Across the country, the role of families in supporting their child’s learning and development has perhaps never been more evident than in the past two years. The pandemic highlighted the significant role of families in supporting student success, both in school and at home. Through those experiences, many families have taken on a greater role in being advocates for their child’s education. That is something to be celebrated! However, at a time when family engagement is being elevated, it is also being misrepresented and politicized in ways that undermine the success of our nation’s children. For this reason, as the national association focused on advancing family, school and community engagement, we are compelled to communicate our longstanding values and unwavering beliefs.

NAFSCE stands for family engagement as an essential strategy for advancing equity. Now more than ever, we must be committed to examining, respecting, and valuing the cultural and linguistic diversity of families and communities. Therefore, we stand against any exclusionary narratives that deploy divisive tactics such as:

- Using one group of families to speak out on issues that explicitly attack or exclude other students and families
- Using families as watchdogs against educators instead of as partners
- Forcing educators to explicitly exclude or to stifle the inclusion of students and families, particularly marginalized communities, due to their race, sexual orientation, gender identity, or in other discriminatory ways, through the curriculum being taught, restrictions on curriculum, the language they are allowed to use, or through other teaching practices.

The current political narrative which misrepresents family engagement has been brought about by an array of polarizing discussions which have divided the school community—placing families, teachers, administrators, support staff, community organizations and others on conflicting sides. This is contrary to what family engagement is. The research is clear, when families, educators and the community are collaborating effectively, kids win.

We believe that students of every background, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, economic or social standing are entitled to a fair, impartial, equal and equitable public education experience at every developmental stage. We believe that authentic family, school, and community engagement does not seek to alienate any families or students from receiving an inclusive and culturally responsive public education.
We are an organization that salutes the differences of each and every family, because we believe that those are the qualities that make us so much stronger together. Family engagement is a shared responsibility that builds partnerships among families, schools, and community spaces to work collaboratively in creating safe educational environments and advantageous opportunities for every student. Core to our practice, we must champion equity as an essential element of family and community engagement and stand with families for equitable educational systems and outcomes. It is our responsibility to recognize that not every family and parent's voice is represented. Thus, we have a duty as family engagement professionals to remind ourselves and others that equity must be built into our systems and our professional practice so we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. It is our purpose to establish mutual respect, understanding, and trust amongst each other to ensure that every child feels represented, protected, and educated. We must be diligent in forging transformative partnerships with families and community partners which embody these values, providing each and every child with opportunities to succeed in school and in life.
Healing the Growing Divide Statement of Support
(Updated October 26, 2022)

The undersigned organizations support NAFSCE’s statement on Healing the Growing Divide Through Family, School, and Community Engagement. Divisive political agendas and a growing public discourse is driving a wedge among families, community members, and the school community, particularly educators and administrators. We echo the sentiments that we all need to come together - families, teachers, administrators, support staff, community organizations, and others - to support each and every child and one another.

20th Legislative District, Illinois

Coaction Collective

The Education Trust

Learning Heroes

National Family Support Network

Parent Institute for Quality Education

Reachwell

The 1647, Inc.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

The Federation for Children with Special Needs

MAEC, Inc

One Green Apple, LLC

The Parents' Place of MD

[Ohio] State Support Team Region 7

Children’s Equity Coalition

Council for Accreditation of Education Preparation

The Flamboyan Foundation

National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy, and Community Empowerment

Parent Education For Exceptional Children

Parents for Public Schools of Greenwood & Leflore County

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