ALIANZA FAMILIA-ESCUELA
HOW TO TRANSFORM FAMILY ENGAGEMENT POLICIES INTO IMPACTFUL PARTNERSHIPS IN COLOMBIA'S SCHOOLS

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| Executive summary

The government of Colombia has recognized family, school, and community engagement as essential throughout a child's entire educational trajectory and has therefore made family and school partnerships —known as Alianza Famlia-Escuela—part of its efforts to foster the holistic development of children and adolescents. Colombia has enacted a series of national laws, decrees, and plans—or education frameworks—to make its program of Alianza Familia-Escuela central to its education system across all levels. As mandated by law and decree, there are several school-based mechanisms in place to ensure that families are involved in decision-making and leadership. One of the most notable mechanisms is the Escuela de Padres y Madres de Familia y Cuidadores (Family Education Program) (referred to herein as "Escuela de Padres"). Despite Colombia's ambitious policy priorities—a notable effort in Latin America—there are numerous challenges in bringing this vision of family engagement to fruition in practice.

This policy report explores how to transform Alianza Familia-Escuela into impactful partnerships in Colombia's schools. The purpose is to guide decision makers, education leaders, and civil society organizations in effectively implementing Alianza Familia-Escuela across the education ecosystem and to ensure that families are meaningfully partnering with schools and communities to support student learning, development, and well-being.

As the research in this policy report indicates, national commitments to Alianza Famlia-Escuela have not yet been fully operationalized as intended in schools, and not all families are engaging in their children's schools as aspired. Most notably, families who do not have flexible and secure work and rely on daily wages struggle to engage in the same way as families that have more economic and social stability. Families are also contending with issues in their communities such as poverty, violence, and migration, challenges which were noted by education

leaders at all levels, as well as teachers, parents/caregivers and students. Schools that struggle with safety and that serve vulnerable communities, as well, face notable challenges in forming trusting relationships with families. These challenges complicate efforts for schools to reach and engage with families and for families to see schools as places that are accessible, supportive, and safe. More needs to be done at the national, departmental, and school levels to ensure that education leaders, schools, and families work together to support learning outcomes, school completion, and student well-being. This policy report presents key findings and recommendations for building family, school, and community partnerships in Colombia.. The research featured in this policy report was conducted in 13 departments and 66 public and private secondary schools during 2023. The research was led by Red PaPaz, a civil society organization (CSO) and network of parents, and Alianza Educativa, a network of secondary schools, in collaboration with the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the Brookings Institution.

This policy report begins with an analysis of how family, school, and community engagement, as well as the roles of families, are envisioned in Colombia's national education frameworks, as well as the school-based mechanisms for implementing Alianza Familia-Escuela. The methodology used for this research—the Conversation Starter Tools—is then introduced, followed by an overview of the research context and the demographics of the participants. Finally, five key findings from the quantitative and qualitative data are presented, along with practical recommendations and strategies for implementing these recommendations at the national, departmental, and school levels of Colombia's education ecosystem. The strategies emerge from examples in Colombia and beyond. These recommendations focus on secondary education but are also relevant to early childhood and primary school.

TABLE 1

Five key findings and recommendations

Findings	Recommendation
For Ministerio de Educación (MEN) in collaboration with CSOs	
1. Family, school, and community partnerships—Alianza Familia-Escuela—are integral to the national education frameworks in Colombia, but schools are struggling to advance partnerships with families in practice.	1. Designate a structure in the Ministry of Education and Certified Territorial Entities responsible for ensuring Alianza Familia-Escuela is implemented in practice.
2. The government of Colombia mandates that all schools have a Consejo de Padres (Parents' Council) to serve as the primary mechanism for family leadership. These family committees could do more to reach marginalized communities who experience barriers in engaging with schools.	2. Provide guidance for schools on how to build diversity and unity in Consejos de Padres and to ensure all families feel welcome to participate.
For Departmental Secretarías de Educación and school leaders	
3. As one of the pillars of Alianza Familia-Escuela, schools across all education levels in Colombia are expected to hold three Escuela de Padres convenings a year. In practice, convenings often employ one-way communication to convey information to families, failing to center the needs of working-class families and thereby missing an important opportunity to deepen family, school, and community engagement.	3. Provide guidance for schools on how to implement Escuela de Padres in ways that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of the school community and diverse families.

Findings	Recommendation
4. Families, educators, and students often have different beliefs on education and the purpose of school, but they have few opportunities to understand each other's beliefs and develop a shared vision of education.	4. Build a process into the development of school plans for understanding different beliefs and perspectives on the purpose of school among families, students, and educators.
5. Building relational trust between families, students, and educators is critical to ensuring safety, well-being, and collaboration in schools and vital to efforts to build coexistence and peaceful communities (convivencia).	5. Identify and share different family, school, and community engagement strategies that create multiple opportunities for deep listening and dialogue, and which lead to concrete actions to improve trust in schools.

List of acronyms

CIETI: Comité Interinstitucional Erradicación del Trabajo y Sus Peores Formas (Inter-institutional Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Child Workers)

CSO: Civil Society Organization

CTE: Certified Territorial Entity

CUE: Center for Universal Education

ICBF: Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombia Institute of Family Welfare)

MEN: Ministerio de Educación (Ministry of Education)

PEC: Proyecto Educativo Comunitario (Community Educational Project)

PEFADI: Programa de Educacion Familiar para el Desarrollo Infantil (Family Education Program for Child Development)

PEI: Proyecto Educativo Institucional (Institutional Educational Project)

PNDE: Plan Nacional Decenal de Educación (Ten-Year National Education Plan)

Introduction to Alizanza Familia-Escuela Colombia

The importance of family, school, and community engagement[1]

Family, school, and community engagement encompasses the many ways that families, educators, and community groups work together to promote student learning and development.[2] Families include all individuals who play a leading role in caregiving and educating their children, including caregivers, guardians, and extended family members—from grandparents to aunts, uncles, or cousins. Family includes those who participate in the caregiving of a child beyond biological relationships.

While family, school, and community engagement varies depending on the context, the intention is to support greater collaborations and partnerships that ensure teaching and learning is equitable, inclusive, high quality, and relevant. When there are strong home and school partnerships, families feel included and welcomed and are better equipped to support their children's learning and collaborate with schools.[3] Educators also benefit from strong family, school, and community partnerships. When they view families as valuable assets rather than barriers to collaboration, they experience greater professional satisfaction and success. Partnerships also strengthen education systems, as they create the conditions necessary for meaningful and sustainable reforms and transformations.[4]

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1   This definition language in Box 1 and Box 3 is consistent across all the publications in the Brookings Institution series "Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Family, School, and Community Partnerships." Additional common language includes the description of the Conversation Starter Tools Methodology. Original source is Emily M. Morris and Laura Nóra, "Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education" (Brookings Institution, 2024).

2   Geert Driessen, Frederik Smit, and Peter Sleegers, "Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement," *British Educational Research Journal* 31, no. 4 (2005): 509–32, https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920500148713.; Leilane Henriette Barreto Chiappetta-Santana, Ana Deyvis Santos Araújo Jesuino, and Ariela Raissa Lima-Costa,"Learning Motivation, Socioemotional Skills and School Achievement in Elementary School Students," *Paideía Ribeirão* Preto 32, (2022), https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-4327e3232.; Mauricio Saracostti et al, "Influence of Family Involvement and Children's Socioemotional Development on the Learning Outcomes of Chilean Students," *Frontiers in Psychology* 10, (2019): 335, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00335. Abdul Waheed Mughal, Jo Aldridge, and Mark Monaghan, "Perspectives of Dropped-Out Children on Their Dropping Out from Public Secondary Schools in Rural Pakistan," *International Journal of Educational Development* 66, (2019): 52–61, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2019.02.004.; Loizos Symeou, Raquel-Amaya Martínez-González, and Lucía Álvarez-Blanco."Dropping out of High School in Cyprus: Do Parents and the Family Matter?" *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 19, no 1 (2012): 113–31, https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2012.717899.

3   Shulamit Natan Ritblatt, Audrey Hokada, and Felicia V. Black. "Creating connections with families of young children using trauma-informed approaches." F*amily community partnerships: Promising practices for teachers and teacher educators* (2023): 65-72.

4   Rebecca Winthrop et al., *Collaborating to Transform and Improve Education Systems: A Playbook for Family-School Engagement* (Brookings Institution, 2021).

Alizana Familia-Escuela is a principle and value first embedded in Colombia's Constitution, the Constitución Política de Colombia (1991).[5] Family, society, and the state have the joint obligation to protect and support children's holistic development and to ensure their rights are met (Article 44). The role of families is further expanded upon in the law governing Colombia's education system, specifically in the Ley General de Educación (National Education Act 115 of 1994),[6] where families are critical actors in achieving educational goals (Article 5) and in participating in education (Article 7).

Colombia's education system is organized under three main levels: the Ministry of National Education (MEN), the Certified Territorial Entities (CTEs), and schools and universities at the local level. The MEN has made notable efforts to prioritize family, school, and community engagement in their national education frameworks. Several laws have been passed to further Alizana Familia-Escuela,[7] which require schools to include families in governance (Consejo Directivo), to implement meetings with families three times a year (Escuela de Padres), and to maintain parent councils (Consejos de Padres). The CTEs support the implementation of activities at educational institutions (schools and universities). Leadership at various levels of the education system is outlined below.[8]

BOX 2

Ministry of National Education (MEN): The central authority in charge of national education policies, setting curricula, and monitoring quality across all levels, from early childhood to higher education. The MEN sets family engagement policies and priorities.

