



What Is Family Engagement in Children’s Education As Part of S4?

Henderson and Berla (1994) define parental involvement as: “Having an awareness of and involvement in schoolwork, understanding of the interaction between parenting skills and student success in schooling, and a commitment to consistent communication with educators about student progress.”

Engagement is a concept that takes parents beyond simply knowing what their children are learning in school, and provides opportunities for families to become involved. We choose to talk about parent engagement in Start Smart Stay Safe because it reflects the reciprocity and mutual commitment we feel is essential in developing lasting relations between schools and families.

- Beyond family involvement – Towards family engagement
- Active participation
- Meaningful involvement
- Giving parents a voice
- Working collaboratively

Family engagement in their children’s education comes in many forms and contributes to schools and students in a number of ways. Parents and family members volunteer to help and support students in classrooms, in the school office, and on field trips. They tutor students, volunteer in students programs and activities, and act as mentors. They raise funds for the school, support and organize activities to promote the school in the community. Parents may be in regular contact with the school to hear about what their children are learning in school and how they may better support this learning. (See [Actions Parents Can Take to Help Their Children Succeed in School](#) for more information on potential parent involvement in schools).

Parents also support children’s education at home by talking to their children about what they are learning and showing interest in their children’s accomplishments. They can also provide a quiet productive workspace for the children to do their homework and help their children develop routines to complete this homework on time.

These are all important ways for family members to be involved in creating positive outcomes for children.



S4 Family Engagement

The goal of the Family Component of Start Smart Stay Safe is “to enhance families’ existing knowledge, capacity, strengths, and skills to effectively support their children's inclusion in, and positive contribution to, society.”

As a parent of a child in a Start Smart Stay Safe (S4) school, there are many ways to be involved. Choose which one is a best fit for you.

1) Participate in the S4 Family Events and Activities with your children and family

- Use the [on-line resources](#) to further strengthen your family’s unique qualities and resilience
- Participate in Family Connection Activities that are sent home by your children’s classroom teacher
- Attend S4 [Family Sessions](#) and other school celebrations and events as part of S4

2) Participate in school council

- Be an S4 Parent advocate to inform school council of activities for families and coordinate other family events
- Support S4 initiatives as a member of school council by assisting, planning and attending of S4 focused activities for families at the school (see [Family Engagement Manual Activities Appendix](#))
- As part of School Council, invite students to share their learnings as part of S4 with School Council members at meetings

3) Volunteer as an S4 Parent Champion at the school to share S4 with other families

