



Newsletter

Stay updated on monthly news, events, & resources for families, schools, and communities!

Welcome to the Engagement Exchange Newsletter!

Inside Issue 10

Welcome Message

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Stay Connected



Upcoming Events

Bridging the Gap: Building Strong Communication with the Whole School Team

August 11, 2026, from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm

[Registration Link](#)

In - Person: Parents as Champions PAC Learning Series

Wednesdays, August 12, 19, 26, at the Clifton Public Library from 10:30 AM to 2:00 PM

[Registration Link](#)

Supporting Students, Families, and Educators Through School Transitions

August 18, 2026, from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

[Registration Link](#)

Digital Boundaries Real-World Awareness: Family Approach to Student Safety

September 8, 2026, from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

[Registration Link](#)

Beyond the Bell: Building a Community-Wide Attendance Team

September 18, 2026, from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm

[Registration Link](#)

Addressing Bullying: What Families Need to Know and How to Respond

October 13, 2026 from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM

[Registration Link](#)

Getting it Done: Hacks for Homework and Life

October 20, 2026, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM

[Registration Link](#)

Deepening Male Engagement: Practical Strategies for Fathers and Male Caregivers

November 10, 2026, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM

[Registration Link](#)



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A welcome message from the Project Co - Directors

Dear Families, Students, Educators, and Community Partners: Welcome to the tenth edition of our Family and Community Engagement Exchange Newsletter!

We're excited to share not just updates and resources, but also a renewed focus on building meaningful partnerships between home, school, and community.

The name Engagement Exchange reflects our commitment to two-way communication, shared learning, and collaboration. We believe that strong family-school partnerships are essential for student success, and that starts with sharing ideas, celebrating wins, and working together.

In this issue, you'll find:

- Highlights from recent family events and initiatives
- Tips and tools for supporting learning at home
- Opportunities to get involved and make your voice heard
- A sneak peek at upcoming events and program

We hope this new format and name resonate with you, and we welcome your feedback! If there's something you'd love to see featured or a story worth sharing, don't hesitate to reach out.

Visit NJFEHUB.org to access these resources and continue fostering meaningful engagement year-round.

Thank you for being an essential part of our learning community. **Let's continue the exchange!**

Warmly,

Dr. Lanisha Makle-Ridley and Jeannette Mejias

Co-Project Directors

New Jersey Family Engagement Hub



Dr. Lanisha - Makle Ridley
Lanisha Makle-Ridley



Jeannette Mejias
Jeannette Mejias

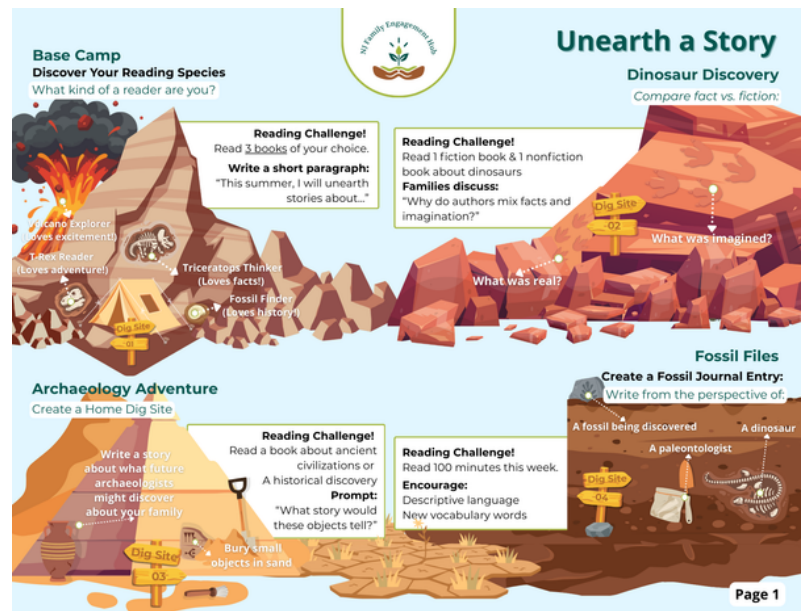
NJFEHUB News



NJFEHUB Website

Join Our Reading Expedition: Unearth a Story!