Certified Territorial Entities (CTEs): CTEs comprise Colombia's 32 departments and a few designated municipalities. They are responsible for implementing education policies and managing and overseeing public and private schools within their jurisdictions, including allocating funding to schools and providing teacher training. CTEs help ensure that schools are implementing family engagement in accordance with their policies.

Educational institutions (schools and universities): Locally, schools implement teaching and learning and work directly with students and their families. Schools ensure Escuelas de Padres are implemented, and that families are involved in the boards of directors (Consejos Directivos) and parent councils (Consejos de Padres).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FAMILIES IN COLOMBIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Colombian government has intentionally positioned Alianza Familia-Escuela as a key component of its national education frameworks and strategies.[9] These include six laws and decrees that reference how family,

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5   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Political Constitution of Colombia of 1991* (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 1991).

6   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Ley 115 de 1994: Por la cual se expide la Ley General de Educación* (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 1994).

7   Ministry of National Education, *Orientaciones técnicas: Alianza Familia – Escuela por el desarrollo integral de niñas, niños y adolescentes* (Ministry of National Education, 2018).

8   Leanna Carroll et al., "Education in Colombia," *World Education News & Reviews*, June 23, 2020, World Education Services, PDF article, effective June 23, 2020.

9   Ministry of National Education of Colombia, *Orientaciones Técnicas Alianza Familia–Escuela [Technical Guidelines for the School–Family Alliance]* (Ministry of National Education of Colombia, 2022).

school, and community engagement is a core part of the education system (see Table 2 for names of frameworks and the appendix for a detailed analysis). Families are considered crucial to the learning, development, and well-being of students, although the envisioned roles and responsibilities of families vary by framework and in practice. Five possible roles and responsibilities of families are outlined in the education frameworks, which reveal how education leaders and decision makers envision family, school, and community engagement within the education system. These five general roles are outlined in the box below.

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BOX 3

Envisioned roles and responsibilities of families in education systems

1. **Implementation of policies and practices:** Utilizes families to implement education policies and frameworks, and/or to promote decentralization of education systems. This includes enlisting families in supporting learning at home, enhancing families' communication with teachers and school leaders, and encouraging active participation and volunteerism in school events and activities.

2. **Decision making and leadership:** Involves families in school decisions and governance bodies through various committees, associations, and boards, and/or in accountability and advocacy efforts.

3. **Being informed:** Ensures families and communities are aware of key education policies, practices, responsibilities, and rights, such as the right of all children to a quality education and healthy nutrition at home.

4. **Providing resources:** Designates parents/caregivers as contributors of financial and in-kind materials and services to schools. This includes any financial or in-kind contributions to teaching, learning, infrastructure, supplies and equipment, management, and other critical areas.

5. **Shifting mindsets:** Mobilizes families, schools, and communities to work together to promote inclusion and reduce stigma and norms prohibiting marginalized children and families from participating in schools. Shifting mindsets also includes intentional efforts to promote positive attitudes and beliefs about family, school, and community partnerships.

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As detailed in the appendix, the main role designated to families in the national education frameworks is decision making and leadership, which entails actively participating in school governance through committees, councils, and bodies that shape policies within the school and beyond. Families are also expected to contribute to the implementation of policies and practices by providing critical information, supporting school initiatives, and ensuring a safe and inclusive environment. Additionally, schools keep families informed about policies, strategies, and responsibilities through integrated parent participation programs, such as the Escuelas de Padres program established by the MEN. Ultimately, families are expected to play a crucial role in shifting mindsets within the school community by sharing their knowledge, experiences, and cultural practices, thereby fostering a collaborative learning environment and promoting social cohesion.

In addition to these laws and decrees that cover the entire education system, some frameworks target specific levels of education. For example, the Ley 1804 de 2016 Política de Estado para el Desarrollo Integral de la Primera Infancia (State Policy of Comprehensive Early Childhood Development)[10] states in Article 2 that families play a crucial role in the development of children and in ensuring their rights are met. Additionally, some laws mandate family engagement for children and adolescents with disabilities; namely, Ley 1618 de 2013 and Decreto 1421 de 2017. These frameworks require schools to collaborate with families in developing individualized education and care plans, also known as Planes de Ajustes Razonables.

TABLE 2

Roles and responsibilities of families across education frameworks

Education frameworks	Role of families
Laws	
Ley 115 de 1994 (National Education Act of 1994) is the general education law that governs the organization and operation of Colombia's education system.[11]	Implementing policies and practices Decision making and leadership Being informed
Ley 1620 de 2013 (National Systems of School Coexistence Act of 2013) ensures human and education rights are upheld alongside sexual reproductive health and the prevention and mitigation of school violence. [12]	Implementing policies and practices Decision making and leadership
Ley 2025 de 2020 (Education of Fathers, Mothers and Caregivers Act of 2025, replaces Ley 1404 de 2010) is the legal guidance for implementing the Escuelas de Padres y Madres de Familia y Cuidadores across preschool, primary, and secondary school levels.[13]	Implementing policies and practices Decision making and leadership Being informed
Decrees and plans (guidance for laws)	
Decreto 1286 de 2005 (Decree 1286 of 2005) details the duties and rights of families in the process of educating their children and details how the Asamblea General de Padres, Consejo de Padres, and parent associations should be formed and operated. [14]	Implementing policies and practices Decision making and leadership Being informed Providing resources Shifting mindsets

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10   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Ley 1804 de 2016: Política de Estado para el Desarrollo Integral de la Primera Infancia* (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 2016).

11   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Ley 115 de 1994.*

12   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Ley 1620 de 2013: Por la cual se crea el Sistema Nacional de Convivencia Escolar y Formación para el Ejercicio de los Derechos Humanos* (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 2013).

13   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Ley 2025 de 2020: Por Medio De La Cual Se Establecen Lineamientos Para La Implementación De Las Escuelas Para Padres Y Madres De Familia Y Cuidadores* (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 2020).

14   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Decree 1286 of 2005: By Which the Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (Colciencias) Is Reorganized* (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 2005), article 2.

Education frameworks	Role of families
Decreto 1075 de 2015 (Decree 1075 of the National Education Act, which also covers Decree 1860 of 1994) is the framework for implementation of the National Education Act 115 (1994) and the roles of education authorities in operationalizing this law. It lays out the role of families in school leadership.[15]	Decision making and leadership Shifting mindset
Decreto 459 de 2024 (Decree 459 of 2024, Participation of Families in Education) is the framework guiding the implementation of the participation of families in formal and non-formal education institutions across education levels. This includes mechanisms such as Escuela de Padres designated in Ley 2025 de 2020 and beyond.[16]	Decision making and leadership Shifting mindset
Plan Nacional Decenal de Educación 2016 – 2026 (Ten-Year National Education Plan 2016-2026) is Colombia's ten-year roadmap for education, setting long-term targets for access, learning quality, teacher development, and other areas.[17]	Implementing policies and practices Decision making and leadership Being informed Shifting mindset

SCHOOL-BASED MECHANISMS FOR FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN COLOMBIA

In Colombia, schools have a number of mechanisms that support family engagement, the most prominent of which are the Consejos Directivos (School Boards of Directors) and the Comités Escolar de Convivencia (School Coexistence Committees) where families participate in decision making and leadership. Families are also expected to participate in school events that build community at the school and support their efforts in caregiving and learning at home, such as the Escuela de Padres. Details on these mechanisms are described in Table 3.

TABLE 3

School-based mechanisms for family, school, and community engagement

School-based frameworks	
Proyecto Educativo Institucional (Institutional Educational Project), Proyecto Educativo Comunitario (Community Educational Project)	The Proyecto Educativo Institucional (PEI) and Proyecto Educativo Comunitario (PEC) are strategic documents that define the education institution's/ school's mission, vision, objectives, and guidelines for educational improvement.[18] Parents/caregivers, alongside educators and education leaders through the Consejo Directivo, are responsible for approving the PEI or PEC and monitoring progress (as required by Decreto 1075 de 2015).

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15   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Decreto 1075 de 2015: Por medio del cual se expide el Decreto Único Reglamentario del Sector Educación* (Republic of Colombia 2015).

16   Republic of Colombia, *Decreto 459 de 2024: Por el cual se modifica el Decreto 1075 de 2015 en lo relacionado con los manuales de convivencia escolar* (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 2015).

17   Ministry of National Education, *Plan Nacional Decenal de Educación 2016−2026* (Ministry of National Education, 2017).

18   In the vast majority of public and private schools, the planning document is called Proyecto Educativo Institutional (PEI),

Manual de Convivencia Escolar (School Coexistence Manual)	A school guidance manual that outlines the school's vision, rules, rights, and responsibilities of different members of the school community, as well as procedures and regulations for how students, families, teachers, and administrators should work together to promote coexistence and well-being in schools. The manual is developed, evaluated, and updated by the Comité Escolar de Convivencia with the participation of the entire educational community (as required by Ley 1620 de 2013).
School-based committees and councils with family participation	
Consejo Directivo (School Board of Directors)	The formal governing body of the school, which includes parents/caregivers, teachers, and administrative staff. The Consejo Directivo is responsible for making decisions about school management, resource use, and approving the PEI or PEC (as required by Ley 115 de Febrero 8 de 1994, Ley 1620 de 2013, and designated in Decreto 1860 de 1994).
Comité Escolar de Convivencia (School Coexistence Committee)	A mandatory committee in schools composed of representatives from parents/caregivers, students, teachers, and school administrators that meets every two months. Its role is to promote a safe and respectful environment, prevent violence, and manage conflicts within the school according to the Manual de Convivencia Escolar (as required by Ley 1620 de 2013). The president of the Consejo de Padres typically participates in the Comité (Ley 1620 de 2013, Article 12).
Consejo de Padres y Madres de Familia (Parents' Council)	A council in every school which is composed of one to three parent/caregiver representatives per grade and can include a teacher or principal. The Consejo de Padres promotes family involvement in education, helps improve school quality, and can establish working committees to further the goals in the PEI or PEC. The Council also elects parent representatives to the Consejo Directivo and Comité Escolar de Convivencia (as required by Decreto 1286 de 2005). A parent/caregiver representative may also participate in the Comité de Evaluación, which evaluates academic progress for the school.
School practices and programs	
Asamblea General de Padres de Familia (General Parents' Assembly)	A parent assembly convening open to all parents/caregivers in the school. The assembly brings families together, helps them stay informed about key school policies, and is the occasion when the representatives for the Consejo de Padres are selected. The assembly meets at least twice per year and is convened by the principal/school leader (as required by Decreto 1286 de 2005).
Escuela de Padres y Madres de Familia y Cuidadores (Family Education Program)	Established in 2020, this program is designed to train and involve parents/caregivers in their children's learning and development and to support their physical and mental safety and well-being. Although not a formal governing body, it is an important mechanism to strengthen family participation (as required by Ley 2025 de 2020).

