



THE STATE OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS: **KEY FINDINGS**

In 2024, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) updated the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTPs) to include requirements for stronger family engagement. In 2025, CA-FEN engaged 371 current teachers and administrators from California through surveys and interviews to learn about their beliefs, behaviors or practices in family engagement, and their level of confidence meeting these standards. These key findings are taken from an online survey.

SECTION I- DEMOGRAPHICS

The survey data revealed meaningful patterns in how educators approach family engagement, depending on their role, age, and level of education. Three key differences stood out:

- Educators who are not classroom teachers — such as teachers on special assignments, counselors and instructional coaches — showed alignment in their attitude, behavior, and in an orientation that values families/students greater than their teaching colleagues.
- Younger educators were more likely to actively engage families and have an orientation that values families/students and family-led engagement, suggesting a generational shift in how teachers approach their work.
- Educators with advanced degrees scored lower on practices where families take the lead — suggesting that attaining more education does not automatically translate into an orientation that values family-led engagement.

SECTION II- BEHAVIORS

Educators scored higher at building connections with families (Standard 1: engaging and supporting all students), but they struggle most with sharing student assessment data and progress reports with families (Standard 5). This is an area where educators may need additional training and support.

SECTION III- CONFIDENCE

Educators showed higher confidence when thinking about family engagement than their actual day-to-day practices reflect. In other words, there is a gap between what educators *believe* they can do and what they regularly *do* in practice.

SECTION IV- ATTITUDES/NORMS

Overall, educators expressed very positive attitudes toward family engagement. Educators were most enthusiastic about treating families with respect. Also, they indicated willingness to self-reflect and increase knowledge to support family engagement.

However, attitudes were less positive regarding visiting families at home or inviting families to co-design lesson plans — suggesting these more intense forms of partnership are less comfortable or practical for many educators.

Educators generally believe that both their administrators and colleagues support family engagement practices, with most responses scoring between 4 and 5 out of 5 points. Educators indicated in their responses that school leaders are slightly more supportive than their fellow teachers, suggesting that peer culture may be a factor in whether family engagement practices are fully embraced.



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SECTION V - THE NEW TEACHING STANDARDS

Educators care deeply about family engagement and student-centered learning. Most are aware of the new California teaching standards and agree with their goals. However, fewer educators are consistently putting the standards into practice — largely because they feel their schools and colleagues are not providing enough support to make it happen.

The most significantly applied standard was CSTP 2, where teachers create and uphold a safe, caring, and intellectually stimulating learning environment that affirms student agency, voice, identity, and development and promotes equity and inclusivity.



SECTION VI- BARRIERS & STRATEGIES

Barriers

About 4 in 10 educators (38.5%) reported facing obstacles when trying to put all six teaching standards into practice. Importantly, these challenges were equally reported across all regions, school types, and educator backgrounds — meaning the obstacles are not limited to any particular group.

The most common barriers were process related such as school systems, structures, lack of time, and poor implementation processes (37%). These were followed by beliefs or mindset-related barriers such as attitudes or outdated assumptions about family roles (21%), and educator capacity, which is related to barriers like lack of resources, skills, or access to tools (10%).

Strategies

When asked how to address these obstacles, educators proposed practical, system-level solutions. The majority (76%) called for processes and structural changes such as more collaboration time and better teamwork across schools. About half (51%) asked for more capacity building or resources including funding, time, and professional development opportunities. More than a third (38%) pointed to the need for beliefs or cultural shifts in school values and attitudes toward family engagement.

CONCLUSION

The data from 371 California educators tell a consistent story: *the will is there, but the conditions are not*. Teachers believe deeply in family engagement and largely agree with the 2024 CSTPs but the gap between agreement and practice remains significant, driven by inadequate institutional support, time constraints, and a school culture that has yet to fully normalize family partnership as a core professional expectation and practice.

The sharpest gap falls under CSTP 5: Assessing Students for Learning. Teachers not only struggle to share assessment results with families in meaningful ways — many question whether the assessments themselves truly reflect what their students know and can do. Educators need knowledge, skills, and ongoing coaching to interpret data more broadly and to engage families as genuine partners, in a culturally responsive manner in understanding data to support student growth and learning.

Schools must build cultures that genuinely support family partnerships and create space for educators to learn and lead together.

Above all, systemic change requires strong leadership, dedicated funding, and a commitment to ensuring that family engagement meaningfully addresses student needs and outcomes.