Pick up your Dig Site Map at in-person events or download it from the NJFEHub website. Available in both **English and Spanish**, this fun-filled adventure invites families to explore 8 exciting “dig sites,” each featuring weekly reading challenges and activities. Track your journey using the Activity & Reading Log as you progress toward becoming a Master Story Excavator and earn your certificate along the way!



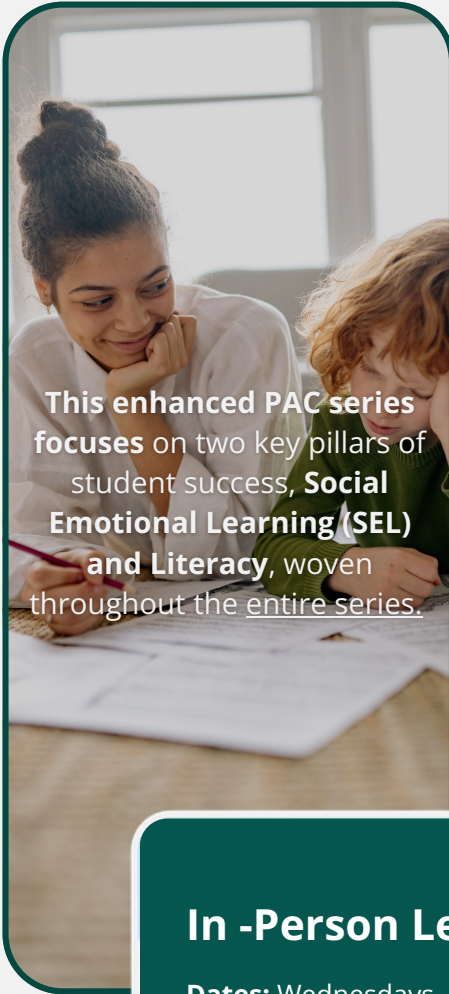
New Jersey Family Engagement Calendar 2026

We're excited to share the **New Jersey Family Engagement Hub's 2026 Family Engagement Calendar**, filled with activities designed to strengthen family connections and support meaningful learning at home. Be sure to look out for the calendar at our in-person events. It's a great resource you won't want to miss.



The New Jersey Family Engagement Hub
is a project of SPAN funded by the U.S.
Department of Education.

The Parents as Champions (PAC) Learning Series



This enhanced PAC series focuses on two key pillars of student success, **Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Literacy**, woven throughout the entire series.



By strengthening these areas, the series equips families with practical tools and strategies to support children's academic, social, and emotional growth at home and in school.



Join us as we grow a community of informed, confident, and engaged **parent leaders**.

In -Person Learning Series

Dates: Wednesdays, August 12, August 19, & August 26

Time: 10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

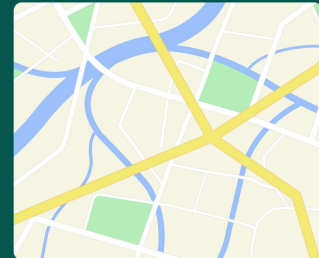
Location: Clifton Public Library, **Room A**

Address: 292 Piaget Avenue, Clifton, NJ 07011

Attendance at all three sessions is required to receive a certificate of completion, and participants who successfully complete the series will be awarded a **National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement** membership.

NAFSCE is the only professional association dedicated solely to those who spend each and every day making family engagement happen- and strive to engage all families in the development of their children.

Learn more about NAFSCE by visiting: <https://nafsce.org/>



Register Now



Scan to Register
(QR Code)

NUTRITION AND HEALTHY CHOICES



WHY IT MATTERS FOR MATH

Nutrition uses numbers. Healthy eating and food choices involve many numbers. For example, nutrition labels include serving sizes, calories, grams of sugar, grams of protein, and percent daily values. Exploring these numbers together helps children develop both math skills and healthy habits.