18 ... whereas in education institutions that serve indigenous, AfroColombian, Raizal, or Roma communities, the equivalent plan is called the Proyecto Educativo Comunitario (PEC).

Research design

CONVERSATION STARTER TOOLS METHODOLOGY[19]

The findings and recommendations in this policy brief are based on the document analysis presented above as well as data collected through the Conversation Starter Tools research methodology.[20] The goal of this community-driven research is to guide schools, districts, and civil society organizations in examining the landscape of family, school, and community engagement within their contexts and to develop a shared vision for building stronger family, school, and community partnerships. The process is not intended to judge or assess schools or districts, but rather to foster greater relational trust between families, educators, and students.

The Conversation Starter Tools were developed by the Family, School, and Community Engagement in Education initiative at CUE, in collaboration with school and civil society organization teams worldwide, including Red PaPaz in Colombia. This approach guides school teams through the process of collecting survey **data** with families, educators, and students, using data as a springboard for **dialogues**, and ultimately to generate strategies and new **directions** that can be integrated into school practices and policies. This mixed-methods suite includes surveys, focus group discussion guides, and other protocols to enhance data, dialogue, and directions on how to strengthen collaboration and partnerships between families, schools, and communities.

FIGURE 1

Conversation Starter Tools process

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19   Between 2022 and 2024, the Conversation Starter Tools research teams surveyed 9,473 families, 2,726 educators, and 9,963 students in 235 schools across 16 countries. Hundreds of subsequent dialogues on strategies for strengthening partnerships were then held across these schools. See Morris and Nóra, "Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education," Brookings Institution.

20   Emily M. Morris, Laura Nóra, and Rebecca Winthrop, *Conversation Starter Tools: A Participatory Research Guide to Building Stronger Family, School, and Community Partnerships* (Brookings Institution, 2024).

RESEARCH PROCESS

Red PaPaz and Alianza Educativa used the Conversation Starter Tools to survey government and private secondary school teachers, education leaders, families (parents/caregivers), and students in 66 schools in 13 departments in 2023.[21] The Conversation Starter Tools surveys were administered in Spanish through a survey link as well as in person for families who preferred this mode. Offering the surveys orally helped ensure that families with low literacy levels and limited access to technology were included. On average, over 50% of targeted families participated in the surveys. CUE and Red PaPaz analyzed and synthesized the survey data into summaries designed for low-literacy audiences. Red PaPaz then shared the data with clusters of schools and held eight conversations with groups of parents/caregivers, educators, and students from 12 schools, all of whom participated in the surveys. These conversations were not only an essential source of qualitative data on why educators, families, and students responded the way they did on surveys, but they also provided a mechanism for building relational trust and identifying new strategies and directions that schools could employ for strengthening family, school, and community partnerships. The findings also informed workshops with school leaders on how to strengthen partnerships with families, as well as a virtual course for teachers produced by Red PaPaz entitled "Working Together, Alizana Familia-Escuela."

Red PaPaz led a similar study with primary school educators and families in 45 schools in 11 departments in 2022. The findings were used to inform the creation of an approach and guide for schools—the Kit PaPaz Alianza Familia-Escuela—meant to guide conversations with schools on how to build on family assets and address barriers to partnerships. The research also informed conversations with education and civil society leaders at the national, department, and school levels. In October 2022, the research was shared at the first family, school, and community engagement convening, which brought together government and civil society leaders, as well as highlighted voices from educators, families, and communities on their visions for education and family engagement. At this convening, different actors in the ecosystem committed to furthering family, school, and community engagement.

Red PaPaz led a subsequent exercise in four schools from the department of Cesar in 2023 using the Global Family, School, and Community Engagement Rubrics Tool ("Global Rubrics Tool")[22]—to assess current practices used by the schools and to inform a school action plan. Small groups of 8-10 family representatives, school staff, and teachers met to assess how schools were facilitating relational trust, building an inclusive culture with families, and other elements of partnerships. Qualitative data from this exercise were used to inform finding four.

The five findings provide an in-depth examination of schools' needs and aspirations for family and school partnerships in both public and private schools, guiding schools and communities in identifying strategies to support their efforts to strengthen family, school, and community partnerships.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

This section outlines the research context, including information about the participants and family engagement practices in Colombia. Demographic data, types of family involvement, and barriers to engagement collected from the surveys informed this section.

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21   The 13 departments were: Antioquia (Medellín), Atlántico (Barranquilla), Bogotá DC, Santander (Bucaramanga), Valle del Cauca (Cali), Bolívar (Cartagena), Norte de Santander (Cúcuta), Tolima (Ibagué), Caldas (Manizales), Valle del Cauca (Palmira), Magdalena (Santa Marta), Cesar (Valledupar), and Meta (Villavicencio).
22   Global Family Engagement in Education Network, *Global Family, School, and Community Engagement Rubrics Tool* (Brookings Institution, 2024).

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

This research was conducted in 26 private and 40 public schools in 13 CTEs (departments and municipalities) of Colombia. A total of 1,280 parents/caregivers, 659 educators, and 2,478 students in secondary grades were surveyed.

Across the various research sites, female caregivers comprised a large proportion of family respondents (85.5%). As highlighted in Table 4, among the secondary school educators surveyed, just over half (52.4%) were female, which is consistent with national data that show that 51% of secondary educators in Colombia are female.[23] More than half of the students (54.9%) surveyed were female. Only 2.2% of surveyed parents/caregivers reported having a child with a disability. This percentage was slightly higher among student respondents, with 4.8% reporting a disability.

TABLE 4

Gender and disability status of students by participant groups

Participant groups	Gender			Child with disability	
	Female	**Male**	**Other identity**	**Yes**	**No**
Families (n = 1280)	85.5%	14.3%	0.2%	2.2%	97.8%
Educators (n = 659)	52.4%	47.5%	0.2%	n/a	n/a
Students (n = 2,478)	54.9%	44.5%	0.6%	4.8%	95.2%

The level of education and socioeconomic status were analyzed across participant groups. Additionally, data on school type were collected across all groups. As shown in Table 5, over half of the families surveyed (56.6%) reported having completed post-secondary education. A few family respondents (16.1%) had primary education or less. Almost all educators (98.0%) reported holding post-secondary education qualifications, including teaching credentials and undergraduate and graduate degrees.

TABLE 5

Level of education by participant groups

Participant groups	Level of education		
	Primary or less	**Secondary**	**Post-secondary**
Families (n = 1280)	16.1%	27.3%	56.6%
Educators (n = 659)	0.8%	0.6%	98.6%

Most families (71.2%) and students (72.8%), and more than half of all educators (61.2%) surveyed were from pub-

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23   World Bank, *Secondary Education, Teachers (% Female) [Indicator SE.SEC.TCHR.FE.ZS]*, World Development Indicators, accessed June 20, 2025, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.TCHR.FE.ZS?locations=CO&view=chart.

lic schools. Socioeconomic status (SES) was measured using the question, "Are you able to cover basic food and living expenses?" Responses were collected using a four-point Likert scale, where "never" and "sometimes" were considered extreme poverty and poverty, respectively, and "mostly" was considered relative poverty. The survey data, as outlined in Table 6 below, revealed that over one-quarter of families (26.3%) reported that they "never" or "sometimes" met basic needs, living in extreme or relative poverty. Roughly two in five educators (41.5%) reported "never" or only "sometimes" being able to meet basic needs. According to national research in Colombia, as of 2023, roughly 33% of the general population lives below the poverty line and 11.4% in extreme poverty. Across Latin America, it has been found that public school teachers often have lower salaries and more temporary contracts than those in private schools.[24] In Colombia, public school teachers have been found to have lower financial compensation, higher workload, and fewer opportunities for rest and maintaining a work-life balance.[25] Therefore, ensuring that family engagement is integrated into an all-school approach, rather than adding another 'ask' to teachers on top of their already high demands and low compensation, is crucial to the well-being of educators.

TABLE 6

School type and socioeconomic status by participant groups

Participant groups	School type		Socioeconomic status (percent meeting basic needs)		
	Public	Private	Never or sometimes	Mostly	Always
Families (n = 1,280)	71.2%	28.8%	26.3%	26.1%	47.5%
Educators (n = 659)	61.2%	38.8%	41.5%	36.4%	22.1%
Students (n = 2,478)	72.8%	27.2%	8.4%	21.6%	70.5%

As Table 7 shows, a greater proportion of public-school families (34.7%) reported "never" or "sometimes" meeting their basic needs, compared to families from private schools (5.7%), which is not surprising, as private schools tend to cater to families with greater resources.

