

Council of Chief State School Officers State Consortium on Family Engagement – Cohort II

Background

CCSSO, as the only organization in the country that is led by education chiefs and represents top officials and staff within every state education agency (SEA), provides extensive support to SEAs in their drafting and implementation of the consolidated Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plans. Within the context of ESSA and the desire among some SEAs to offer systemic and strategic approaches to family engagement, CCSSO has received funds to work with seven (7) states on developing Family Engagement Frameworks. The participating states in the first cohort are Arkansas, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New York, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina. The state teams articulated the importance of family engagement as an equity strategy to improve the learning opportunities for students.

The existing State Consortium on Family Engagement (Consortium) was launched in June 2017 and will proceed through December 2018. CCSSO has partnered with the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE), the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. (MAEC), and the Campaign for Grade Level Reading (GLR) to engage the leading experts in family engagement research and practice. As CCSSO and its partners support the participating states to develop the statewide frameworks, the state teams will also be informed by national and state models of family engagement frameworks which define key principles, shared beliefs, and high impact policies as the states engage families in education. Furthermore, the Consortium highlights the intersects of family engagement with critical education reform agendas such as engaging families in the digital world, reaching families from culturally diverse backgrounds, integrating family engagement with school improvement, and implementing high impact two-generational services for families. By means of four separate meetings and webinars as well as regular communication and on-site support, as well as a train-the-trainers program, CCSSO and its partners provide a platform of state-of-the-art evidence-based practices, policies, and hands-on tools on family engagement as well as in-depth peer exchange and a professional learning community among the seven states. CCSSO and its partners consider the combination of support strategies a formula for success.

Establishing a Second Cohort of the State Consortium on Family Engagement

CCSSO and the partners were approached by several states to join the State Consortium. Since the onboarding process with the current cohort has already been completed, CCSSO received funds to establish a second cohort by May 2018. The twelve states joining the second cohort are Alaska, Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Wyoming. Staff at each of the states' state education agencies have been contacted to confirm their continued interest in joining a second cohort.

The second cohort will be implemented the same way as the first one. Minor adjustments could be made as the CCSSO partnership team is being informed about any “lessons learned” from the



work done with the first cohort. Current state teams may also be engaged in peer exchanges with the new cohort.

Specific Objectives, Outcomes, and Strategies

In May 2018, CCSSO established a second cohort of up to ten (10) states to participate in the State Consortium on Family Engagement. State teams of three (3) individuals will be comprised of SEA staff from early child education, school improvement/Title 1, family engagement specialist or a key staff from other units or agencies charged with impacting family engagement policies and practices. The Consortium will focus on:

- Developing a Community of Practitioners (CoP) among state teams to examine updated research and exemplary national and state models of family engagement;
- Establishing a coalition of stakeholders within each state with a vested interest in culturally sensitive family engagement;
- Developing a Birth to Grade 12 Family Engagement Framework, customized to the needs of each state and informed by national and state models, as well as other resources;
- Creating a technical assistance forum of experts in family engagement for the purpose of exploring technical as well as policy-related perspectives in alignment with the participating states' ESSA plans or the SEAs' strategic plans; and
- Establishing a repository on family engagement research and implementation tools developed by states and national organizations.

The second cohort will complete its work by December 2019.

The Outcomes of the State Consortium

The outcomes of the State Consortium, contingent upon the particular needs of the participating states, include the following:

- Increased awareness of research and evidence-based practices in family engagement;
- Establishment of a Coalition on Family Engagement of family engagement stakeholders in each state to initiate and sustain the development and implementation of the Framework;
- Creation of a repository of research and evidence-based tools on family engagement, including exemplary state models.

Key Strategies to Meeting the Outcomes

The strategies will be implemented as follows:

- Four (4) two-day in-person CoP meetings by up to ten (10) state teams;
- Four (4) webinars with topics, including specific research on outreach to families through social digital media, family engagement with families from culturally diverse backgrounds, integrating family engagement strategies in school improvement efforts, and engaging families through high-impact two-generational services;
- Linkages to webinars on family engagement;
- Monthly consultative conference calls and technical assistance with state teams on developing family engagement frameworks that are aligned with the state's ESSA plans and/or strategic plans;



- Developing a communication plan on the dissemination and implementation of the family engagement framework with early childhood education providers and school districts; and
- Providing a train-the-trainers model for state teams on equitable, culturally responsive family engagement.

Program Partners

The Consortium's key partner is the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) as the fiscal agent of the Consortium activities. In addition, the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE), the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. (MAEC), and the Campaign for Grade Level Reading (CGLR) are supporting the Consortium activities. CCSSO works with the Policy Equity Group, LLC as an advisor to the project. In addition, the Consortium has access to national experts in family engagement, stakeholder engagement, digital media in family engagement, and state specialists in family engagement and school improvement. State teams may schedule consultation calls with the experts upon request.

Criteria for State Selection

The Coalition has identified the states because they:

- Have the commitment and capacity to establish a coalition of stakeholders to develop a Family Engagement Framework, Birth to Grade 12;
- Have a track record of strong SEA support for parent and family engagement ;
- Show willingness to work across the agencies, e.g., offices of Title 1 and family engagement collaborating with the office of early childhood education.

Commitment by States

Selected states will form teams of three (3) individuals. It is recommended to have representation from early learning and school improvement/Title 1 on the team. A third individual could be added from another unit within the SEA or another agency. Specific commitments include:

- The state teams will be asked to complete a brief self-assessment on policies and practices regarding family engagement in the state.
- The state teams participate in four (4) in-person meetings (2 days each). All costs for travel, lodging, and meals are covered.
- State team members participate in monthly conference calls on topics specifically tailored to the development of the Framework and other needs of the states.
- State teams identify key staff within the SEA to participate in a train-the-trainers program on equitable, culturally responsive family engagement.
- For evaluation purposes, state team members will be available for structured interviews at the end of the Consortium activities.

Contact Information

For more information contact Dr. Rolf Grafwallner at rolf.grafwallner@ccsso.org.

