

Meeting ‘Families Where They Are’

The pandemic has broken down long-standing barriers between home and school, but it has also created unimaginable challenges for both educators and parents. As schools, afterschool programs, libraries and other family-serving organizations prepare for full reopenings this fall, the game is a perfectly timed resource for discussing the disconnect that often exists between providers and families. It’s also a tool for using this crisis as way to reimagine the way organizations interact with families and include them in decision making.

Appropriate for groups and combinations of families, teachers, students, professionals and others, the game is a great way to brainstorm new solutions, partnerships and approaches toward meeting today’s challenges and the inevitable ones to come. The flexible format allows users to tackle dilemmas that fit their community and context.

That’s what Melissa Kurtz, an instructional coach at Winder Elementary School in Barrow County, Georgia, did by adding a scenario involving a grandfather who is reluctant to participate in activities that support his grandchildren’s education. She added that she would continue to “change the situations to reflect challenges that our teachers and other educators have experienced this year.”

The game can be used as a professional development activity or in outreach directly to families. GFRP is continuing to seek feedback from early adopters of the game with [this survey](#). We are also gathering examples of the different settings in which these professionals and parent leaders are implementing the game as a way to inspire more to try it.

“This game seems like a great way to get staff involved and thinking about how they can contribute!”

- A library leader

“Before COVID, our families were very involved in our afterschool program,” one educator told us. “This year we have struggled to engage with families and are looking for different ways to meet families where they are.”

And a community college instructor who works with aspiring educators plans “to add this game to my instructional toolbox.”

Stay tuned for more examples of how the Family Engagement Game is prompting educators and others to redefine what it means to work in partnership with families to support children’s success. ↻

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