TABLE 7

Relationship between school type and socioeconomic status by family respondents

Families	Socioeconomic status (Percent meeting basic needs)			
	Lower		Higher	
	Never	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
Public school families (n = 911)	2.3%	32.4%	29.0%	36.3%

24   Beatrice Ávalos et al., "La Profesión Docente: temas y discusiones en la literatura internacional [The teaching profession: themes and discussion in international literature]," *Estudios Pedagógicos* 36, no. 1 (2010): 235–263, https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-07052010000100013

25   Víctor Hugo Charria Ortiz et al., "Bienestar laboral y condiciones de trabajo en docentes de primaria y secundaria [Workplace Well-Being and Working Conditions of Primary and Secondary School Teachers]," *Revista CES Psicología* 15, no. 3 (2022): 63–80, https://doi.org/10.21615/cesp.5984.

| Families	Socioeconomic status (Percent meeting basic needs)			
	Lower		Higher	
	Never	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
Private school families (n = 369)	0.5%	5.2%	19.0%	75.3%
Total families (n = 1,280)	1.8%	24.5%	26.1%	47.5%

NOTE: Among family respondents, the correlation between school type (private and public) and SES (lower and higher) had a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of .354**, meaning a moderate, positive relationship between the two variables. Lower SES is "never" and "sometimes" meeting basic needs, and higher SES is "mostly" and "always" meeting basic needs on a 4-point Likert scale.

MAIN TYPES OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

There are six main types of family involvement and engagement outlined in the literature and shown in Figure 2. In this study, families, students, and educators were asked to identify the primary ways in which families were involved in their children's schools and learning. According to the majority of respondents, across participant groups, the main types of family involvement and engagement were supporting learning at home, caregiving, and communicating with school staff. Decision-making and leadership are also critical to family, school, and community engagement—as indicated by the laws and decrees—but the proportion of families involved in this type of engagement was lower than the others, at roughly 9%. Participation in decision-making and leadership was higher among parents/caregivers of private school students than among those from public schools, as was the frequency of communication with school staff.

FIGURE 2

Types of family involvement and engagement
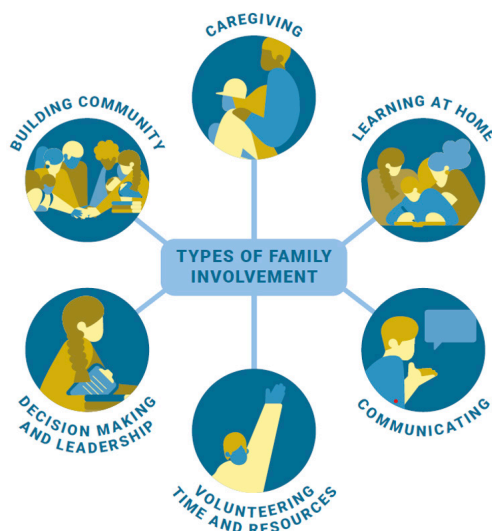
According to families and students, the most common way families were involved was in supporting learning at home, with over three-quarters of families (77.9%) and roughly two-thirds of students (66.9%) listing this as the primary type of involvement. Educators identified supporting learning at home as the second most common

type of family involvement, at approximately 52.7%. According to families, supporting learning at home included "supervising homework, providing materials and supplies, and asking about/inquiring about school," as well as providing tutoring or other educational needs.

Communicating with school staff was the most common form of family involvement, as reported by more than half of public-school educators (55.8%) and nearly three-quarters of private school educators (73.8%). This was the second most common type of family involvement or engagement reported by parents/caregivers, with one-third of families in public schools (36.1%) and half of families in private schools (47.2%) saying they communicate with staff and teachers. Among students, roughly half (46.2%) said the second most common way their families were involved with schools was through following student news.

TABLE 8

Top types of family involvement and engagement, reported by participant groups

Type of involvement and engagement	Participant group	Total (all schools)	Comparison by school type		
			Public school	**Private school**	**P value**
Caregiving and supporting learning at home					
Supporting or monitoring learning	Families (n = 1,280)	**77.9%**	**77.2%**	**79.7%**	*
	Educators (n = 659)	**52.7%**	**45.9%**	**63.3%**	*
	Students (n = 2,478)	**66.9%**	**67.9%**	**64.0%**	
Communicating					
Communicating with school staff	Families	**39.3%**	**36.1%**	**47.2%**	*
	Educators	**62.8%**	**55.8%**	**73.8%**	*
	Students	29.0%	28.3%	31.0%	
Follow school news	Families	37.1%	34.5%	43.6%	*
	Educators	33.7%	29.8%	39.8%	*
	Students	**46.2%**	**43.8%**	**52.6%**	*
Building community					
Attending school events	Families	28.8%	24.5%	39.6%	*
	Educators	39.2%	31.3%	51.6%	*
	Students	32.7%	28.7%	43.3%	*
Volunteering time and resources					

Type of involvement and engagement	Participant group	Total (all schools)	Comparison by school type		
			Public school	Private school	P value
Volunteering	Families	7.4%	6.4%	10.0%	*
	Educators	14.3%	11.4%	18.8%	*
	Students	6.6%	6.5%	6.7%	
Donations	Families	2.3%	2.1%	3.0%	
	Educators	3.8%	2.0%	6.6%	*
	Students	3.1%	2.3%	5.5%	*
Decision making and leadership					
Providing feedback on school decisions	Families	8.9%	7.8%	11.7%	*
	Educators	22.8%	18.9%	28.9%	*
	Students	16.1%	13.4%	23.4%	*
Leadership role in parent association	Families	7.8%	7.1%	9.5%	
	Educators	26.9%	20.3%	37.1%	*
	Students	5.1%	4.3%	7.3%	*
Not involved	Families	1.3%	1.3%	1.1%	
	Educators	7.3%	10.7%	2.0%	*
	Students	7.1%	7.0%	7.4%	

NOTE: Responses were "select all" and do not equal 100%. Bolded percentages are top selections for families. Lower SES is "never" and "sometimes" meeting basic needs and higher SES is "mostly" and "always" meeting basic needs on a 4-point Likert scale. For significance, *p ≤ .05.

The proportion of families who supported learning at home, followed school news, and attended school events tended to be greater for families with higher levels of education and higher socioeconomic statuses. This is not surprising, as families with higher levels of education often feel more comfortable with student assignments, can follow school news due to higher literacy levels, and usually have more flexible work situations that enable them to attend school events more easily.[26] Interestingly, there was no statistical difference between communicating with school staff, volunteering, donating, or holding a leadership role in a parent association among families of different socioeconomic statuses and education levels. Families with post-secondary education provided feedback on school decisions at rates that were significantly higher than those of families with a secondary education or less. Still, only around one in ten (9%) of families overall were involved in the decision making and only 8% served on a parent association, despite most education leaders envisioning family engagement as parental

26   Emily M. Morris and Laura Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education* (Brookings Institution, 2024).

participation in leadership committees.

TABLE 9

Top types of family involvement and engagement by SES and level of education, reported by family respondents (n = 1,280)

Types of involvement and engagement	Socioeconomic status			Level of education		
	Lower SES	Higher SES	P value	Secondary or below	Post-secondary	P value
Caregiving and supporting learning at home						
Support learning at home	**74.4%**	**81.6%**	*	**75.1%**	**80.3%**	*
Communicating						
Communicating with school staff	38.1%	41.1%		36.3%	41.4%	
Following school news	34.2%	41.2%	*	31.9%	41.5%	*
Building communities						
Attending school events	23.0%	35.7%	*	23.2%	33.6%	*
Volunteering time and resources						
Volunteering	8.0%	7.0%		6.4%	8.3%	
Donations	2.0%	2.8%		2.4%	2.4%	
Decision making and leadership						
Providing feedback on school decisions	8.3%	9.8%		6.0%	11.3%	*
Leadership role in parent association	7.7%	8.2%		6.2%	9.2%	
Not involved	1.2%	1.2%		1.6%	1.0%	

NOTE: Responses were "select all" and do not equal 100%. Bolded percentages are top selections for families. Lower SES is "never" and "sometimes" meeting basic needs and higher SES is "mostly" and "always" meeting basic needs on a 4-point Likert scale. For significance, *p ≤ .05.

In summary, when families think of family, school, and community engagement, they think first about the work they do at home supporting student learning and caregiving, while educators tend to think about family engagement in terms of communicating with families. Decision makers often think about family engagement as involvement of parents in leadership and decision making, even though in reality this involves a small proportion of families.

MAIN BARRIERS TO FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Families, educators, and students were asked to report the main barriers to building strong family engagement. Barriers were structural (taking place in school or society), situational (taking place in the household), or overlapping structural and situational, as shown in Figure 3.[27]

Barriers to family involvement and engagement
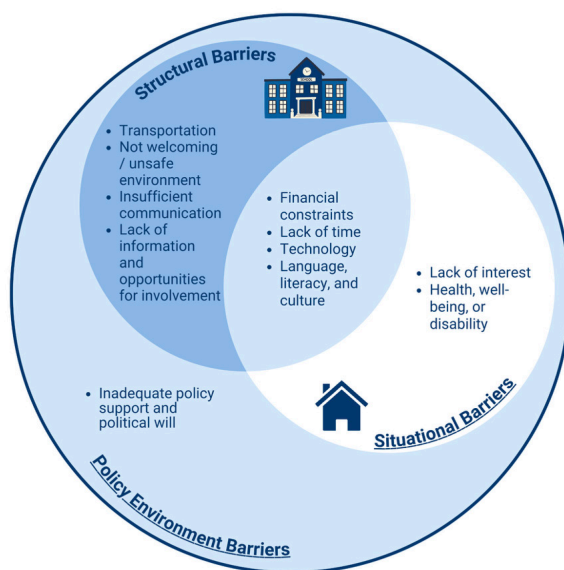
According to the majority of families, educators, and students—across public and private schools—the main barrier to family engagement was lack of time; families do not have the time to get involved and engaged based on their life demands. This aligns with global trends.[28] Part of the challenge is finding times that are convenient for both families and educators. According to teachers and families in Antioquia, "the school has not been able to find a time/schedule so that everyone can attend [parent meetings]."

