

QUICK FACTS

How Can SEPAGs Build Diverse Family Engagement?

Even with the best of intentions, it may be difficult to get and keep a core group of parents engaged in the Special Education Parent Advisory Groups, or SEPAGs. It's even harder to do in the diverse school districts in which there are language and cultural differences that may further impact parent involvement in the SEPAG. Follow these strategies and tips to increase your culturally responsive practices in your school district when it comes to engaging diverse families on SEPAGs.



START Statewide Technical Assistance
and Resource Team

To invite and support the input from culturally and linguistically diverse families in SEPAG decisions:

- Translate special education documents, meeting announcements, SEPAG materials, and SEPAG needs assessments in languages spoken by families in your school community
- Provide interpretation services at SEPAG meetings
- **Use multiple ways for outreach, such as:**
 - Sending flyers home
 - Posting SEPAG meeting announcements on the school website, district calendar, social media platforms determined to be used by families
 - Communicating via mail, email and text-message
 - Making personal phone calls
 - Posting announcements in different locations within the community and on a marquee sign in native languages spoken by families
- Hold SEPAG meetings in different, accessible locations and at different times of the day to give everyone the opportunity to attend.
- Make decisions by consensus and respect all cultures to build on what unites us.

To ensure ongoing, two-way communication when engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse families in your school district:

- Send information to families in understandable terms and in languages spoken by families in their homes
- Provide strategies to district staff on ways to effectively communicate with all families and let families know how to reach teachers, staff members, and principals directly.
- Provide multiple ways for engagement and communication, including translation of the information on the school district website in multiple languages, staff interpreters to assist with verbal and written communications, communication via email, text, Facebook messaging, and language phone-line service for families and staff.

To show support for the culturally and linguistically diverse families and their experiences:

- Hire culturally and linguistically diverse educators, professional and support staff, family- community liaisons, and professional interpreters that reflect community demographics.
- Be inclusive and assume a multi-generational approach to diverse family engagement on SEPAGs.
- Offer training to educate diverse families on the US educational system and school operations.
- Provide training to all school district staff on the cultural diversity of the students and their families.
- Honor cultural diversity in the school community by identifying and recognizing daily traditions observed by students and their families, and avoid scheduling meetings during those times.
- Bring in partnerships with community resources that support family engagement activities that could provide additional supports and services, including after-school programs, ESL classes for families, libraries, YMCA, and interfaith groups.
- Provides sufficient time for families to share their experiences during the pre-meeting listening session before the SEPAG meeting.

Thank
you

The New Jersey Family Engagement Hub would like to thank all parents, SEPAG members, and school district staff for their contributions toward the development of this quick reference guide



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Reaching Out to Diverse Populations:
What Can Schools Do To Foster Family-
School Connections?



Minority Parent and Community
Engagement: Best Practices and Policy
Recommendations for Closing the
Gaps in Student Achievement



For a complete guide to starting and supporting a SEPAG in your school, district, or community, visit the **START at the New Jersey Family Engagement Hub** (<https://njfehub.org/start/>)

Access the SPAN SEPAG Guide

