

## YOUTH, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY

# Evaluating a Place-Based Collaboration for Systemic Family Engagement

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## APTT: A lever for systemic family engagement?

The Road Map Project is a collective impact initiative formed to address equity issues in schools across South King County, Washington. In 2012, partners in the initiative began to gather the community to explore family engagement as a strategy to build on community assets and address disparities in outcomes across the region, where over three-quarters of students are youth of color, two-thirds live in low-income households, and 45 percent live in households that speak a language other than English.<sup>1</sup>

In 2019 the partners decided to try implementing Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT), a model developed by WestEd. They began a three-year pilot with two school districts in the region to see if APTT could support educators to learn the principles of two-way family engagement. Educators received training and coaching to facilitate meetings where families review data and discuss strategies to reinforce academic skills at home.

The Road Map Project and the Community Center for Education Results invited Education Northwest—who had provided evaluation support since 2012—to evaluate the pilot and subsequent initiative (2022–2025). We took a collaborative approach grounded in culturally responsive and equitable evaluation principles, working closely with partners representing multiple sectors. (Access this [infographic](#) for insights from this six-year partnership.)

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<sup>1</sup> Learn more in the Road Map Project Data Dashboard: <https://roadmapproject.org/data-dashboard/>

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## Evaluating the APTT Readiness Initiative

Based on learnings from the pilot, the APTT Readiness Initiative focused on cultivating the district-level conditions necessary to scale and sustain school-level change, such as language access infrastructure and ongoing professional development. Education Northwest co-facilitated interactive, in-person planning sessions with the core partners to develop regional and district-level theories of action that reflected the new focus on district-level capacity building and systemic family engagement. Being at the table when the strategies were designed allowed us to deeply understand the intent of the work, which later informed how we designed data collection tools and organized our reporting. We worked closely with all partners throughout the evaluation to refine data collection tools, plan data collection, interpret findings, and develop final messaging.

Our evaluation incorporated additional lessons learned from the pilot phase. For example, we created more opportunities to use data to inform the work of the schools and districts, tightening the loop between evidence and practice. We also built in a data capacity component: We co-designed family engagement measures with the districts, piloted the tools with families, then set districts up to administer the tools without our support after the first year.

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## Leveraging findings for future growth and sustainability

Our final evaluation report highlighted how one district, Highline Public Schools, used this six-year partnership to promote systemic family engagement. Highline scaled APTT to eight elementary schools in 2024–25, and more than 1,800 families representing diverse identities and experiences participated in APTT meetings.

We found that APTT schools in Highline experienced positive outcomes. Teachers perceived family engagement as a priority and felt confident communicating with families about academics, while most families found APTT meetings inclusive and relevant—especially families of students in special education and English learner programs. At the student level, we saw promising gains in reading, math, and attendance, including reduced disparities for multilingual learners and students of color for APTT pilot schools in their sixth year of implementation.

We also found that there are still many opportunities for schools and the district to make families feel welcomed, included, and engaged. This type of change can take a long time.

District and school leaders continue to cultivate the conditions for family engagement, including training more staff members to support implementation. Since the evaluation, Highline expanded APTT to a ninth elementary school, one middle school, and one high school. They continue to leverage data collection tools from our evaluation, such as the survey, to measure progress on their family engagement strategic plan.