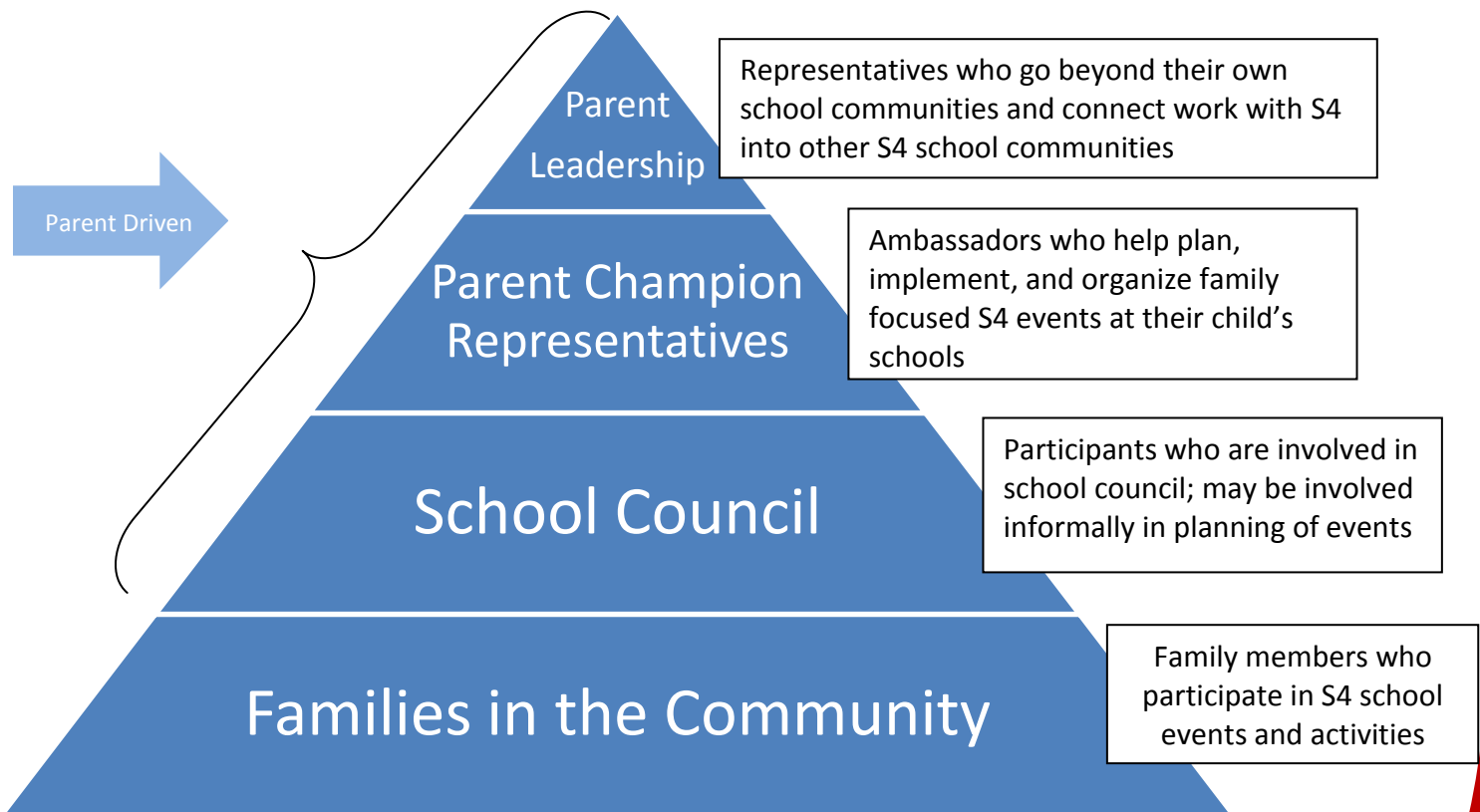
- Become an ambassador for the S4 program to help coordinate, plan, implement and organize family focused S4 events at your children’s school (see [Family Engagement Manual Activities Appendix](#))
- Help other families become familiar with S4 at events at the school like Welcome to Kindergarten, Meet the Teacher Nights, Parent Teacher Interviews, other School Celebrations. (Use [Family Activity Brochures](#) and [Activities](#) and [Helpful Hints](#) as handouts at your events to share information with families)
- Organize [Family Learning Sessions](#) with school administration for parents/caregivers, community members
- Contact your child’s school administration team to connect with the school’s assigned School Education Officer (SEO) to organize and coordinate Family Sessions
- Use the guide to involving your SEO at the school for other family focused events (found in the Engagement Manual – Officer Engagement)



4) Connect with other school communities to collaborate around S4

- Take S4 one step further and connect with other families within other school communities to organize collaborative S4 events between schools (like joint family sessions, or school wide community safety celebrations)

Below is a visual display of the variety of ways that families can become involved in S4
(Visual adapted from *Boston Children Thrive Leadership Pathways for Parents*, 2013)



References:

FSG.org (2013). *Boston Children thrive leadership pathways for parents*. Retrieved May, 2013 from http://www.fsg.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/PDF/Early_Success_Indicators_Webinar.pdf?cpgn=Webinar%20DL%20-%20Early%20Success%20Indicators%20ppt