



# Preparing Educators in Kentucky for Partnerships

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## Overview

In the fall of 2020, NAFSCE fielded the [National Survey of Colleges and Universities Preparing Educators for Family Engagement](#).<sup>1</sup> The survey of over 150 educator preparation programs across the country showed that although there are promising pockets of success in how educators learn and practice family and community engagement, there is room to grow. To map the landscape in Kentucky, in 2022, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence adapted the original survey and asked department chairs or deans from the 37 educator preparation programs (EPPs) across the state to respond. Of the 21 to answer the call, the findings were distressing:

- 46% acknowledged that graduates were less prepared for family engagement, relative to other skills, knowledge, and dispositions;
- 22% reported just one stand-alone family engagement course;
- 4% of institutions tracked how well completers are prepared to engage families;
- Major challenges reported were “too many courses” and “limited opportunities in the field.”

Yet, a positive result from the survey emerged. A full 74% of respondents expressed an interest in strengthening their knowledge of family engagement. From this finding the Kentucky Preparing Educators for Partnerships (KYPrEP) was born. The goal of the project was to work with

### PROJECT PARTNERS

**The Prichard Committee and its Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership**

**Morehead State University (Morehead State)**

**Eastern Kentucky University (EKU)**

**Rowan County School District**

**Madison County School District**

**Kentucky Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (KACTE)**

teacher educators throughout Kentucky's EPPs to build their understanding and awareness of family and community engagement and embed it throughout their courses and clinical experiences.

## The Innovation

The project focused on five main activities:

- **Focus groups:** Family leaders from Madison County District Schools, Rowan County District Schools, and the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership along with educators and teacher educators participated in one-hour focus group sessions to share how they would like family and community engagement to be represented in educator preparation curricula.
- **In-class seminars:** Four teacher educators, two at Morehead State and two at EKU, opened their classes to four seminar sessions led by Prichard Committee staff. The seminar sessions were designed to flexibly fit into each course and were designed based on focus group sessions. The four seminars were also organized around ideas presented in the Family Engagement Core Competencies – Reflect, Connect, Collaborate, and Lead – and the Dual Capacity Building Framework.<sup>2</sup> Teacher educators were also asked to integrate one family and community engagement assignment into their course. The text box below highlights two sample activities used during the seminar sessions.
- **Family-led panel discussions:** Family and school personnel representatives spoke in a panel format with pre-service teacher candidates in the four classes. These discussions were either virtual or in person. Teacher candidates developed the questions for the panelists with additional questions prompted by the conversation.
- **Communities of practice:** Through bi-weekly communities of practice, teacher educators had an opportunity to discuss what was working in the seminars, what could be improved, and share teacher candidate projects, rubrics for evaluation, and commitments to sustaining family engagement in the curricula.

### Activities To Get Students Thinking

**Resource round-up role play:** This activity is intended to generate discussion around the levels of empowerment traditionally held by families and by school personnel, ending with a discussion about how developing the four family engagement competencies can change the dynamic of working with families.

**Categorizing from involvement to engagement:**

This activity asks students to consider different types of activities and categorize them as family involvement, family engagement, or partnership.

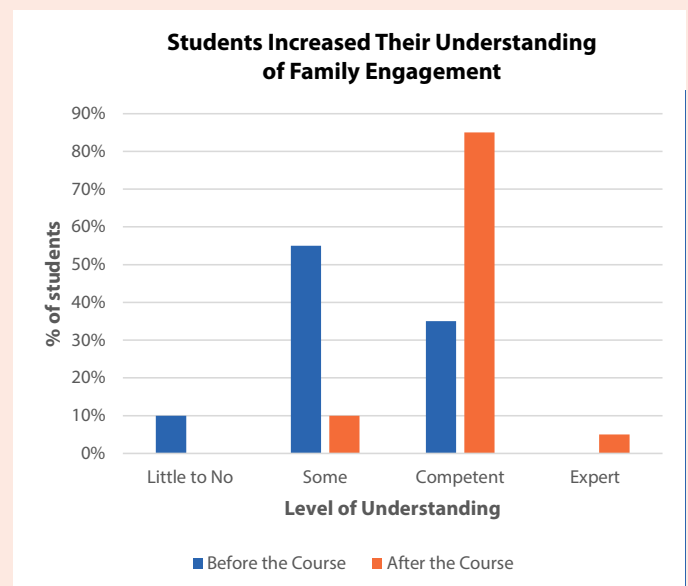
- **Presentations at the annual KACTE meeting:** For the culmination of the project, teacher educators and participating teacher candidates presented at the Annual Conference of the KACTE.

## Outcomes

### Pre-Service teacher candidates increased their confidence in working with families.

Pre-service teacher candidates participating in the seminar sessions were asked to complete a survey at the beginning and end of their course. Before the class began, only 35% of teacher candidates felt competent in their understanding of family engagement. That grew to 85% after the seminars.

