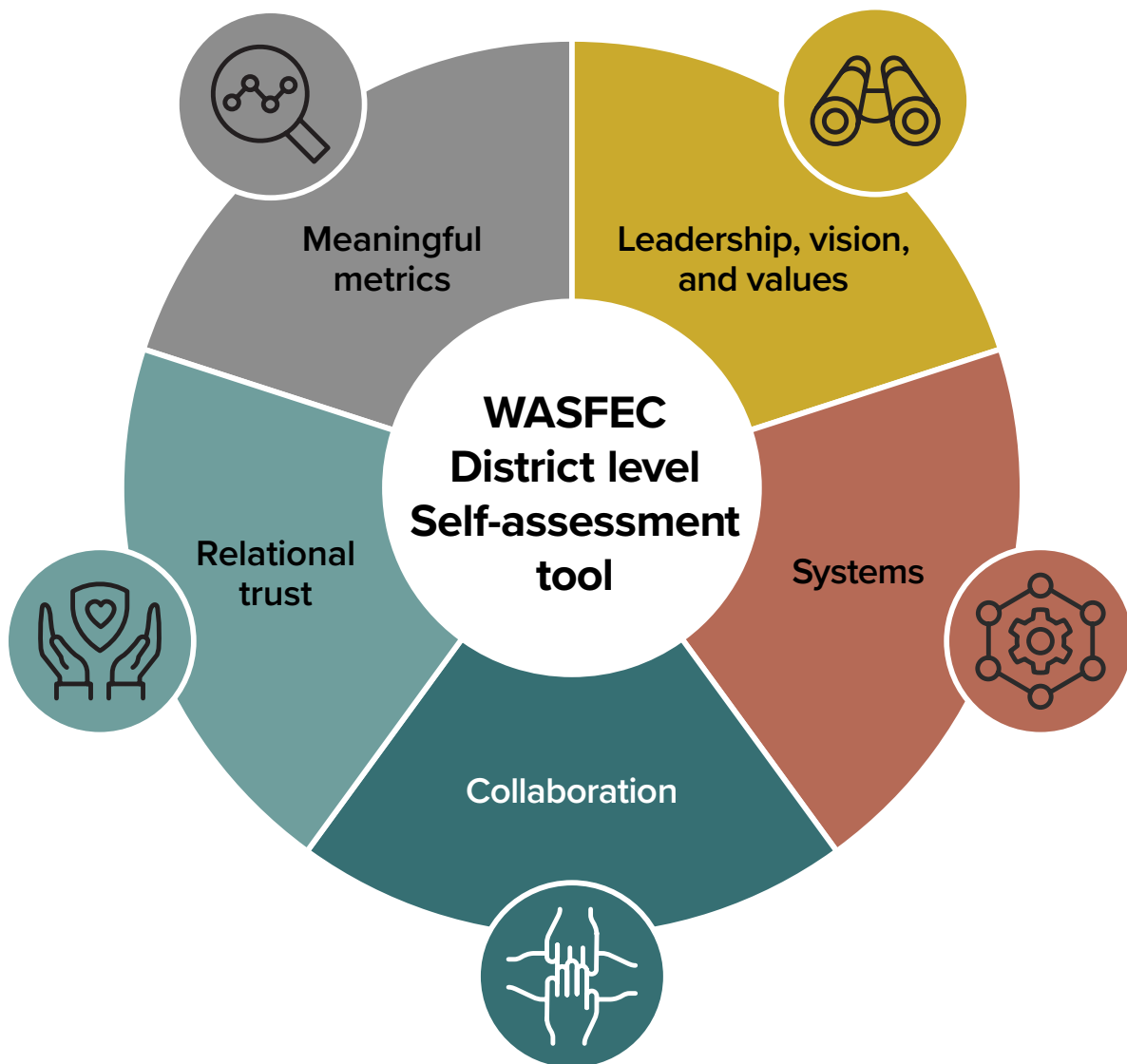- Community-based organization leaders
- Other executive district leaders

How can this tool support family engagement in your district?

This tool helps teams reflect on current family engagement practices in their system with the goal of identifying opportunities for meaningful growth and improvement. It is intended to support teams to create momentum for strategic planning that leads to sustainable change, the empowerment of all families, and shared decision-making to benefit all students.

