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Purpose
The purpose of this study was to explore to what degree school leaders increased their understanding of “family engagement” and also to what degree did the administrators and teachers implement “family engagement” by the end of the first year.

The Article
Parents and their roles in schools is often the subject of heated debate. What was once “parent involvement” is now considered “family involvement.” Parent involvement suggests a picture of parents being involved in their children’s education. Typically the flow of information is between the school and the parents. Family involvement is considered a multiparty relationship among family and the school. However, schools often limit family involvement. Families are allowed to get involved, but their engagement in the actual learning process is minimal. Most often parents’ opportunity for learning at home is through support in homework, reading, and enrichment activities. There is a call for teachers and administrators to embrace a higher level of family involvement which has been termed “family engagement.” Family engagement implies a richer association between the home and school. However, the term “engagement” merely replaces “involvement” without understanding the rich subtly of difference. A qualitative research design was developed to explore the term “family engagement” based on the question: Is “family engagement” simply a new phrase or is it a synonym for “family involvement”? Participants were 90 school-site administrators from a midsized western school district. Results indicated that additional training was needed to help administrators broaden their understanding of parent involvement/family engagement. Lastly, the author discusses strategy components to foster engagement.

What this Means for the Field
Powerful change that enables a transition from “parent involvement” to “family engagement” requires a set of systematic steps with related meaningful, outcome based activities. It is through the gathering of information and analyzing the features of the school or school district that will guide crucial activities to develop a plan to foster sustained engagement building. It is through family engagement that families will receive increased support and involvement in their children’s education.

Citation

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