

ACADEMIC PARTNERING COMPANION GUIDE

For School Leaders

INTRODUCTION

REAL Family Engagement happens when families have what they need to play the essential roles of communicating high expectations communicate high expectations for their student, support their student's learning at home, monitor their student's progress, guide their student's education, and advocate for their student's needs. This takes:

Relationships with teachers built on trust, ongoing communications, and shared power;

Experiences where educators challenge their own biases and promote racial equity;

Academic partnerships that include grades and social-emotional development; and

Leadership in schools, school systems, and communities who create the conditions for meaningful engagement

When family engagement gets **REAL**, educators and families become true allies in educational excellence, schools foster a sense of belonging for everyone, and students succeed in school and beyond.

Families are the number one partner in supporting students' academic success. Flamboyan believes that all families have the ability and desire to support learning and monitor progress. While they might not be families' primary point-of-contact, leaders play an essential role in ensuring teachers and families can partner academically throughout the school year.

This guide provides school leaders with a checklist for supporting an effective academic partnership between families and teachers. Academic partnering can take many forms: goal setting parent-teacher conferences, Academic Parent-Teacher Team meetings (APTT), or student-led conferences (SLCs). Whatever the format or delivery method (in-person or online), the time educators spend in discussion and collaboration with their students and families is a crucial step to support student success.

How to Use this Guide

As a companion to this guide, leaders should review the <u>Academic Partnering Toolkit</u> for Teachers. The Academic Partnering Toolkit for Teachers provides in-depth information for teachers to conduct meaningful academic partnering meetings. As you review this document and its companion, consider ways that you might adapt this information to fit your specific school context. For example, secondary schools may want to assign students a participatory role in outreach and in the meeting. They can share their strengths, areas for growth, and set goals for themselves with their family and teacher.

A key concept you will see referenced here is "Academic Partnering Windows." Academic Partnering Windows are when educators and families have a length of time in which to schedule their academic partnering meeting – rather than a single afternoon or evening. Using a window approach means that educators can find a time to connect with families that works for them. If the family isn't available on that single date, there will be other opportunities around that same time that they can meet. It sends the message that the most important part of academic partnering is that all families have the opportunity to engage in academic partnering as an equal partner in their student's education. Academic Partnering Windows usually:

- Come three times a year: fall, winter, and spring;
- Last two weeks; and
- Encourage flexibility of time. For example, scheduling conferences before or after school.





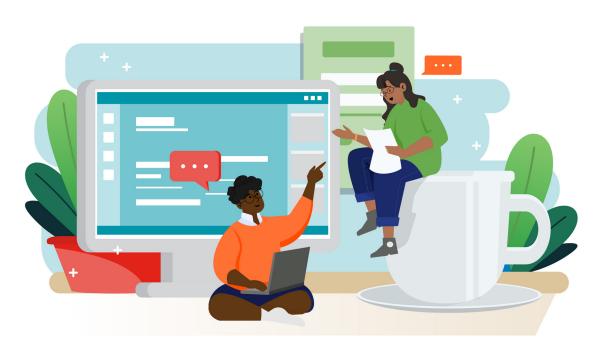
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BEFORE THE ACADEMIC PARTNERING WINDOW

It is the leader's responsibility to create the conditions so meaningful academic partnering between educators and families can take place. There are key leader actions before academic partnering ever takes place!

Early Planning

Determine the format your academic partnering will take, i.e. Parent-Teacher Conferences, Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT), or Student-Led Conferences (SLCs).
Message your vision, provide clear expectations about what these formal partnering meetings should look like, and build investment with your staff.
Decide how you will track academic partnering attendance and relevant data throughout the year.
Plan key dates and activities — such as Academic Partnering Windows — in alignment with when meaningful data will be available.
Reserve time on your staff professional development calendar to review timeline, roles and responsibilities, technology (if applicable), accessibility considerations, and time to plan for academic partnering meetings.
Determine how community stakeholders, such as specials teachers, paraprofessionals, social workers, front office staff, and partnered organizations, may be leveraged to support academic partnering.



