

ECHO IDAHO

K12 Youth Well-being & Upstream
Prevention

Effective Strategies for Positive Community & Parent Engagement

April 10, 2026

Alexis Morgan

Podcast Host, Doctoral Candidate,
Immediate Past Pres. Idaho PTA
The Purple Zone podcast

None of the planners or presenters for this educational activity have relevant financial relationship(s) to disclose with ineligible companies whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients.



Learning Objectives

- Differentiate family engagement approaches by understanding your audience.
- Apply a dignity -centered framework to build trust and sustain engagement.
- Implement practical, relationship -driven strategies that move beyond communication to true partnership.

Parent Groups 101

- PTA→Idaho Congress of Parents & Teachers
 - Parent Teacher Association
 - National, State, Local
 - 501(c)3 →nonprofit
- PTO→Parent Teacher Organization
 - local school only
- Boosters
 - local school only, content specific
 - fundraising focus

Mission: Fundraising focus, some school activities, teacher appreciation week

The Dignity Framework

Builders in the emerging field of Dignity

Contempt : The feeling of disdain or disgust for another group; treating another as vile or worthless.

- Dismissing them as not worth talking to
- Looking down on them
- Calling them names
- Questioning their motives
- Attacking their character
- Mocking their background
- Lumping them together in large groups under negative labels

Dignity is the Way

Dignity is the opposite of contempt - the belief that we are born with inherent worth.

“The mutual recognition of the desire to be seen, heard, listened to, and treated fairly; to be recognized, understood, and to feel safe in the world.” Donna Hicks, Dignity

- Offering others care and attention
- Making sure they feel free to speak
- Hearing what they've been through
- Giving the benefit of the doubt
- Making them feel they belong
- Acknowledging their gifts and accomplishments

6 Commitments for Effective Engagement

- Lead with Dignity:
 - Speak *with* families, not about them.
- Respond with Care:
 - Acknowledge communication
- Provide Reassurance:
 - Families want to know how their child is doing and what to expect.
- Build Relationships:
 - Invest in relationships *before* you need them.
- Practice Reciprocity:
 - Engagement is a two-way street.
- Reflect and Adjust:
 - Pause and ask: What worked? What didn't? Are we reacting or learning?

What this looks like in practice

Build Before Problems

- SNAC
 - School Neighborhood Advisory Committee
 - process, not outcome
- Justice League
- Asset Mapping

Make Engagement REAL (not performative)

- Invite parents explicitly
- Reduce email overload
- Vocabulary sheets
- Sign-up genius
- micro-volunteering

Share Power

- Youth voice
 - Table Talk with Teens
- Include students in decisions
- Home visits
- Shared leadership

Belonging plus Adolescents

The older the child, the more disconnected families feel.

Counter that with:

- Visibility (principal on corner)
- Community projects (murals/business windows)
 - Homecoming Business Competition (decor)
- Intentional Invitations

Collectively, we can make a difference.

Policy sets the direction. Relationships make it real.

Async Assignment #7: Due 4/24 @ 4:00 pm MT

Step 1: Identify Who You Reach

Reflect on the groups you engage well and the groups that feel less connected or harder to reach.

Step 2: Choose a Focus Group

Select one group you want to better connect with. Identify one key barrier and one opportunity for engagement.

Step 3: Apply One Commitment

Choose one engagement commitment (e.g., lead with dignity, respond with care, build relationships, practice reciprocity) and describe what this commitment looks like in action.

Step 4: Take One Action

Identify one concrete action you will take in the next 2–4 weeks to strengthen engagement.

Remember: *Engagement without dignity doesn't last.*

Resources

Dignity

- Donna Hicks, PhD

Love Your Enemies

- Arthur Brooks, PhD

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High

- Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler

Lead with Dignity

- Donna Hicks, PhD

How to Disagree Better

- Julia Minson, PhD

The Dignity Index → www.dignity.us