Other barriers impacted families and students substantially less than the lack of time. For example, less than 10% of families and students reported that the lack of transportation and financial constraints as barriers, and less than five percent of families and students listed lack of technology, welcoming or safety of the environment, health, well-being or disability of caregivers, and literacy, language, and culture as barriers. These are likely under-reported, as nearly one-third of families (38.7%) and one-quarter of students (20.4%) said that there were no barriers to family engagement. Upon debriefing, this was because they felt they were able to meet the expectations for family engagement laid out by their children's school.

Half of educators (49.3%) also believed that families demonstrated a lack of interest in getting involved in their children's education, which they considered a barrier to building strong engagement and partnerships. As one educator in the north of Santander described, families "do not attend meetings, they do not respond to emails, they do not participate in activities, they do not receive assertive responses." However, the majority of families did

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27   Morris and Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education.*
28   Morris and Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education.*

not report a lack of interest as one of the barriers to their engagement; instead, they described how they wanted to be more involved but lacked flexible work and employment that allowed them to take time off to attend school activities.

As indicated in the demographics section, one-quarter of families were only meeting their basic needs "sometimes" or "never." Financial constraints and the reliance of families on daily wage labor kept them from participating in family engagement activities. In urban and metropolitan areas, the population working in the informal sector is approximately 43.9%, while in rural areas, it reaches as high as 84.7%.[29] A parent in Magdalena spoke to this barrier, "due to financial shortcomings, [parents/caregivers] are forced to work long hours or have multiple jobs to meet the family's basic needs. This financial pressure can limit your ability to be present in your children's educational lives and actively participate in school." An educator in Magdalena highlighted the difference in perception among educators and families regarding motivation and interest in engaging with schools. The educator said, "The belief that families lack interest in getting involved in school is often based on parents' lack of visible involvement in school activities, but this may not reflect their genuine interest in their children's education, as they may face significant economic and time challenges."

TABLE 10

Top barriers to family involvement and engagement by participant groups

Barriers to involvement and engagement	Participant groups	Total (all schools)	Comparison by school type		
			Public school	Private school	P value
Structural barriers					
Lack of transportation	Families (n = 1,280)	5.1%	5.6%	3.8%	
	Educators (n = 659)	12.3%	13.9%	9.8%	
	Students (n = 2,478)	8.2%	7.8%	9.2%	
Not welcoming/unsafe environment	Families	2.0%	1.9%	2.4%	
	Educators	2.3%	3.0%	1.2%	
	Students	0.9%	3.1%	5.9%	*
Insufficient communication	Families	5.6%	5.2%	6.9%	
	Educators	14.0%	14.4%	13.3%	
	Students	10.3%	9.1%	13.5%	*
Situational barriers					

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29   National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Boletín Técnico: Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (GEIH), Trimestre móvil febrero - abril 2025 *[Technical Bulletin: Large Integrated Household Survey (GEIH), Moving Quarter February– April 2025]* (DANE, 2025).

Barriers to involvement and engagement	Participant groups	Total (all schools)	Comparison by school type		
			Public school	Private school	P value
Lack of interest	Families	1.0%	0.8%	1.6%	
	Educators	**49.3%**	**48.1%**	**51.2%**	
	Students	7.1%	5.6%	11.0%	*
Health, well-being, or disability	Families	2.5%	3.0%	1.4%	
	Educators	7.7%	8.2%	7.0%	
	Students	3.1%	3.8%	1.2%	*
Overlapping barriers					
Financial constraints	Families	7.2%	9.1%	2.4%	*
	Educators	30.0%	43.9%	8.2%	*
	Students	12.1%	14.0%	7.1%	*
Lack of time	Families	**41.6%**	**42.0%**	**40.7%**	
	Educators	**80.7%**	**81.8%**	**80.1%**	
	Students	**55.0%**	**54.5%**	**56.2%**	
Lack of technology	Families	3.3%	4.3%	0.8%	*
	Educators	15.8%	22.3%	5.5%	*
	Students	5.0%	6.3%	1.5%	*
Literacy, language, and culture	Families	0.3%	0.4%	0.0%	
	Educators	6.4%	8.9%	2.3%	*
	Students	0.9%	1.2%	0.3%	*
No barriers	Families	38.7%	37.2%	42.3%	
	Educators	3.8%	2.0%	6.6%	*
	Students	20.4%	20.0%	21.4%	

NOTE: Responses were "select all" and do not equal 100%. Bolded percentages are the top selections for families and students, with educators' top two selections also bolded. For significance, $*p \leq .05$.

Lack of time was a barrier to families across public and private schools, and it was a barrier that affected families across socioeconomic status and educational levels, with no statistical difference between groups. Families from lower SES and lower education levels reported financial constraints and lack of technology as barriers at signifi-

cantly higher rates than those with higher SES and education levels.

TABLE 11

Top barriers to family involvement and engagement by SES and level of education among family respondents (n = 1,280)

Barriers to involvement and engagement	Socioeconomic status			Level of education		
	Lower SES	Higher SES	P value	Secondary or below	Post-secondary	P value
Structural barriers						
Lack of transport	6.8%	3.2%	*	6.4%	4.2%	
Not welcoming/unsafe environment	2.7%	1.3%		1.8%	2.2%	
Insufficient communication	6.7%	4.7%		3.1%	7.6%	*
Situational barriers						
Lack of interest	1.2%	0.8%		0.7%	1.3%	
Health, well-being, or disability	2.9%	2.2%		3.4%	1.8%	
Overlapping barriers						
Financial constraints	11.8%	2.3%	*	10.9%	4.3%	*
Lack of time	**42.5%**	**40.7%**		**38.70%**	**44.1%**	
Lack of technology	4.8%	1.7%	*	4.9%	2.0%	*
Language, literacy, and culture	0.3%	0.3%		0.5%	0.1%	
No barriers	32.7%	45.7%	*	37.4%	40.3%	

NOTE: Responses were "select all" and do not equal 100%. Bolded percentages are the top selection for families. Lower SES is "never" and "sometimes" meeting basic needs and higher SES is "mostly" and "always" meeting basic needs on a 4-point Likert scale. For significance, *p ≤ .05.

In summary, lack of time was the most significant barrier to engagement. Families and students were reluctant to report other barriers, which needs further study. Educators tended not only to point to a lack of time as a barrier, but also to a lack of interest among parents/caregivers. The blame of families as not being motivated to get engaged will be discussed further in finding and recommendation five.

Findings and recommendations

Finding 1: Family, school, and community partnerships—Alianza Familia-Escuela—are integral to the national education frameworks in Colombia, but schools are struggling to advance partnerships with families in practice. There are multiple school-based family engagement mechanisms to support families in fulfilling these roles, but no official mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating, or sustaining the impact of these mechanisms or coordinating with other sectors.

Family, school, and community engagement is woven into Colombia's national education laws, decrees, and plans. Education frameworks such as Ley 1620 define the family as society's "fundamental nucleus" and mandate Alianza Familia-Escuela in schools through many mechanisms. According to the three laws that govern family engagement (Ley 115, 1620, 2025), the role of families is largely to provide their children with a safe and conducive environment at home for learning and development, which falls under caregiving and supporting learning at home, one of the the six types of family involvement and engagement (Figure 2). The Comité Escolar de Convivencia is the school-based mechanism tasked with ensuring young people have a safe and inclusive environment at home and school. Communicating with school staff is largely facilitated by the Consejo de Padres through the Asamblea de Padres and the Escuela de Padres, whereas the Consejo Directivo is the mechanism for ensuring decision making and leadership has family representation. Volunteering time and resources and building community are not explicitly mentioned in the legal frameworks and are left to the schools and education institutions.

The vision of Alizanza Familia-Escuela is more comprehensive and formalized in Colombia than in most countries across the region and the world. In reality, however, schools struggle to implement family engagement for a number of structural and contextual factors, including: lack of clear and centralized coordination at various levels of the government, little to no training among educators, insufficient financial and human resources to implement strong partnerships in schools, and complex issues such as violence, displacement, and poverty in communities. During this research, educators, families, and students described how the schools were still struggling to build convivencia, belonging, safety, and collaboration with families, given the lack of dedicated resources and capacity. For example, many low-income communities reported that they are facing issues of violence in their communities, and schools do not often have the personnel and resources to support families and students. Many schools have a single social worker or psychologist (orientadoro/a social or psicólogo/a) for thousands of students and families. Additionally, conversations with schools revealed that an influx of migrants from Venezuela due to political conflict has also increased challenges in schools with insufficient support to address the trauma and deprivation these children and families are often experiencing.