How should you use this tool?

This is not a test. It is an opportunity to work collaboratively to better understand family engagement systems and to support honest discussion and evaluation. Each team will spend time in collaborative conversation and will rate their current practices on a rubric. Teams should discuss areas of strength and opportunities for growth as they complete the self-assessment. These discussions may lead to an examination of specific areas of family and community engagement or to a broader overview of family engagement practices in your setting.

The rubric has five domains, which represent broad foundational elements of effective and systemic family engagement practices and beliefs. Teams will collaboratively identify their level of implementation in each domain.

Table 1. Domains and definitions of systemic family engagement

Domain	Definition
Leadership, vision, and values	Teams consider district systems and practices for: • Defined vision and values that elevate family and community engagement • Family engagement goals connected to district strategic planning • Leadership expectations that are aligned to defined values and vision for family and community engagement
Systems	Teams consider district systems and practices for: • Policies (e.g., board policies and other formal rules) • Structures that support family and community engagement rather than create barriers • Sustainable resources and capacity
Collaboration	Teams consider district systems and practices for: • System-wide integration of family engagement goals, vision, and principles • Embedded cross-departmental family engagement work • Shared leadership with families and community members
Relational trust	Teams consider district systems and practices for: • Inclusive and welcoming environments • Culturally responsive, equitable, and asset-based approaches to engaging students and families • Differentiated and community focused two-way communication
Meaningful metrics	Teams consider district systems and practices for: • Meaningful measures of family and community engagement data collection aligned to vision and goals • System-focused accountability measures and outcomes

Table 2. Reflection and self-assessment scale

Level of implementation	Description
1. We haven't started	–
2. We are just beginning	We have started conversations and planning for this but have not yet implemented
3. We have some elements in place	We have a clear plan of action and are implementing this in some schools or spaces in our district
4. We have this fully in place	We are implementing our plan for this districtwide

Section 2. Self-Assessment Rubric

Domain 1. Leadership, vision, and values

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How is family engagement reflected in your district's vision?

- How are the guiding principles, expectations, and objectives for family engagement identified and communicated to district leaders, school leaders, educators, and families?

- What framework does your team use for decision-making? Does it align with the core values of family engagement? How is it used?

Please rate your level of implementation based on the following statements:

1. We haven't started	2. We are just beginning	3. We have some elements in place	4. We have this fully in place
District does not yet have an articulated vision or value statement for systemic family engagement. Families and community members were not involved in defining priorities, and there is no public reporting of progress toward the vision.	District has drafted a vision or value statement for family engagement, but it was developed internally with limited community input. The vision may not reflect asset-based or culturally responsive approaches, and progress is not regularly reported.	District has a published vision or value statement for family engagement that includes some asset-based and culturally responsive elements. Families and community members contributed to its development, and the district is beginning to report progress, although not consistently.	District has an articulated and published vision or value statement of systemic family engagement that was collaboratively designed with families and community members. The vision or value statement is focused on asset-based culturally responsive family engagement approaches that prioritize student and family voice and shared decision-making. The district regularly reports its progress toward the vision to the community.

1. We haven't started	2. We are just beginning	3. We have some elements in place	4. We have this fully in place
District-level goals were developed without input from families or community members. There are no collaborative teams or structured work plans, and family engagement is not reflected in the strategic plan.	District has begun forming collaborative teams, but family and community member representation is limited or inconsistent. Work plans may exist but lack clear action steps. Family engagement goals are mentioned but not integrated across strategic priorities.	District-level goals are supported by collaborative teams that include some family and community representatives. Work plans with action steps are in place, and family engagement goals appear in multiple areas of the strategic plan, although not consistently embedded.	District-level goals are worked on by ongoing collaborative teams that include family and community representatives and have well-developed work plans and associated action steps. Family engagement goals are embedded throughout the strategic plan (e.g., academics, culture).
District has not defined leadership expectations related to family engagement. There is no articulated vision or value statement guiding leadership practices, and student and family voice is not prioritized.	District has begun to define leadership expectations for family engagement, but they are not clearly aligned to a vision or value statement. Asset-based and culturally responsive practices are mentioned but not emphasized, and shared decision-making is limited.	District has defined leadership expectations that reflect some alignment to a vision or value statement for family engagement. These expectations include elements of asset-based and culturally responsive practices and begin to prioritize student and family voice.	District has defined leadership expectations aligned to an articulated vision or value statement for asset-based culturally responsive family engagement that prioritizes student and family voice and shared decision-making.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What is your team's biggest challenge in defining a clear and actionable vision for family engagement?