Figure 1. Pre-Service Teacher Candidates Increased Their Confidence in Working with Families



Moreover, at the end of the semester, 82% of teacher candidates indicated significant growth in each of the key areas of respecting and valuing families, embracing equity, building trusting relationships, and linking family engagement to learning and development.

### Teacher educators increased their knowledge and confidence for teaching family and community engagement.

Through monthly communities of practice, participating teacher educators frequently reported they had learned and built their confidence. They also increased their understanding of different methods to bring about teacher candidate learning including readings, discussions, role playing, case methods, guest speaker panels, service learning, and action research projects. During these

communities of practice teacher educators shared different tools with one another including rubrics for assessing family and community engagement projects. Figure 2 illustrates a scoring guide that was created by a faculty member and students together.

**Multiple partners increased their commitment to improve how educators are prepared to engage families.**

The project led to commitments from various partners to improve systems for preparing educators for family and community engagement. At the university level, teacher educators from Morehead State and ECU have made commitments to continue to embed seminars on family and community engagement into their courses through the Fall of 2023. For example, in her fall semester course, EDEE 330 Reading for the Elementary Teacher, Dr. Rebecca Roach, assistant professor of education at Morehead State, created an assignment in which pre-service teacher candidates engaged with families during the family reading night hosted by the school where teacher candidates completed their field experience. During the reading night, the Morehead State teacher candidates created family-friendly trifold handouts, aligned with specific reading standards, describing activities that are practical and fun. Between family-teacher conferences, caregivers visited the media center and talked with candidates about the at-home or on-the-go strategies the students developed to increase reading engagement as a family.

Figure 2. Co-Constructed Scoring Guide for Family Engagement Projects

**Scoring Guide for Family Engagement Project: UTCH450**

Areas for Improvement	Criteria	Evidence of Exceeding
	<p><b>Capabilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows families to gain a new skill or new knowledge</li> <li>Asset-based and linked to learning</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Connections</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows families to make new or to strengthen connections to school/classroom/content</li> <li>Relational – built on trust</li> <li>Allows for feedback from families</li> <li>Culturally responsive and respectful</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Cognition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows families to have a positive shift in beliefs and values related to equity and excellence in school/classroom</li> <li>Provides transparency into the classroom so families have knowledge of daily routines</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Confidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows families to have more confidence in supporting academic success</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Quality of Materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well-written or spoken; no spelling/grammatical/content errors</li> <li>Engaging</li> <li>Practical</li> </ul>	

*\*Highlight the targeted capacity(ies) of project*





Teacher educators are also working to incorporate family and community engagement into the college-level courses' Student Learning Outcomes. This requires committee approval and is another avenue to ensure sustainability of this work, codifying the course requirements, regardless of who taught the course. Finally, partner districts are pursuing opportunities to go through a certification process with the Prichard Committee to become Family Friendly Schools (FFS), a certification recognized by the state in the accountability model. FFSs provide a meaningful environment for pre-service teachers to apply their learning about family and community engagement.

## Concluding Thoughts

Taken together, the KYPrEP innovation increased pre-service teachers' confidence in working with families, increased teacher educator knowledge and confidence for teaching family and community engagement and increased the commitment among multiple partners to improve how families and communities are part of educator preparation coursework. Next steps for the project include gathering materials from the project to use as the basis of a virtual state-wide teacher educator family engagement discussion group. Partners are also joining with KACTE to influence sustainability at a policy level by looking to changes to accreditation and licensure requirements around family and community engagement.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Caspe, M. & Hernández, R. (2021). National survey of colleges and universities preparing educators for family engagement. National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement. <https://nafsce.org/page/IHESurvey>

<sup>2</sup>National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement [NAFSCE] (2022). Family engagement core competencies: A body of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for family-facing professionals. <https://nafsce.org/page/CoreCompetencies>; Mapp, K. L. & Bergman, E. (2019). Dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships (Version 2). [www.dualcapacity.org](http://www.dualcapacity.org)

<sup>3</sup>You can read more about KYPrEP's work at: <https://www.prichardcommittee.org/colleges-help-future-teachers-build-family-outreach/>

The National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) is the first membership association focused solely on advancing family, school, and community engagement. Our mission is advancing high-impact policies and practices for family, school, and community engagement to promote child development and improve student achievement. This research-to-practice brief was developed as part of NAFSCE's Family Engagement and Educator Preparation Impact Project, the goal of which is to fund local innovations in testing components of the Educator Preparation Framework for Family and Community Engagement. We wish to acknowledge Dr. Margaret Caspe and Elia Hilda Bueno for their research and writing support. You can learn more about NAFSCE's work at: [www.nafsce.org/edprep](http://www.nafsce.org/edprep).