According to Colombia's current organogram (as indicated in Decree 2269 of 2023, Article 1.3) and the 2024 national budget, there is no designated office or budget line devoted exclusively to family, school, and community engagement and ensuring schools have the capacity and resources to implement Alianza Familia-Escuela. Schools run Escuela de Padres and other school-based mechanisms with ad-hoc funding and staff time, which limits consistency of implementation and the potential impacts.[30] In addition to the lack of designated responsibility in the MEN and CTEs to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the Alianza Familia-Escuela, there is a lack of coordination across agencies to ensure family engagement is an intentional component of holistic child development and meets the complex needs of communities. As a consequence, noted in conversations with schools, there is a duplication in efforts—particularly among the civil society sector—and a lack of collective action in moving policies into practice. For example, during conversations with public schools in Valledupar,

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30   House of Representatives of Colombia, *Proyecto de Ley No. 057 de 2023C: Presupuesto General de la Nación 2024 [Bill No. 057 of 2023C: General Budget of the Nation 2024]* (House of Representatives, 2023).

educators described how there are virtual workshops on Alianza Familia-Escuela developed by the MEN for social workers to implement Alianza Familia-Escuela in their schools. At the same time, the CTE hired an expert to facilitate an in-person workshop with the same social workers, creating a duplicative training for the same teachers. Had the MEN and CTE teams collaborated and had a mechanism for consulting with schools on family engagement needs, resources could have been used differently.

Per Decree 459 of 2024, the MEN has the responsibility to "ensure the development of the Alianza Familia-Escuela throughout the country, through monitoring and evaluation, in order to reaffirm the joint work of the family and the school in the comprehensive education of children and adolescents." Yet, there has been no known evaluation of the Alizanza Familia-Escuela or the Escuela de Padres to date. Without a detailed evaluation of these programs and other school-based mechanisms, it is hard to pinpoint what aspects of family engagement efforts are working and which are falling short.

Recommendation 1: Designate a structure in the Ministry of Education and Certified Territorial Entities responsible for ensuring Alianza Familia-Escuela is implemented in practice. This includes identifying a central unit in the MEN and a multi-sectoral steering committee (comprising central and departmental representatives) responsible for planning, monitoring, and maintaining accountability of Alianza Familia-Escuela.

In order to ensure laws, decrees, and plans are implemented as envisioned, it is important to have designated units and expertise in the MEN and CTEs who are responsible for monitoring family engagement efforts and working with responsible units to make sure schools receive needed resources and support. For example, the Sub-directorate for Evaluating Quality Education (subdirección de evaluación de la calidad educativa) that works at the MEN and CTE levels. The designated unit would be responsible for: drafting implementation plans for Alianza Familia-Escuela, creating a monitoring framework, overseeing a budget, and developing a process to share providing feedback on progress with CTEs and schools. It is also important to integrate family engagement into national and departmental teacher training efforts.

Alongside a designated unit and expertise, a centralized monitoring system should be put in place that would enable the MEN and CTE to track progress. Additionally, a formal evaluation of the entire Alianza Familia-Escuela program—and especially the Escuela de Padres program—would help systematically reveal what is working, what needs to be adjusted, and how resources should be allocated. Timing this evaluation before the release of the next national education plan (PNDE) would make sure family engagement continues to serve a vital role in implementing high-quality education.

To address the lack of multisectoral collaboration, forming a steering committee at the national MEN and CTE levels would help ensure that health, social welfare, and education experts—as well as families and schools—are involved in the holistic development of children and adolescents. These steering groups should lead the planning and monitoring of Alianza Familia-Escuela in collaboration with the MEN and CTEs. Building under an existing steering group is ideal to maximize time and resources. One useful precedent to draw from is Program de Educacíon Familiar para el Desarrollo Infantil (Family Education Program for Early Childhood Deveoment), or PEFADI (1984-1995), an early childhood family-education program that was implemented in the late 1980s to early 1990s that reached thousands of rural families across the country.[31] The program was designed to promote collaboration between families and teachers and to ultimately support families in their roles as caregivers and in supporting learning at home. The program had a multisectoral structure composed of the MEN, the Ministry of Health, and

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31   UNESCO Office Santiago and Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, *Coordinación intersectorial de políticas y programas de la primera infancia: experiencias en América Latina [Intersectoral Coordination of Early Childhood Policies and Programs: Experiences in Latin America]* (UNESCO, 2003).

the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar or ICBF). There was a similar structure in the CTEs where the same ministries and institutes collaborated—along with municipal leaders, hospitals, and community leaders—to oversee planning and implementation. The PEFADI left a lasting example of how to work across the education, health, and social welfare sectors, in collaboration with other government offices, to advance holistic family engagement and early childhood development.

A more recent example of multisectoral collaboration is the Comité Interinstitucional Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil y Sus Peores Formas (CIETI, the Inter-institutional Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor and the Protection of Child Workers). The purpose of CIETI is to build a coalition to eradicate the worst forms of child labor across the country. CIETI is coordinated by ICBF and the Ministry of Labor,[32] and members of the steering committee hail from eight different secretariats, including health, education, labor, sports and recreation, and culture. The steering committee has national and local coordinating bodies, much like PEFADI's structure, and meets four times a year. Together, each of the different levels of steering committees develops work plans, strategies, and appoints roles and responsibilities to the different institutions with the collective goal of reducing and eradicating child labor. Members of the steering committee are also responsible for conducting outreach to communities, families, and schools, and evaluating progress made in eradicating child labor against national indicators. Creating a similar steering committee for family engagement would help ensure that the holistic vision for family, school, and community partnerships, as outlined in the Alianza Familia-Escuela, is realized.

In summary, designated units at the national and departmental levels, as well as a multi-sectoral steering committee, would ensure that Alianza Familia-Escuela is implemented and monitored and the laws and decrees are executed in practice.

Finding 2: The government of Colombia mandates that all schools have a Consejo de Padres to serve as the primary mechanism for family leadership. These family committees could do more to reach marginalized communities who experience barriers in engaging with schools. The more inclusive and diverse that parent councils are, the more responsive they can be to families of different demographics and groups.

Consejos de Padres are all-parent councils that have a family representative from each of the different grades in a school. Consejos are expected to serve a critical role in improving school quality and helping schools implement the goals in their school plans. The parent/caregiver representatives are selected at the Asamblea General de Padres de Familia at the start of the year as laid out in Decree 1286 of 2005.[33] Consejos de Padres must meet at least four times a year, two of those at the initiation of the school principal/director. There are no official communication channels for Consejos de Padres, but according to the school conversations, many Consejos de Padres start a social media or WhatsApp conversation during the Asamblea General. Consejos de Padres is the main school-based mechanism for family leadership, as representatives of Consejos de Padres also sit on other school governance bodies, including the Consejos Directivos, Comités de Convivencia Escolar and Comités de Evaluación (Evaluation Committees).

One of the challenges of parent/caregiver councils and associations in Colombia—and in many parts of the world—is the lack of diversity and representation from marginalized families.[34] In Colombia, this includes families from racial and ethnic minorities (such as Indigenous communities), very low socioeconomic status (living

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32   Mayor's Office of Neiva, *Comité Interinstitucional: Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil y sus Peores Formas [Interinstitutional Committee for the Eradication of Child Labor] (CIETI)* (Alcaldía Municipal de Neiva, 2024).

33   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Decree 1286 of 2005.*

34   Yvonne De Gaetano, "The Role of Culture in Engaging Latino Parents' Involvement in School," *Urban Education 42,* no. 2 (2007): 145–162, https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085906296536.

in extreme poverty), and displaced communities (such as families displaced from neighboring countries). Parent councils can be an important mechanism for promoting unity among families and helping families play an important role in promoting quality and equity in education systems.[35]

Consejos de Padres are an important school-based mechanism for not only including families in decision making and leadership but also in building greater communication with families and creating strategies to ensure that marginalized families are involved in schools. Consejos de Padres could do more to foster more positive two-way communication pathways among all families and with educators. As parents/caregivers are a vital source of information for other families, Consejos de Padres can support and mentor other families to be more involved and engaged in their children's learning and in communicating with teachers and school leaders. Centering Consejos de Padres activities around communication and building trust, as opposed to simply adding more events, can help expand participation among families who struggle to engage with schools due to a lack of time.

Recommendation 2: Provide guidance for schools on how to build diversity and unity in Consejos de Padres and to ensure all families feel welcome to participate. Enhance the capacity of Consejos de Padres to serve diverse families, particularly those from marginalized communities.

According to Decree 1286 of 2005, Consejos de Padres are to be established in all schools, across all levels, to ensure that families from all grades are an active part of educational decision making. The goal of Consejos de Padres is to "promote and facilitate the effective participation of parents in the improvement of educational processes." (Article 1) Yet, there is little guidance, if any, on how to bring together a diverse group of families to ensure that everyone feels a sense of inclusion and belonging. There is also little guidance on how Consejos de Padres contribute to the school ethos beyond contributing to other school committees. Creating guidance with clear strategies on how to engage diverse families—with special attention to historically marginalized groups—would ensure that Consejos de Padres and school leaders have the resources to plan, design, and maintain active parent/caregiver participation.

One way to promote Consejos de Padres to be more impactful is to encourage more parent-led decision making and leadership. Consejos de Padres are established by education leaders, and they weigh in on decisions as directed by the school as opposed to having a strong body of parent leaders who set the agenda. Encouraging more family autonomy and leadership in Conejos de Padres would help give parents/caregivers a more meaningful role in the school beyond reviewing PEIs or PECs and weighing in on decisions as token members on committees. For example, Consejos de Padres could meet monthly, set their agenda at the beginning of the year, and invite the school leaders and teacher liaisons to participate in the meetings led by parents. Another way to make participation in Consejos de Padres more meaningful is to involve the councils more actively in developing the PEI or PEC as opposed to only involving them after the plans have been developed. An example of how to do this can be drawn from a school district in Brazil's Amazonas region, where there is an annual collaborative process in the development of the school plans. Communities and families provide feedback on what they think should go into the next year's school plans and share their perspectives based on what they are seeing and experiencing in their school, home, and community contexts. Through a democratic management process, parent councils help shape collective feedback for the school plans in collaboration with education leaders and teachers.[36] This process of involving Consejos de Padres more intentionally in the PEI and PEC development should be outlined in the PNDE

35   Heather B. Weiss et al., *Reframing Family Involvement in Education: Supporting Families to Support Educational Equity. Equity Matters: Research Review No. 5* (Campaign for Educational Equity, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2009), https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED523994.
36   Brookings Institution, "Case Study: Escola Municipal Waldir Garcia," accessed July 8, 2025, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/case-study-escola-municipal-waldir-garcia/.

alongside other concrete roles for families.