IDEAS TO TRY AT HOME



- **Sugar Detective.** Compare two foods. Ask: Which has more sugar? How many grams more?
- **Serving Size Math.** Look at a snack label. For example, if one serving is 12 crackers, how many crackers are two servings? How many servings are in the box?
- **Build a Balanced Plate.** Use a simple plate drawing. Ask your child to fill $\frac{1}{2}$ the plate with fruits and vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ with grains, and $\frac{1}{4}$ with protein. This helps children explore fractions and proportions.



Brought to you by:



Resources:

- [USDA MyPlate parent handouts](#) – info and interactive activities on nutrition and physical activity
- [The Healthy Eating Plate](#) – a visual that shows what types of food and how much of each is healthy
- [From the Label to the Table](#) by NIEHS shows kids and parents how to read a nutrition label

SEVENTH ANNUAL
Family Engagement
LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

small steps

**extraordinary
impact**

leading the way for family engagement



Ohio Statewide
Family Engagement Center

Join us online on September 18, 2026

Register today at go.osu.edu/FamilyEngagementSummit



Join us at the 2026 Family Engagement Leadership Summit!

The Summit is dedicated to a core belief that the most extraordinary breakthroughs in education begin with simple, intentional shifts in how we lead. By empowering educators and community leaders to prioritize authentic connection and accessible communication, we transform everyday actions into lifelong success for every student.

Shalinee Sharma is this year's keynote speaker. She is the co-founder of Zearn and the author of Math Mind: The Simple Path to Loving Math.

Over 20 engaging breakout sessions will cover important areas of family engagement: Attendance, Mathematics, Literacy, Career Development, Artificial Intelligence and more.

- Practical tools you can use immediately
- Inspiring examples from across the example
- Engaging sessions from the Harvard, John Hopkins, and Appalachian State
- Networking with passionate family engagement leaders



In addition, a special networking session for our state is planned at 3:30 pm EST. Registration is now open through September 11, 2026. We hope to see you there!

Family Engagement Toolkit

Our Family Engagement Toolkit offers practical resources to help families understand progress reports and report cards, prepare for parent-teacher conferences, identify concerns early, and set SMARTER goals. **These tools are designed to empower families, build trust, and strengthen collaboration with schools, supporting every child's academic and personal growth.**



Back to School Toolkit

Our Back-to-School Toolkit provides practical resources to help families prepare for a successful school year, including guidance on school supplies, literacy and family math activities, and social-emotional learning supports. It also offers strategies to strengthen family-school partnerships and connects families with libraries, fatherhood engagement opportunities, and community resources to support every child's academic and personal success.



To learn more about our upcoming in - person and virtual events, visit the [SPAN Events Page](#) using the button below.

[SPAN Events](#)



Testimonials



How can we improve the program?

Excellent Program.

Attended a NJFEH Webinar



Describe in 1-2 sentences what you learned from the workshop.

Digital contract, support in learning AI and safe use of technology

Attended a Social Emotional Learning Alliance for NJ



Describe in 1-2 sentences what you learned from the workshop.

How to identify learning styles.

Attended a NJFEH Lunch & Learn



Hub Updates & Community Highlights

Webinar Recap: Skill Up This Summer: Engaging Activities to Inspire Learning at School and Beyond



This webinar encouraged families to make the most of summer through enriching activities that build skills, spark creativity, and support learning beyond the classroom. Participants explored opportunities such as STEM, arts, sports, volunteering, internships, libraries, museums, and community programs, while learning practical tips for planning ahead and finding affordable local resources.

The session also highlighted the shared role of families, educators, and community organizations in supporting student success. By encouraging year-round learning and collaboration, the webinar emphasized that meaningful summer experiences help students build confidence, develop new skills, and return to school ready to succeed.