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	Determine the modality of academic partnering (in-person, virtual, or a combination) and message this to the school community.
	In school-wide communications, advertise the upcoming Academic Partnering Window. Consider who will create flyers, send robocalls, post on the website and social media, etc.
	Ensure the academic leadership team, keeps academic partnering meetings part of the conversation as teachers analyze and evaluate data.
	Norm with the academic leadership team what quality academic partnering will look like. Share this with staff.
	Order any materials that teachers will share with families during academic partnering.
	Make sure teachers have access to interpreters, translated materials, and other accommodations, such as childcare and accessible parking.
	Provide teachers dedicated time to prepare for meetings, such as time to gather resources, analyze data, and schedule academic partnering meetings.
	Provide teachers with examples, tools, and templates, such as those provided in the <u>Academic Partnering Toolkit for Teachers</u> .
Tw	o to Three Weeks Before
	Review relevant materials, such as APTT PowerPoint decks or SLC binders, and provide feedback.
	Provide time to practice. For example, teachers should practice facilitating an APTT meeting, and students should practice facilitating their SLC.
	Ensure every teacher has a concrete strength, growth area, activity, and goal to share with families.
	Ensure every family is aware that teachers are requesting feedback and input for what to discuss during academic partnering meetings. Leaders can help by creating family polls or survey templates teachers can implement.
	Provide needed support for teachers, such as structuring time for teachers to send reminders or confirmation to families, build agendas, or prepare materials.
	Ensure there is a structure in place to track and monitor scheduling and determine the options for makeup sessions.

The Month Refore

DURING THE ACADEMIC PARTNERING WINDOW

Once academic partnering has begun, school leaders should maintain ongoing communication with staff to provide support that is relevant and timely. There are many actions that leaders can take to ensure staff feel supported.

Observe meetings and leave feedback for teachers.

Ensure families complete feedback forms.

Strategically join meetings teachers might need support with.

Be available to troubleshoot technology or accessibility issues.

Help teachers with last minute re-schedules.

Support with logging data.

Hype up students and families before and after school.

Celebrate attendance ongoingly.

AFTER THE ACADEMIC PARTNERING WINDOW

The school leader plays a key role in leveraging multiple forms of data to assess the quality of practices and implement changes as needed. Analysis of data points should include multiple levels of data to ensure the needs of all students and families are met.

Review attendance data and develop a plan to support unreached families.

Facilitate reflection meetings with staff to highlight students' strengths, growth areas, and priorities.

Share guidance for follow-up and ongoing communication expectations (e.g., a thank you note to families, links to resources to support learning at home, follow-up on outstanding items).

Support staff in maximizing every interaction to ensure families have the information and resources to play the Five Essential Roles at home effectively.

Incorporate feedback from families and staff to make adjustments for the next Academic Partnering Window.

CLOSING

A cademic partnering is just that – teachers working in partnership with families for the academic and socio-emotional success of students. No matter the form or time of year, consider the actions you are taking to create the conditions so all families are able to:

- ✓ Communicate high expectations for their student;
- ✓ Support their student's learning at home;
- ✓ Monitor their student's progress;
- ✓ Guide their student's education; and
- ✓ Advocate for their student's needs.

As the year progresses, continue to look to Flamboyan Foundation to support you in your REAL Family Engagement efforts.

- Follow us on Twitter and Facebook.
- Sign-up to receive our newsletter.
- Be on the lookout for new resources on http://www.FlamboyanFoundation.org

Questions? Reach us at Product@FlamboyanFoundation.org

What did you think of the Academic Partnering
Companion Guide for School Leaders?

Take our survey!

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

The Academic Partnering Toolkit for Teachers shares relevant teachers' actions in detail and should be used in conjunction with this Companion Guide.

A. Example Backwards Planning Tool

In this example, the school is holding Goal-Setting Conferences and their first Academic Partnering Window is scheduled for November 2nd-13th. School began September 8th.

Before the AP Window

When	What		
August during summer	Determine the format of academic partnering. Message your vision, provide clear expectations about what these formal partnering		
planning	meetings should look like, and build investment with your staff. Decide how you will track academic partnering attendance and relevant data throughout the year.		
	Plan key dates and activities — such as Academic Partnering Windows — in alignment with when meaningful data will be available.		
	Reserve time on your staff Professional Development calendar to review timeline, roles and responsibilities, technology (if applicable), accessibility considerations, and time to plan for academic partnering meetings.		
	Determine how community stakeholders, such as specials teachers, paraprofessionals, social workers, front office staff, and partnered organizations, may be leveraged to support academic partnering.		
Mid-September	Determine the modality of academic partnering (in-person, virtual, or a combination) and message this to the school community.		
	Ensure the academic leadership team, such as instructional coaches, keeps academic partnering meetings a part of the conversation as teachers are analyzing and evaluating data.		
Late-September	In school-wide communications, advertise the upcoming academic partnering window. Consider who will create flyers, send robocalls, post on the website and social media, etc.		
	Norm with the academic leadership team what quality academic partnering will look like. Share this with staff.		
	Provide teachers with the <u>Academic Partnering Toolkit for Teachers</u> .		
Early-October	Order any materials that teachers will share with families during academic partnering.		
	Make sure teachers have access to interpreters, translated materials, and other accommodations, such as childcare and accessible parking.		
	Provide teachers dedicated time to prepare for meetings during PD time.		
Late-October	Ensure every teacher has a concrete strength, growth area, activity, and goal for families.		
	Ensure every family is aware that teachers are requesting feedback and input for what to discuss during academic partnering meetings.		
	Provide needed support for teachers such as giving time for teachers to send reminders or confirmation to families, build agendas, or prepare materials.		