At a systems level, working together with community, family, and education leaders to design the roles and responsibilities of Consejos de Padres and to identify key issues for collaboration would be a powerful way to build unity and cohesion. In regions and schools with historically underrepresented communities¬—such as the Indigenous communities in Colombia—integrating community leaders into the development of PEI or PECs would build local collaboration. In a school district in British Columbia, Canada, that serves a large community of Indigenous students, they used a survey to gather ideas and feedback on parent/caregiver involvement in councils alongside intergenerational dialogues with community leaders from Indigenous groups.[37] Through a consultative process, community and school leaders collaborated with families to understand how to work together effectively to address the low graduation rates of Indigenous students. They worked in partnership on a school reform effort, and in the process, built trust between community and tribal leaders, families, and students.

Another approach that can be used to build synergy between families is a parent/caregiver mentoring program where a family that is comfortable engaging with the school pairs with other families that are less comfortable to help them feel a greater sense of belonging and learn ways to interact with teachers and school staff. Consejos de Padres could train parent/caregiver mentors and match seasoned families with newcomer families. In Parent'R'Us, a program developed in Europe, parent/caregiver mentor managers from marginalized backgrounds were selected to lead the mentoring process in their schools.[38] Parent/caregiver mentors received training and support to bring together families who were confident in family engagement with families who were less confident, and they created a process where families could meet to develop relationships and learn from each other over the course of the school year. The program leveraged peer support to create a practice of building inclusion and belonging in schools. Curating active parent/caregiver chat groups, led by a mentor manager or Consejo de Padres representatives, is another way to build communication and participation across families.

In addition to leveraging families as resources and support for other families, school efforts to share information and build trust with marginalized families are also critical. A school district in the U.S. (Indiana) with a large influx of newcomer families from across Latin America used a three-pronged strategy. Parent/caregiver liaisons, welcome packets with resources, and monthly informal meetings specific to newcomer families were used to help build inclusion of families entering into a new education system and navigating cultural and language differences.[39]

In summary, while Consejos de Padres are mandated for every school, and families are expected to participate in these boards, more could be done to ensure that representation on these Consejos is diverse and that families have the capacity to fully participate in meaningful ways.

Finding 3: As one of the pillars of Alianza Familia-Escuela, schools across all education levels in Colombia are expected to hold three Escuela de Padres convenings a year. In practice, convenings often employ one-way communication to convey information to families, failing to center the needs of working-class families and thereby missing an important opportunity to deepen family, school, and community engagement.

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37   Brookings Institution, "Case Study: School District 48: Sea to Sky," accessed July 8, 2025, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/case-study-escola-municipal-waldir-garcia/.
38   Brookings Institution, "Case Study: ParentRus," accessed July 8, 2025,, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/case-study-parentrus/.
39   Brookings Institution, "Case Study: Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township," accessed July 8, 2025, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/case-study-metropolitan-school-district-of-wayne-township/.

The Escuela de Padres program aims to increase family involvement in children's learning and development at home and school and to support children's physical and mental safety and well-being.

Family engagement includes caregiving and supporting learning at home and giving parents/caregivers the tools to support their children on a number of topics, such as substance-use prevention, sexual and reproductive health education, digital safety, positive discipline, and school coexistence. The MEN names a core set of topics for public schools to choose from as the content of these Escuela de Padres convenings, while private schools may substitute or add subjects that match their own ethos or parental demands. Escuelas de Padres are scheduled by the school community. In public schools, convenings are often an hour long and take place at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. They typically occur during weekdays in the early mornings before school at drop-off. Some schools provide breakfast to families as an incentive to attend. Private schools can vary greatly in days, times, and formats of their convenings. Virtual Escuelas de Padres were common during the COVID-19 pandemic across school types, but were less common post-pandemic.

There were several avenues that public schools in Colombia used to determine which topics to focus on for a given year. First, the school leadership names the topics. Second, the school psychologist or social worker (orientado escolar) decides on the topics based on challenges they observed or heard reported by teachers. Third, schools survey families on which topics they want to focus on and when to hold the convenings, and bring this information to the Consejos Directivos, which then set the topics and agenda. Parents/caregivers who cannot easily read and complete the school survey often work with the social worker to fill out the survey.

One of the most highly discussed challenges of the Escuela de Padres was attendance. Parents/caregivers who work in jobs that are not flexible, are far from the school, and do not provide paid time off detailed how difficult it was to attend these convenings. During a conversation among parents/caregivers and families in Antioquia, one educator described how "parents' non-attendance" and lack of active participation were the main challenges to the success of the program. On the other hand, as one parent/caregiver from a public school in Bogota explained: "It's not that I don't have an interest, of course I have it. What happens is that either I work or I come to school; they must create a space where we can all participate. I am a street vendor; the day I don't make a sale, I don't bring food home. I want to be part of my children's lives, but it is not that easy." Additionally, social workers carry a large caseload, serving hundreds to thousands of students and families as well as being responsible for organizing Escuela de Padres and ensuring the participation of a wide range of families. They do not always have the resources to be in contact with families who do not attend.

A student in Valledupar explained this challenge of parents/caregivers who are informal workers in attending these meetings. Being an informal worker, "it is difficult to manage time to attend these three meetings," she said. "It is not the same for a family that has the fortune to have a stable economic business and a family with a number of children... that has only one parent/mother at home who is self-employed and would need to duplicate herself to be able to attend the meetings." In this young woman's case, her mother was a single parent of three children, trying to work to feed her children and be responsive to their different educational needs and demands as well as attending the various meetings. Another challenge is safety getting to and from events in some communities. Decree 459 of 2024 explicitly classifies informal work, long commutes, rural isolation, and travel costs as "just causes" for missing Escuela de Padres sessions and instructs schools to anticipate those constraints when planning activities.[40]

Educators also noted that, in addition to struggling to attend the convenings, a lack of "fluid communication with the Consejo de Padres" and a lack of family interest in the meetings prevented the meetings from being engaging

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40   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Decreto 459 de 2024.*

and meaningful. As an educator in Antioquia noted, "when they [parents/caregivers] attend, it is only half-heartedly due to their work schedules and their interest wanes due to the meetings being so frequent." Many parents/caregivers revealed in the school conversations that schools "were not telling them anything new" at these Escuela de Padres convenings, referring to the format and facilitation of these convenings. As one parent/caregiver in Cali noted, "I am not going to Escuela de Padres anymore because they don't teach me anything new…they always say the same thing." Information is commonly communicated to families in these hour-long sessions by an expert who typically lectures to participants using PowerPoint; families are told what to do rather than invited to participate in a dialogue with experts, educators, and other families. There are often only five to ten minutes for questions. Examples of experts who facilitated the meetings included psychologists, police officers, government representatives from different sectors, and sometimes community or civil society organization representatives. Families sign attendance sheets to indicate their participation, and there is rarely a convening feedback protocol or follow-up after each meeting, except perhaps for information on subsequent meetings. Sometimes information and reminders are sent through social media or WhatsApp groups, if they were created during the Asamblea de Padres.

Another noted challenge was developing a culture of belonging and trust. Although the intention is to keep Escuela de Padres convenings short for families, there is often a missed opportunity to have conversations with and listen to families about their hopes for their children and emerging issues. During a conversation among parents/caregivers and families in Antioquia, one participant said, "Due to the approach of giving lectures, this does not generate participation or reflection on the school culture that is needed, because the commitment of families in the institutional mission is lacking." This positioning of teachers, psychologists, and other professionals as experts transmitting knowledge through one-way communication is a missed opportunity to build collaboration and trust and to see families' knowledge as critical to the school climate and environment, as indicated in Ley 2025 de 2020 and Decreto 1075 de 2015.

Recommendation 3: Provide guidance for schools on how to implement Escuelas de Padres y Madres de Familia y Cuidadores in ways that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of the school community and diverse families. Build the capacity of schools—and designate resources—to implement impactful convenings, promoting greater two-way communication between educators and families.

This recommendation focuses on increasing the participation of families in the design and planning, facilitation, and monitoring of the Escuela de Padres convenings and making these convenings more interactive, relevant, and engaging. Planning teams should include families from the Consejo de Padres, and schools should survey families on topics that they see as most pressing at the beginning of the year and set these as priorities. Standardizing a practice of surveying families at the beginning of the year and streamlining with the demographic household survey also conducted with families would help schools get perspectives from families on what issues are on their minds, alongside data on students and families. To ensure the participation of diverse families in surveys (such as parents/caregivers with low literacy levels or those without stable residency), multiple options for completing the survey should be offered. This may include an online survey link that families can opt to complete on their own, as well as an oral survey offered through an enumerator, either in person or by phone. This will help ensure that marginalized families with low literacy levels are included in the process. Offering these oral surveys at times convenient to families would help demonstrate that schools are being responsive to families' working conditions and situations.

