



June 29, 2021

Dr. Miguel Cardona
U.S. Secretary of Education
Department of Education
Department of Education Building
400 Maryland Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona,

The National Association of Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) and members of its National Alliance for Family Engagement, a coalition of organizations that have come together to provide thought leadership in broad areas of knowledge and influence around family, school, and community engagement, are writing to urge you to establish an [Office of Family and Community Engagement](#) within the U.S. Department of Education. This office will serve as a support system for state and local education agencies on the implementation of high-impact family, school, and community engagement (FSCE) practices and policies to promote child development, student achievement and school improvement.

We congratulate the Department in making strides using the American Rescue Plan to provide educational agencies with the resources to make strategic and beneficial plans for schools and students as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there has been insufficient priority for incorporating FSCE practices into these plans. Family, school, and community engagement needs to be more extensive than just outreach and public relations. As we move forward, we must be strategic and intentional in reaching and engaging all families, of all races, cultures and socio-economic statuses, supporting authentic collaboration as educational partners to close the gap on achievement and support student success.

We believe that family and community engagement is one of the most important, and too often forgotten, factors in a student's education. Therefore, in order for there to be true transformational change to education, we must increase the voices of parents and communities. Additionally, we must encourage the building of partnerships among families, communities, and schools themselves. This is where an Office of Family and Community Engagement will be most effective. The Department of Education has the opportunity to actualize a new and improved education structure that puts families and communities at the forefront.

The Office of Family and Community Engagement should:

- coordinate FSCE across Department offices;
- serve as a liaison to facilitate inter-agency coordination between the White House, the Department of Education, and other federal agencies serving children and families;
- not only provide internal support for the administration and oversight of FSCE across federal programs, but also provide significant guidance and resources to local education agencies;

- advance equity and support communities, students, and families that have been historically underserved and under-resourced by championing equitable strategies in education practices and policies that provide all families the opportunity to participate in meaningful ways;
- engage with national and local stakeholders on a regular basis, including convening a nationally-representative Family Cabinet, to inform the Department's work;
- enhance communication with families, communities, and other stakeholders
- collect and share FSCE best-practices; support improved practice and strengthened policies; and provide greater access and transparency for families and communities to decision-makers.

As the country prepares for the after-effects of COVID-19 and the Department of Education continues to provide guidance for the reopening of schools across the country, now is the time for education advocacy and policy reform to reflect the importance of high-impact family, school, and community engagement practices. Now is the time to truly reshape our education system in the image of our diverse communities. We urge you, Secretary Cardona and the Department of Education, to establish an Office of Family and Community Engagement within the Department of Education for the benefit of all students, families, and communities in this nation.

Sincerely,

The National Association of Family, School, and Community Engagement
 Afterschool Alliance
 Brazelton Touchpoints Project, Inc.
 Children's Equity Coalition
 Committee for Children
 Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)
 the Educare Learning Network
 Institute for Educational Leadership
 Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop
 Learning Heroes
 MAEC, Inc.
 National Family Support Network
 National Parent Leadership Institute
 National PTA
 ParentChild+
 Parent Institute for Quality Education
 Parent Teacher Home Visits
 POWER-PAC IL
 Start Early
 United Parent Leaders Action Network (UPLAN)