During the AP Window

When	What	
November 2-13	Observe meetings and leave feedback for teachers.	
	Ensure families complete feedback forms.	
	Strategically join meetings teachers might need support with.	
	Be available to troubleshoot technology or accessibility issues.	
	Help teachers with last minute re-schedules.	
	Support on logging data.	
	Hype up students and families before and after school.	
	Celebrate attendance ongoingly.	

After the AP Window

When	What
The week of November 16	Review attendance data and develop a plan to support unreached families. Facilitate reflection meetings with staff to highlight strengths, growth areas, and priorities.
Late November/ early December	 Share guidance for follow-up and ongoing communication expectations. Support staff in maximizing every interaction to ensure families have the information and resources to play the Five Essential Roles at home effectively.
In early February as the school prepares for the second AP window	Incorporate feedback from families and staff to adjustments for the next Academic Partnering Window.

B. Example Agenda + Planning Tool - can be used as an observation guide

In the Academic Partnering Toolkit for Teachers, school leaders will find the steps a teacher needs to take to hold quality academic partnering meetings. The next page has a tool teachers can use to plan their academic partnering or leaders can use to observe and assess quality of academic partnering.



Β. Example Agenda + Planning Tool (cont.) - can be used as an observation guide Reassures family that instruction will be tailored Welcomes family and thanks them for coming Ssks family, "What do you hope to get out of intelligence and all students learn at different Explains the data that support why this is an Explains the data that support why this is an growth and invites families to ask questions Checks for understanding about area(s) of Clearly describes student area of strength Explains the goal of the meeting and the Clearly describes student area of growth Asks for input on how teacher can better Emphasizes that scores are not a sign of Provides time to review and process Trames the purpose of the meeting family-teacher-student partnership to meet individual student needs **Teacher Actions** support student on skill in class Emphasizes the importance of this conversation?" area of strength area of growth student's data agenda and can communicate pride and high expectations Family is able to communicate where to go to In oral or written feedback, family can explain monitor student data and academic progress. Families are proud of their student's performance Family shares insight on how the teacher can student performance and hold them accountable. Family asks questions about student data or Families know where their child is struggling and Families understand the goals of the conference In oral or written feedback, family says they struggling in and cites specific data points. excelling at and cites specific examples of Family explain skills that their student is Family explains skills that the student is how they can help support improvements in expanding on, or restating information. The conference covers anything family Share Data: Student Area for Growth Agenda Item + Objectives what the point of the conference was. and feel valued as an expert on their child. confirms understanding by clarifying, indicated was important to discuss. for continued excellence to their child better support student in class. Share Data: Student Strength felt valued and listened to. their good work. Evidence Evidence Evidence

Agenda Item + Objectives	Teacher Actions	Notes
Strategy/Activity Families have a concrete strategy that they can confidently use with their child to support learning at home. Evidence Family can explain the learning activity and strategy. Family demonstrates confidence to do learning activity at home through live practice or other checks for understanding. Family asks questions about learning by expanding on or restating information. Family shares feedback on activity and ideas for modifications at home. Family is able to connect data to concrete strategies to support learning at home.	Models the learning activity for family and shares how often to do the activity at home Checks for family's understanding of activity by providing time to practice and/or asking questions Shares how the student will continue to support learning in the classroom Asks for feedback on activity, ideas for modifications, lessons learned from previous conferences	
Goal Setting Families and teacher set an ambitious, feasible goal that they are excited about. Evidence Teamily, student, and teacher discuss goal and set it together. Family has a record of student goal to take home. In written or oral feedback, family and student communicate investment in reaching the goal. For second or third AP meeting, student and family shares updates on goal set during prior meeting.	Shares class end of year goal and class interim goal (by next meeting) for area of growth Motivates family to set ambitious but feasible goal by reminding them of the family-teacher partnership, classroom practice, and the strategy for home Records goals families and student sets for student, so both family and teacher have a record of the goal For second or third AP meeting, reviews previous goals and discuss progress and challenges, if any	
Questions and Conclusion Families leave the meeting feeling confident about next steps and their capacity to support their student at home. Evidence □ Family can ask any lingering questions. □ Family lists their next steps, as well next steps for teacher and student. □ Family knows concrete time and way that they and teacher will follow up.	Concludes the meeting by summarizing key points and allotting time for family's feedback and suggestions Concludes meeting by thanking family for coming and provides timeline for mid-point check-in, as well as the dates of future conferences Confirms the best way to communicate with families following the meeting Provides an exit ticket so families can give feedback	