Lunch & Learn Recap: The College Track



Designed to help students become college- and career-ready while empowering families and community members to advocate for high-quality education. Participants learned from the experiences of successful participants who shared different pathways to college and careers, demonstrating that there are multiple routes to achieving future goals. The session encouraged participants to ask

about preparing every student for success after graduation. Meaningful questions, exploring college and career options, and beginning to develop personalized action plans. By focusing on informed decision-making and self-determination, the webinar emphasized preparing every student for success after graduation.

Lunch & Learn Recap: Understanding The School Budget



This Lunch & Learn webinar provided families with an overview of the school budget process and explained how state and district budget decisions influence students' educational experiences. Participants learned how budgets are developed, from the Governor's budget proposal through local school board planning and public hearings, and gained insight into district and school-level

budget priorities, including funding for programs, services, and family engagement. The session also focused on helping families become informed advocates by teaching them how to read school budgets, identify key spending areas, and ask meaningful questions about how resources are allocated. Through strategies from the Right Question Project, participants explored ways ways to engage in budget discussions, understand what

their children need to succeed, and work collaboratively with school leaders to support student achievement. **To learn more about Paterson Education Fund, please visit their website at: <https://paterson-education.org/>**

June 2026 Partner Workshops: SEL4NJ

SEL4NJ Workshop: Digital Well-being & Social Awareness in the AI era



This workshop explored how families and educators can promote healthy technology use by balancing the benefits of AI with students' social-emotional well-being. Participants learned practical strategies to encourage responsible digital habits, support self-awareness and decision-making, and model positive technology use at home and in the classroom. The session also highlighted how AI can enhance

learning when used thoughtfully to generate ideas, build understanding, and support problem-solving without replacing critical thinking. Families and educators were encouraged to guide students in using technology to foster learning, resilience, and overall well-being.

SEL4NJ Workshop: Creating Meaningful Partnerships for Youth



This workshop explored how strong partnerships between schools, families, and community organizations create a coordinated support system that helps children and youth thrive. Participants learned why connection and belonging are essential for resilience, well-being, academic success, and positive relationships, while examining common barriers to engagement and strategies for

Supportive, meaningful participation. The session emphasized building trust through consistent communication, listening, recognizing the strengths of families and communities, and sharing responsibility for student success. Presenters also highlighted the importance of elevating youth voice and leadership by creating opportunities for students to contribute, make decisions, and speak up for themselves.

Ultimately, the workshop reinforced that when families, schools, and community partners work together, young people experience the consistent support they need to grow, succeed, and reach their full potential.

Lunch and Learn: Unlocking Your Child’s Learning Style: Tools to Get Better Engaged and Become a Stronger Parent Partner



This Lunch and Learn explored how understanding a child’s unique way of processing information can help families create more positive and effective learning experiences at home. Participants learned about different learning approaches, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic strategies, while gaining practical tools to better support homework, study habits, and academic growth. The session emphasized

moving beyond simply monitoring grades to building strong partnerships that connect home and school learning. Families explored the benefits of multisensory learning, creating supportive routines, using community resources like libraries, and encouraging strategies that help students build confidence, independence, and success.

July 2026 Partner Workshops: SEL4NJ

SEL4NJ Workshop: A Strengths-Based Approach to Teaching



This workshop explored how a strengths-based approach helps educators build trust, motivation, and engagement by recognizing what students do well while supporting areas for growth. Participants learned how to shift from focusing on challenges and deficits to identifying students’ academic, social, emotional, and behavioral strengths in meaningful ways. The session emphasized reframing

behaviors as opportunities to build skills rather than as character flaws. Educators explored strategies for using positive language, recognizing student strengths, and creating classroom environments where students feel valued, capable, and connected. By helping students see their own potential, educators can strengthen relationships, increase confidence, and support long-term success.

