



S4 Framework for Family Engagement

The original Start Smart Stay Safe (S4) Four Cornerstones (Significance, Success, Self-Awareness, Service), adapted from the Circle of Courage, are used in S4 classrooms to teach children about their unique talents and abilities, and how they can work together with their families, police, and schools to face today's challenges.



Just as these four areas are used to promote healthy development in children, they can also be used as a framework to promote family engagement in schools. Using the cornerstones from the framework as criteria for building an activity for families at the school intentionally creates opportunities that empower and motivate families to become involved in their children's education, and to take on greater leadership in their community.

In order to assist schools in using this framework as a guide for family activities and interactions, we have created guiding questions and examples to identify each cornerstone and how it would connect to an event. When planning for a family activity at your school, ask yourself if the guiding question fits as part of your event. Could you answer "yes" to each question when planning your event? These guiding questions can be used to provide some direction when planning a family activity or event.



Guiding Questions:

Cornerstone	Guiding Question	Examples
Significance	<i>Does this activity help families experience a sense of belonging within their community?</i>	Cultural celebrations, BBQs, family dances, potlucks, games night, creating a parent centre space at school
Success	<i>Does this activity give families an opportunity to achieve their family or community goals?</i>	Participating at a parent centre at school, parent-teacher interviews, ESL classes, workshops, book clubs, sports days, school council, fundraising events, parent-driven events
Self-Awareness	<i>Does this activity help families become aware of their role in the community?</i>	Parent-teacher interviews, two-way communications, parent education nights, family learning sessions, parent surveys, discussion nights, dads' clubs, cultural celebrations
Service	<i>Does this activity provide the opportunity to support others in the community?</i>	Parent volunteers, fundraising events, family service projects, volunteering in the community, food and clothing drives, resource fairs

As you begin to reflect on the Four Cornerstones, you may find that there are many different ways to think about these areas in terms of family engagement. And you will likely find that each area is not mutually exclusive, as many activities fit into more than one category. In fact, the four areas are interdependent and often flow from one another. You might find an activity you have planned at your school will fit in multiple areas and that's great!

This model for family engagement recognizes the contributions of both schools and families as key partners in children's education.



Significance

Does this activity help families experience a sense of belonging within their community?

Success

Does this activity give families an opportunity to achieve their family or community goals?

Self-Awareness

Does this activity help families become aware of their role in the community?

Service

Does this activity provide the opportunity to support others in the community?

References and Further Reading:

Brendtro, L. K., Brokenleg, M., van Bockern, S. (2002). *Reclaiming youth at risk*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

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Peterson, J. M. & Taylor, P. D. (2009). *Whole Schooling and the Circle of Courage*. Detroit, MA: Whole Schooling Consortium. Retrieved from: www.wholeschooling.net/WS/WSPress/WS%20&%20C%20of%20C.pdf