



Family Friendly Schools: School Selection Guide

Purpose

This guide helps district leaders (superintendents, family engagement leads, and other members of the district leadership team) to identify schools best positioned to participate in the Family Friendly Schools process.

Selecting the right schools early builds strong examples, creates momentum for the work to expand, and ensures participating schools have the leadership commitment and conditions needed to fully engage.

This **School Selection Guide complements the Family Friendly Fit and Readiness Checklist**, which supports both schools and districts in self-reflection about beginning the Family Friendly journey.

How to Use This Tool

1. Review “pause” indicators. If any are present, consider discussion before moving forward.
2. Review Selection Criteria Indicators and reflection prompts
3. Assign a score from 1–5 based which indicators are present
4. Compare scores across schools to inform selection discussions
5. Scores should be used to guide discussion and should not be the sole factor. Consider also selecting a diverse group of schools by grade, context, and community needs.

“Pause” Indicators – Stop and Reassess

Consider pausing if the school shows any of the following:

- Undergoing or preparing for a principal or leadership transition.
- High levels of staff dissatisfaction or conflict.
- Staff see certification as a compliance or marketing task, not a multi-year effort to strengthen teacher-family partnerships.
- Little experience or interest in family engagement strategies.
- History of short-lived initiatives that don’t last beyond one school year.
- Leadership repeatedly misses or cancels meetings.



- Staff or leadership resist reflection, feedback, or trying new approaches.
- School conversations consistently frame families in a negative or deficit-oriented way (e.g., “families don’t care,” “our families are different”).

of Pause Indicators present: _____

Reflection Question:

Which indicators suggest this school may need more preparation before starting? Are there any issues that would prevent us from moving forward at this time?

Selection Criteria:

1. Principal Leadership Indicators:

- Principal is known for communicating the school’s commitment and strategies for engaging families.
- Principal already sets aside time for staff to practice family engagement and learn best practices.
- Principal has a track record of supporting initiatives that respond to feedback from families, staff, students, or the community.
- Principal already keeps staff and families in the loop about decisions, changes, and celebrations.

of Principal Indicators present: _____

Reflection Question:

Where does the principal already show the mindset and habits to lead this work, and are there any gaps to discuss?

2. School Action Team Indicators:

- School already has a staff member wanting and able to take on the Team lead role (this can be the principal).



- School already has active teams that include a mix of staff and family partners, or shows willingness to build an inclusive team.
- School has a history of maintaining teams or committees through staff transitions or other changes.
- Leadership supports team meetings and provides regular feedback to help the team function effectively.
- School already has systems in place to recruit classroom teachers and remove barriers for family participation (e.g., stipends, childcare, transportation, flexible meeting times)

of Action Team Indicators present: _____

Reflection Question:

Where does the school already show the ability and mindset to build and sustain a Family Friendly School Team, and are there any gaps to discuss?

3. Openness to Learning and Sharing Indicators:

- School already reviews practices and makes improvements based on what they learn.
- Classroom teachers are open to feedback, coaching, or trying new approaches.
- School already shares successes and challenges openly with staff, families, or district leaders.
- School already participates in learning sessions or improvement discussions and applies lessons to action.
- School already contributes to district-wide or cross-school learning where possible.

of Learning and Sharing Indicators present: _____

Reflection Question:

Where does the school already show openness to learning and sharing, and where might support be needed?

4. Capacity to Participate Indicators:

- Staff schedules and workloads allow them to consistently attend staff meetings and family engagement activities.
- The school tracks family engagement participation and feedback through simple data systems (i.e. post-event surveys and annual family feedback reports).
- Leadership keeps the number of team initiatives manageable to ensure there is adequate support, staffing and family participation. (i.e. ensuring you aren't burning out the same leaders)
- The school communicates with families through multiple channels (email, calls, in-person) to share information and invite participants.
- Basic resources and structures are available for staff and families to meet (i.e. meeting spaces, time, simple tools).

of Capacity Indicators present: _____

Reflection Question:

Where does the school already have the structures and resources to participate fully, and what barriers should we discuss?

Eagerness to Sustain Indicators:

- Leadership and staff recognize that family partnership is central to learning, not just about events or programs.
- The school wants to strengthen classroom teacher-family relationships and sees the value of this work in improving learning outcomes
- Leaders are open to making system-level changes (schedules, communication, policies) if needed to support families and teachers.
- Staff and leadership are eager to rethink routines, roles, or practices to create a more family-friendly culture.
- The school expresses long-term interest in sustaining changes that embed family partnership into the school's culture.



of Sustainability Indicators present: _____

Reflection Question:

Where does the school show eagerness and understanding of what true family partnership requires, and are there any concerns about readiness or commitment?

Scoring and Selection

1. Assign 1–5 for each criterion (maximum 30 points).
2. Use both scores and pause indicators to guide discussions.

Score Guidance:

- **27–30:** Strong candidate for early participation
- **21–26:** Likely ready with some support
- **15–20:** May need additional preparation
- **Below 15:** Consider delaying participation

Schools should also complete the Family Friendly Fit and Readiness Guide to reflect on their own readiness, ensuring both district support and school-level preparedness.

School Name: _____

Total Score: _____

Notes on “Pause indicators”: _____

Other Important Discussion Notes: _____