SEL4NJ Workshop: The Power of Words: How Language Shapes Growth and Connection



This webinar explored how intentional, positive language shapes children's behavior, confidence, and self-belief. Participants learned how everyday words influence identity, relationships, and motivation, and discovered strategies for shifting from controlling or corrective language to language that teaches, guides, and encourages growth. Through real-life scenarios, such as responding when a child

repeatedly forgets homework; they practiced reframing common responses into coaching conversations that promote responsibility, problem-solving, and self-reflection. The session also highlighted the importance of replacing generic praise and criticism with meaningful feedback that recognizes effort, perseverance, and learning.

The presenter shared practical language swaps that families, educators, and community members can use to strengthen relationships, reduce conflict, and help children feel capable, connected, and motivated. Ultimately, the webinar reinforced that small changes in everyday communication can have a lasting impact on children's resilience, confidence, and long-term success. **To learn more about SEL4NJ, please visit their website at: <https://sel4nj.org>.**

To learn more about our upcoming in - person and virtual events, visit the SPAN Events Page using the button below.

[SPAN Events](#)



Community Connections

Donuts with Dads



Jefferson Elementary School in Plainfield, NJ, continues to shine as a beacon of community engagement and family involvement. On June 13th, the school hosted its much-anticipated annual Donuts with Dads event, drawing fathers, father figures, and students together in a celebration of the vital roles dads play in their children's lives. The morning was filled with laughter and warmth as

families gathered in the school cafeteria for a breakfast spread featuring donuts, coffee, and a variety of delicious treats. The event fostered a welcoming environment where fathers and their children could share special moments before the school day began. A highlight of the morning was an inspiring presentation by Reverend Odom of Paterson, NJ, on behalf of the New Destiny Family Success Center.

Reverend Odom spoke passionately about the importance of fatherhood, community support, and the upcoming launch of the Dad's Club at Jefferson Elementary. His words resonated with the audience, encouraging greater father involvement in school activities and offering practical support for dads navigating parenthood. The event concluded with lively games and exciting prizes, leaving everyone smiling



and with a sense of camaraderie. Donuts with Dads is more than just a breakfast—it's a testament to the school's commitment to building strong family-school partnerships and nurturing the next generation with the help of engaged, caring fathers and role models. As Jefferson Elementary looks ahead to future Dad's Club events, the school community remains grateful for the enthusiasm and support shown by all the fathers and father figures who attended this year's gathering.

By Evann Hardy, Central Region Family Engagement Specialist, NJ Family Engagement Hub.



Featured Articles and Resources



Explore research-based resources from Harvard's Center on the Developing Child to discover simple strategies that help support healthy development, resilience, and lifelong learning.

[Visit Website](https://developingchild.harvard.edu/)

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2026b, July 23). Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/>



Want to help students succeed? Discover how family, school, and community partnerships create stronger learning environments with resources from the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement.

[View Website](https://nafsce.org/)

NAFSCE. "National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement." Nafsce.Org, 2019, <https://nafsce.org/>. Accessed 27 July 2026.



What career could be the right fit for you? Use [CareerOneStop](https://www.careeronestop.org/) to explore careers, identify your strengths, and find education and training opportunities.

[View Website](https://www.careeronestop.org/)

CareerOneStop. (n.d.). Careers and career information - CareerOneStop. <https://www.careeronestop.org/>

Check out NJFEHUB Fridays and Youth Engagement Saturdays on Instagram!

Get inspired with awesome activities and epic highlights.

Follow SPAN on Instagram today!





Stay Connected

Get the latest on SPAN Parent Advocacy Network and the New Jersey Family Engagement Hub (NJFEH)-- stay informed, connected, and be part of the journey!

SPAN Events

Need to reach us? We're here to help!

Visit the SPAN Office: 570 Broad Street, Suite 702 | Newark, NJ 07102

Contact SPAN: Toll-free in NJ: (800) 654-SPAN (7726)

Tel: (973) 642-8100 | **Fax:** (973) 642-8080

Email: info@spanadvocacy.org

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The New Jersey Family Engagement Hub is a project of SPAN funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

