

Early Adopters Share Feedback on GFRP’s Family Engagement Game

With nearly 1,000 users so far, the game is helping educators and others discover ways to be ‘partners and champions’ for families

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The Global Family Research Project’s [Family Engagement Game](#), released this summer, is helping educators, higher education faculty, community leaders and other professionals confront – and solve – persistent challenges in partnering with families as well as new dilemmas created by the pandemic. The ultimate goal of the game is to move each player’s thinking through a design-focused process, rather than promoting competition and judgement of right or wrong solutions to a dilemma.

Nearly 1,000 family engagement professionals, across the K-12, early-childhood, library, teacher education, and nonprofit sectors, are now using the game in their work and sharing feedback with GFRP on how it’s leading to creative solutions.

“Our library is working on increasing our focus on family engagement and increasing our collaboration with the local school district,” wrote one library leader. “This game seems like a great way to get staff involved and thinking about how they can contribute!”

A lecturer in a graduate-level early-childhood education course said, “I would like to use the game to help students understand how and why it is important to engage with families.”

And an administrator who manages a parent leadership program working with immigrants, refugees, and other underserved parents plans to use the game as part of professional development for staff members.

“I have found it is extremely important to train school and district staff in equitable family engagement and how to truly partner and collaborate with families so they are partners and champions and not gatekeepers,” the leader wrote.



Word cloud of intended ways users plan to implement the Family Engagement Game

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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