C. Leader Guide to Assessing Academic Partnering Quality

The purpose of academic partnering is to support families to play the <u>Five Essential Roles</u> of monitoring learning, supporting learning, communicating high expectations, guiding, and advocating for their child by providing academic and socio-emotional information, resources and tools to elevate student success. Leaders play an essential role in ensuring quality academic partnering takes place. This guide provides a framework for how to assess academic partnering.

How can you tell if academic partnering is serving these purposes?

The steps and tools below help answer this question with a focus on quality:

- 1. Observe academic partnering meetings (i.e. APTT, parent teacher conferences, SLCs) and gather data
- 2. Reflect and debrief with the teacher(s)
- 3. Reflect and action plan

Step 1: Observe academic partnering meetings and gather data

Strategically plan observations. You may not be able to observe all teaches or grades, but you can use your observations as a proxy, so you should select a diverse group of teachers.

- *Tip:* Select a cross section of teachers. That is, pick teachers who you have reason to believe are naturally strong at leading academic partnering meetings as well as teachers who struggle with academic partnering; also, aim for a range of teachers from different grades and subjects.
- Tip: Pull in other instructional leaders to observe
- Tip: Plan to co-observe at least one meeting with other instructional or family engagement leaders to norm on quality

Let teachers know. Schedule the meetings you will observe, and ensure teachers know you will be observing and the purpose of your observation.

- *Tip:* Do this as early into the academic partnering season as possible to allow teachers time to get extra support if need be.
- Tip: Share the observation guides or expectations with teachers prior to their meetings.
- Tip: Ensure teachers communicate to families you will be observing, especially for PTCs and SLCs.

Conduct observations.

• Tip: Be prepared for observations with an observation guide, this document, or something to take notes.

Step 2: Reflect and debrief with the teacher

Reflect with the teacher about the academic partnering meeting directly following the meeting or at a scheduled debrief soon after the meeting.

• Tip: Use the graphic organizer below post-meeting to capture your observations and the teacher's reflections.

Assess the academic partnering meeting using the observation guide or specific school expectations.

• Tip: Use debrief guidance in this document to support.

Step 3: Reflect and action plan as a leadership team

Determine with your leaders how you will use the information gathered and analyzed.

Tip: Use this tool to help you decide next steps

Lead an academic partnering reflection debrief with staff based on collective observations and reflections.

• Tip: Be sure to continue to follow up on next steps discussed during this debrief when preparing for the next round of academic partnering.

Reflect and Debrief with the Teacher

Leader Actions Before Observing Academic Partnering

Using school-wide expectations for quality academic partnering and/or the observation guides, reflect on the strengths and areas for growth for teachers/grade teams. Debrief academic partnering with teachers. Below you will find suggested actions for before, during, and after the observations.

	Inform teachers of your observation and give them the observation guide you will be using
	Connect your observations to any "must win" focus or priority area
	Ask teachers if they would like feedback on any particular component of the meeting
	Determine a time to debrief with the teacher/team post-meeting to reflect on quality
Le	ader Actions During Academic Partnering
	Print observation guide and take notes in hard copy as meetings are usually low tech
	Smile and be conscious of facial expressions during your observation
	Participate in the meeting when it makes sense to keep the authenticity of the community meeting
	Engage with families to get a sense of what they are taking away from the meeting
	If you see major components missing that will impact the quality of the meeting, consider telling the teachers in the moment if possible. For example, "I noticed you did a great job doing \mathbf{X} , don't forget to do \mathbf{Y} ."
Lea	ader Reflection Questions After Academic Partnering
	To what extent was the teacher(s) prepared to deliver a meaningful academic partnering meeting with recent data, skills, strategies, and goal setting?
	To what extent were the objectives of each meeting component met? What evidence do you have based on what families were saying and doing (i.e. family feedback forms)?
	Based on the reflection above, what are two strengths to share with the teacher(s) and two prioritized areas of growth?

D. School-wide Academic Partnering Debrief Guidance

To be scheduled post Academic Partnering Window; approximately 30 minutes in length.