What strengths could you leverage to meet that challenge?

Domain 2. Systems

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How have you mapped system-wide family engagement practices and activities and identified their impact level?

- How have you assessed whether current strategies align with high-impact practices?

- How has your team successfully integrated family engagement policies into your system? How are your family engagement polices aligned with the foundational elements of effective family engagement to achieve your desired outcomes? How are these policies being implemented?

- How are family engagement expectations embedded into key district/school policies (e.g., teacher evaluations, school improvement plans)?

- Do you have clear procedures, templates, and action plans for mandated family engagement activities?

Please rate your level of implementation based on the following statements:

1. We haven't started	2. We are just beginning	3. We have some elements in place	4. We have this fully in place
District does not yet have a family engagement policy, or the existing policy was developed without family and community collaboration. Family engagement is not reflected in other district policies.	District has developed a family engagement policy, but collaboration with family and community members was limited. The policy exists in isolation and is not yet connected to other district priorities or policies.	District has collaboratively developed a family engagement policy and is beginning to integrate it across departments. Some alignment with other district policies is evident, but not yet consistent or systemic.	A collaboratively developed district family engagement policy has been integrated across the system. Family engagement priorities are integrated into other district policies.
District has not yet developed procedures or structures to support family engagement. Barriers to engagement have not yet been addressed.	District has begun to identify the need for family engagement and is exploring ways to address barriers. Initial steps or efforts may be in place but are not yet consistent or systemic.	District has implemented some procedures and structures to support family engagement. Efforts to remove barriers are underway, although not yet fully integrated or consistently applied across the system.	District has developed systemic procedures and structures that support family and community engagement and remove barriers.

1. We haven't started	2. We are just beginning	3. We have some elements in place	4. We have this fully in place
District does not yet offer opportunities or training for educators to support equitable collaboration with families. There is little or no focus on building educator capacity in this area.	District has begun to recognize the importance of educator training for equitable school-family collaboration. Occasional opportunities may exist, but they are limited in scope or reach.	District offers some training and opportunities for educators to build capacity for equitable collaboration with families. These efforts are not yet routine or fully embedded in professional development systems.	District routinely offers opportunities and training for educators focused on building their capacity to foster equitable collaboration with families.
District does not yet offer opportunities or training for families to support equitable collaboration. There is little or no focus on building family capacity in this area.	District has begun to recognize the importance of providing opportunities and training for families to support equitable engagement. Occasional opportunities may exist, but they are limited in scope or reach.	District offers some training and opportunities for families to build capacity for equitable collaboration. These efforts are not yet routine or consistently implemented, and they are not assessed for utilization or impact.	District routinely offers opportunities and training for families that builds their capacity to engage in equitable collaboration with the school. The district monitors participation and assesses effectiveness.
District has not yet allocated financial or human resources to support family engagement. There is no evidence of support for family engagement in district budgets or staffing.	District has begun to allocate limited resources for family engagement. Support may be temporary, grant-based, or not yet reflected in formal budgeting processes.	District has designated some financial and human resources for family engagement. These resources are beginning to be incorporated into district budgets, but sustainability is not yet assured.	District has designated, sustainable, and continuing resources (financial and human) outlined in district budgets for systemic family engagement.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What policies or programs are currently aligned to support systemic family engagement?

What policies or programs are misaligned or under-leveraged in supporting systemic family engagement?

Domain 3. Collaboration

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How have you identified who is on your family engagement team at both the district and school levels? How have you planned for diverse representation and documented and communicated the roles and responsibilities of the team members?

- How have you mapped out cross-departmental allies (e.g., special education, Title I, student services, teachers' union)?

- How is your team engaging community partners to strengthen family engagement efforts? Do you have an established process for this?

- In what ways could a district-wide coalition for family engagement support your efforts?