Sample Meeting Goals

- Celebrate success/impact and reground in the WHY of academic partnering
- Brainstorm challenges and solutions based on qualitative and quantitative academic partnering trends
- Reiterate quality expectations and best practices around following up from academic partnering with ongoing academic communication

Sample Agenda

Celebrate/The Impact (approx. 5 minutes)

- Staff share stories of impact partner up with a staff member on another grade level and share a story of an impactful academic partnering meeting **OR**
- Data story have a staff member share a story about a student and how the academic partnering practices supported the student's academic growth OR
- Celebrate teachers, grade bands, who have met school benchmarks (qualitative/quantitative)

Motivate/Monitor Progress (approx. 5 minutes)

- Overall School-wide Goals
 - o Share how family engagement supports school goals
- Follow-up on academic partnering "must wins" for school
- Share academic partnering goals, benchmarks, and progress
- Why (not the "what")
 - o Discuss why effective academic partnering leads to student success

Surface Any Barriers (approx. 10 minutes)

- Discuss barriers/challenges and brainstorm solutions for supporting AP quality in the next round i.e. mindsets, relationships, and/or teacher capacity
- Reflect on families that didn't receive an academic partnering meeting and plan next steps to ensure these families receive the necessary academic partnering information
- Discuss equity of family participation in academic partnering

Quality, Apply Learning, & Next Steps (approx. 10 minutes)

- Develop teacher capacity (informed by Leader Quality Reflection)
 - o Quality of academic partnering (content, attendance, delivery, relationships) AND/OR
 - o Differentiation (using data by grade band or teacher)
- Follow-up ongoing communication individualized outreach
 - o Plan ways to follow up with families on strategies and data updates
- Next steps
 - o Expectations for make-up meetings and academic partnering follow up communication

Sample Meeting Ideas

Meeting Topic (Time)	Details/Things to include	Suggestions and Considerations for Differentiation based on data
Celebrations and Motivation (5-10 minutes)	Celebrate quantity/quality of academic partnering	 Celebrate/highlight a success from each grade level Leader can share out success, or grade level can share Using the 5 roles that support student success – have teachers reflect on the impact of their academic partnering meeting Celebrate attendance high achievers (75%+) Stand up/Sit Down Exercise Stand up if your attendance was higher than X Allow a few of those standing to share why they think that was. Allow a few of those sitting to share why they think it was low. Stand up if you think the content of your PowerPoint was strong Allow a few of those standing to share why they think that was. Allow a few of those sitting to share why they think it declined. Display the following choices: data, explaining foundational skill, home learning activity, goal setting. Stand up if you think (i.e. data, etc.) was the strongest part of your meeting Allow a few of those standing to share why they think that was. Allow a few of those sitting to share where they would like to improve. Ensure celebrations are grounded in school vision for family engagement; must-win focus areas for school; and/or 5 family roles that support student success
Challenges and Problem-Solving (10-15 minutes)	The content of this section should be determined by the data at the school	If a school has few academic partnering meetings logged, consider: • Setting expectation for scheduling and conducting make-up meetings • Identifying and troubleshooting challenges to scheduling • Revising process for partnering, interpretation, and logging • Providing time to schedule and log academic partnering make-up meetings If the school has met or is on track to meet their attendance goals consider: • Problem-solving hard-to-reach or disinterested families • Allow teacher reflection time; teachers can self-rate on observation guides and identify next steps to take their academic partnering to the next level on the rubric • Have teachers complete a leader support survey to support planning for the next round • Spend more time on next section, Academic Partnering Follow Up Communication Schools may want to differentiate by teacher within this section of the agenda

Sample Meeting Ideas (cont.)

Meeting Topic (Time)	Details/Things to include	Suggestions and Considerations for Differentiation based on data
Academic Partnering Follow Up Communication (5-10 minutes)	Communicate an expectation for ongoing communication post academic partnering (i.e. 100% of families should receive a follow-up communication in 4-6 weeks) Discuss as a group or in grade levels how to conduct ongoing communication after academic partnering	Provide examples to staff to build capacity for follow up communication: • Follow up on activity – How's the activity going? • Celebrate progress – All that practice is paying off! Jacob's fluency has really improved! • Provide progress on goal set – You set a goal of working with Stella 2x per week, how is that going? • Did not attend – We missed having you at our 2nd PTC meeting. One of the skills we focused on was addition fluency. Brandi is doing really well with fluency with single digits! She scored 8 out of 10 on our last quiz! Direct teachers to flamboyanfoundation.org to search for ongoing communication resources
Next Steps (5 minutes)	Allow teachers to articulate (verbally or in writing) their commitments to next steps to continue the academic partnership	 Provide commitment cards to staff or Google survey option (consider if it makes sense for this to happen in grade teams) Ensure make-up meeting and ongoing communication follow up expectations are clear for teachers (what, how, and when)