Please rate your level of implementation based on the following statements:

1. We haven't started	2. We are just beginning	3. We have some elements in place	4. We have this fully in place
District departments and programs operate in isolation with little or no collaboration focused on family engagement. No shared structures or resources exist yet to support cross-departmental efforts.	Some district departments and programs have begun to collaborate around family engagement. Initial structures or resources may exist, but efforts are limited in scope and not coordinated across the system.	District departments and programs have established some structures and resources to support collaboration focused on family engagement. Coordination is growing but not yet fully integrated across all departments and schools.	District departments and programs have developed system-wide structures and resources that support collaboration around family engagement across all departments and schools.
District departments and programs do not yet collaborate with families to support greater family engagement.	Some district departments and programs have begun to collaborate with families around family engagement. Initial structures or resources may exist, but efforts are limited in scope.	District departments and programs have established some structures and resources to support collaboration with families focused on family engagement.	District departments and programs have developed system-wide structures and resources that support collaboration with families focused on family engagement as a lever to improve outcomes across departments.

1. We haven't started	2. We are just beginning	3. We have some elements in place	4. We have this fully in place
Collaboration is not a defined or practiced element of district culture. There is no evidence that collaborative practices are monitored.	District has begun to encourage collaboration, but implementation is inconsistent. Efforts are informal or isolated, and there is limited monitoring of practices.	Collaboration is implemented in some areas of the district and is becoming part of the culture. Structures for integration and monitoring exist but are not yet consistently applied.	Collaboration is consistently implemented, integrated, and monitored within district culture.
There are no formal systems in place to include families or students in leadership or decision-making. Engagement is minimal and not connected to community priorities.	District has begun exploring ways to involve families and students in leadership roles. Some input is gathered, but systems are informal and not consistently tied to community-identified issues.	District has initiated systems to include families and students in shared leadership. Decision-making opportunities exist, but they are limited in scope or not fully aligned with community priorities.	District has articulated and designed systems to include families and students in shared leadership that includes decision-making around issues that the community deems important or that impact students and families.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What barriers exist in engaging allies and forming meaningful partnerships?

What strengths could you leverage to engage allies and form meaningful partnerships?

Domain 4. Relational trust

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How does your district approach building asset-based trusting relationships with families and community members?

- What guidance does your district provide for creating welcoming school environments? How does the district encourage schools to implement that guidance?

- How do you practice culturally responsive two-way communication? What data do you collect to measure implementation?

Please rate your level of implementation based on the following statements:

1. We haven't started	2. We are just beginning	3. We have some elements in place	4. We have this fully in place
District does not provide formal support or guidance for educators to create inclusive or welcoming environments. Practices vary widely and are not systemically addressed.	District has begun to promote inclusive and welcoming environments, but support for educators is inconsistent or limited to specific schools or initiatives.	District provides some structured support for educators to foster inclusive and welcoming environments. Efforts are present in multiple schools but not yet fully implemented across the system.	District systemically supports educators to foster inclusive and welcoming environments at all schools.
District does not actively promote asset-based practices or recognize the value of family knowledge. No systems exist to support, monitor, or improve such practices at the school level.	District has begun encouraging asset-based practices in some schools, but efforts are informal or inconsistent. Systems for monitoring and improvement are not yet developed.	District supports schools in implementing asset-based practices that value family knowledge. Initial systems for monitoring and improving practices are in place but not yet fully operational or systemic.	District supports schools to implement asset-based practices that value the funds of knowledge of all families and has developed systems to monitor and improve practices.
District lacks formal systems for two-way communication with families. Communication is one-directional, inconsistent, and not culturally responsive. No infrastructure exists to reach all families.	District has begun developing communication systems that consider cultural responsiveness. Some two-way communication occurs, but follow-through is inconsistent, and communication platforms do not reach all families.	District has established systems for culturally responsive, two-way communication and is working to ensure follow-through with families. A communication platform is in use but reach and effectiveness vary across schools.	District has systems for culturally responsive, two-way communication and ensures follow through with families. There is a developed communication infrastructure that includes an effective platform used to reach all families district-wide.

1. We haven't started	2. We are just beginning	3. We have some elements in place	4. We have this fully in place
District does not provide support or guidance for educators to build relationships with families. Issues of disparity in opportunity are not acknowledged or addressed in practice.	District has begun encouraging educators to build relationships with families, but efforts are informal and do not consistently address bias or inequities. Support is limited or isolated.	District provides some support for educators to build authentic relationships with families. There is growing attention to bias and inequities, but systems are not yet fully integrated or consistent across schools.	District supports educators to build authentic, trusting relationships with families that acknowledge and attend to bias and inequities.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What challenges does your team face in fostering culturally responsive authentic relationships with families and community members?

What strengths or resources could you leverage to foster culturally responsive and authentic relationships with families and community members?

Domain 5. Meaningful metrics

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How do you collect data and what tracking systems are in place to measure family engagement success?

- Have you developed a method for assessing family engagement efforts within and across schools?

- How do you acknowledge and celebrate successes?

- How do you provide tailored support based on school-specific needs?

- What kinds of data are collected on both family engagement outputs (activities or engagements) and outcomes (impact or observed changes)?

Please rate your level of implementation based on the following statements:

1. We haven't started	2. We are just beginning	3. We have some elements in place	4. We have this fully in place
District does not have defined metrics to assess its family engagement efforts. Community input is not solicited or included in evaluation processes.	District has begun developing metrics to assess its family engagement efforts, but they were created internally with limited family or community involvement. Metrics may not reflect authentic engagement.	District has established some metrics to assess its family engagement efforts and is beginning to involve family and community members. Co-development is partial or inconsistent.	District collaborated with family and community members to co-develop metrics that are used to assess authentic family engagement.
District does not collect data on family engagement or uses generic metrics that were developed without family or community input. Data collection is sporadic and lacks transparency or purpose.	District has begun collecting data on family engagement, but metrics are not co-developed with the community. Collaboration in data collection is minimal or inconsistent.	District co-developed some metrics with community members to measure family engagement. Data collection is occurring, but collaboration is limited to certain schools or groups and systems are still being refined.	District collaborates with community members to collect data on co-developed metrics that assess authentic family engagement. The purpose of data collection is clear.

1. We haven't started	2. We are just beginning	3. We have some elements in place	4. We have this fully in place
District does not use family engagement data to inform decisions. Data may be collected but are not analyzed or used for accountability or improvement.	District has begun reviewing family engagement data, but its use in decision-making is limited or informal. Data are not yet connected to systems-level accountability.	District uses family engagement data to inform some decisions and is building systems to connect data to accountability structures. Use is not yet consistent or systemic.	District uses family engagement data to drive decision-making and for systems-level accountability.
District does not assess school environments using defined metrics. Feedback to schools is informal, inconsistent, or absent.	District has begun using some metrics to assess school environments, but the approach is limited in scope. Feedback is provided occasionally and lacks a systematic process.	District uses multiple metrics to assess school environments and has begun implementing a feedback system. Feedback is provided to most schools, but consistency and follow-up vary.	District uses a variety of metrics to assess school environments and provides systematic feedback to schools.
District does not engage the community in interpreting data. Findings are not shared transparently, and outcomes are not reported publicly or meaningfully.	District has begun sharing data with the community, but collaboration in interpreting findings is limited. Reporting is sporadic and lacks clarity or accessibility.	District and community engage in some collaborative data interpretation. Reporting of findings and outcomes is improving, but transparency and consistency vary across contexts.	District and community collaborate to make meaning of data and transparently report findings and outcomes.
Family engagement metrics are absent or not clearly defined. There is no connection between measurement and the district's vision or goals for family engagement.	District has developed some family engagement metrics, but alignment with the district's vision and goals is limited or unclear. Metrics may not reflect strategic priorities.	Family engagement metrics are partially aligned with the district's vision and goals. Efforts are underway to strengthen coherence and ensure metrics reflect intended outcomes.	Family engagement metrics are well aligned with the district's vision and goals for family engagement.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Where does your district struggle most in using data for continuous learning, improvement, and accountability for family engagement?

What additional forms of data could your team collect to get a more holistic understanding of impact? What types of information would help you make progress toward your family engagement goals?

Section 3. Prioritization and Action Steps

After district teams process their results, they will reflect on these questions when developing their action plan.

- What are the top three areas where you feel most confident?
- What are the top three areas where you see the biggest gaps?
- What is the one area you want to focus on improving first?
- Who else needs to be part of this conversation to move forward?
- What support do you need to take these next steps?

Endnote

[1] Rees, H. (2021). *Family engagement framework: 2021 report to the legislature.* Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.