Giving families leadership roles in facilitating convenings and shifting the format from one-way lectures would promote family buy-in and participation. For example, if the school social worker is the main facilitator for one of the convenings, they could work with a few family leaders to facilitate opening activities or to help facilitate

breakout conversations. Training could be offered for school personnel and family leaders to help ensure they have the knowledge and skills to co-lead facilitation in a participatory, interactive, and engaging way. A guidebook with examples of interactive approaches that facilitators can draw from to encourage incorporating families' experiences and knowledge would help schools and family leaders develop engaging sessions. For example, in one school district in the U.S. (California) with a significant population of newcomer families, poverty empathy simulations were used to build both engagement and knowledge of families' contexts.[41] Parents/caregivers and community members walked educators through their lived experiences trying to support their children's education in the face of poverty, safety, and other issues in their community. Educators and families had an opportunity to ask questions and work in teams to develop school-based strategies to help families feel more welcomed and included in schools.

Providing multiple ways for families to engage with the topics, such as micro-workshops, would help reach families who cannot attend scheduled meetings. These micro-workshops could be held virtually and cover the topics in a condensed virtual platform. Using radio, video, or other media, in addition to in-person sessions, has been employed globally to extend participation in education to families with limited access or time. For example, in Santander, Colombia, one school pivoted to a series of videos for Escuela de Padres after extensive flooding made the school inaccessible. They used videos and audio files to communicate with families through social media and text platforms, as few families had the internet bandwidth to connect to an asynchronous session. Research shows that when schools combine multiple channels—digital, face-to-face, and community-based—families participate more consistently and feel heard.[42]

In some communities in Colombia, school leaders hold an Escuela de Padres student-facing workshop concurrently with the workshop for families to increase impact and reach. For example, in Medellín, Escuela de Padres is part of the protective environment program (Escuela Entorno Protector) organized by the municipal city hall. As students are often mediators of information and can reinforce topics at home, their participation in similar interactive workshops helps extend learning and engagement among parents/caregivers. These workshop organizers often use playful and recreational activities to reinforce learning.

Finally, it is vital for Escuela de Padres to have clear feedback and monitoring mechanisms linked to ongoing communication. Offering a quick survey at the end of each Escuela de Padres with a field to input suggestions for the future convenings will help families see that schools are trying to be responsive to their feedback. Sharing resources and information between meetings through social media platforms is also essential to encouraging two-way communication. To facilitate two-way communication, schools could leverage family leaders through the Consejos de Padres to share information and encourage family participation. Building collaboration with families and facilitating greater two-way communication would help turn mandatory family engagement into meaningful engagement.

In summary, Escuelas de Padres have the potential to be inclusive spaces for families that help build a sense of belonging as well as advocate for their children and their schools. Providing guidance to schools on how to implement more interactive workshops with greater two-way communication and opportunities for workshop leaders to mentor each other and build capacity will help increase their impact.

Finding 4: Families, educators, and students often have different beliefs on education and the purpose of

41   Brookings Institution, "Case Study: Cajon Valley Union School District," accessed July 8, 2025, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/case-study-cajon-valley-union-school-district/.

42   Karen L. Mapp et al., Everyone Wins!: The Evidence for Family-School Partnerships and Implications for Practice (Scholastic, 2022).

school, but they have few opportunities to understand each other's beliefs and develop a shared vision of education. Although the different school plans (Proyecto Educativo Institucional, Proyecto Educativo Comunitario, and Manual de Convivencia Escolar) include visions and plans for schools, families play a more symbolic role in both the creation and implementation of these visions, as opposed to more authentic roles.

PEIs and PECs include the history of each school, alongside the mission, values, vision, and details of school management and administration. They include the curricular structure and community outreach plans, among other aspects. When parents/caregivers are mentioned in PEIs or PECs, it is often symbolic—such as recognizing the important role they play in children's lives—or regulatory, noting how families should be informed about school information. The PEI and PEC development process is an entry point for building a shared family-school vision on education, including important purposes and pedagogical approaches. While the PEIs and PECs do reflect many purposes of education, including academic, civic, and social and emotional learning, families do not always understand the different purposes from the perspective of educators or have opportunities to reflect and ask questions about teaching and learning approaches. Having a shared vision on education not only creates opportunities for families to support schools, but also to more intentionally support learning at home.

Families, educators, and students often have different beliefs about education. Understanding these diverse perspectives helps schools build shared visions of education and cultures of collaboration. Families, educators, and students across all the schools surveyed were asked the questions outlined in Table 12 below, as well as given possible responses, which were based on multiple phases of research and development across the world.[43]

Survey questions on beliefs on education

Code	What do you believe is the most important purpose of school?	When are you most satisfied with your (child's/students') education? When they are…
Academic learning	To further education	Getting good marks in subjects/exams
Economic learning	To develop skills for work	Getting skills for work
Civic learning	To be active citizens and community members	Participating in community service/learning
Social and emotional learning	To understand oneself and develop social skills and values	Gaining skills to understand themselves, developing social skills, or values
Other	(Respondents write their own responses)	

Findings showed that, as shown in Table 13, the majority of families (64.1%) and students (66.7%) saw academic learning as the most important purpose of school. Families in public schools leaned even more towards academic learning (73.5%) than those in private schools, who leaned more towards civic learning (62.8%). Similarly, families from lower socioeconomic statuses (68.9%) tended to select academic learning at higher rates than families from higher socioeconomic statuses (58.3%). Families were concerned about their children furthering their education so they could secure gainful employment. They were supporting their children's learning at home but needed

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43   Emily M. Morris and Laura Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education Systems: Technical Report,* with Craig Hoyle (Brookings Institution, 2025).

more guidance on how to do this.

Educators were mainly concerned with ensuring that students are engaged in civic learning to improve the safety and well-being of their communities, followed by academic learning. In conversations, one educator in Magdalena said, "For teachers, civic learning is essential to form responsible citizens with values, promoting respect, tolerance, and participation in society." Building a shared vision in the PEI and PEC that reflects the different purposes of and beliefs on education is important to the schools' mission and efforts.

TABLE 13

What do you believe is the most important purpose of school?

Participant group	School type	Academic learning	Economic learning	Civic learning	Social and emotional learning
Families	Public school (n = 911)	**73.5%**	3.7%	18.4%	4.3%
	Private school (n = 369)	40.5%	1.4%	**48.4%**	9.7%
	Total	**64.1%**	3.1%	27.0%	5.8%
Educators	Public school (n = 403)	27.8%	3.6%	**56.8%**	11.9%
	Private school (n = 256)	14.3%	0.8%	**72.1%**	12.7%
	Total	22.5%	2.5%	**62.8%**	12.2%
Students	Public school (n = 1803)	**71.9%**	5.4%	16.9%	5.8%
	Private school (n = 675)	**53.1%**	5.6%	32.8%	8.5%
	Total	**66.7%**	5.5%	21.3%	6.6%

NOTE: The top response is bolded for each participant group. For significance, p ≤ .05. Response rates that were not significantly different among participant groups in public and private schools are shaded.

According to families, if students obtain high grades on exams, it opens them up to further learning and better future employment. Educators explained families' prioritization of academic learning as a "cultural belief" across Latin America and described how it was even more aspirational for families living in poverty and/or who have been historically excluded from school. A teacher in Magdalena described this "cultural belief" as "one [referring to a parent/caregiver] believes that the best student is going to be the most successful [financially]…That is why parents focus so much on academic learning, because they have the aspiration that their children have a better life than them, avoiding the difficulties they as parents experienced, such as the lack of educational opportunities." The deep-seated belief that schooling is critical to individual and collective economic growth and development has been reinforced through economic policies and practices over the global history of schooling.[44] It is interesting to note that in an earlier study conducted in Colombia in 2022 on the purpose of school with primary

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44   Ghulam O. Qargha and Emily M. Morris, "Why Understanding the Historical Purposes of Modern Schooling Matters Today," Brookings Institution, effective May 22, 2023, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/why-understanding-the-historical-purposes-of-modern-schooling-matters-today/.

schools, educators leaned towards social and emotional learning, while families remained leaned towards academic learning.[45] As the research in Colombia, as well as the global study, found, beliefs about education can vary depending on the age and grade of the children, as well as the prevailing social and political landscape.[46]

When families, educators, and students were asked about their intrinsic satisfaction with schools, they tended to gravitate towards social and emotional learning because they were concerned with the well-being of young people and their mental health and safety. As one parent/caregiver in Magdalena noted, "For me, it is important that my child learns, but their mental health is even more important, I want the school to work on their emotions." Another parent/caregiver in Bogota noted that, given the amount of stress secondary students are carrying, they need emotional support to help them cope and thrive.

TABLE 14

When are you most satisfied with your (child's/students') education? When they are gaining…

Participant group	School type	Academic learning	Economic learning	Civic learning	Social and emotional learning
Families	Public school (n = 911)	25.2%	7.5%	7.8%	**59.4%**
	Private school (n = 369)	11.3%	4.8%	8.8%	**75.1%**
	Total	21.3%	6.7%	8.1%	**63.9%**
Educators	Public school (n = 403)	4.1%	6.6%	11.2%	**78.1%**
	Private school (n = 256)	4.1%	9.3%	16.8%	**73.4%**
	Total	4.1%	6.3%	13.3%	**76.3%**
Students	Public school (n = 1803)	36.2%	9.3%	5.8%	**48.7%**
	Private school (n = 675)	**40.6%**	13.2%	6.2%	**40.1%**
	Total	37.4%	10.3%	5.9%	**46.4%**

NOTE: The top responses are bolded for each participant group. For significance, p ≤ .05. Response rates that were not significantly different among participant groups in public and private schools are shaded.

Families from higher socioeconomic statuses reported at higher rates (67.0%) that they were more satisfied with teaching and learning when students were exhibiting social and emotional learning as compared to families of lower socioeconomic status (61.3%). The same pattern held true for students, where a higher proportion (47.4%) of those from higher socioeconomic statuses reported being more satisfied with social and emotional learning as compared to students from lower socioeconomic statuses (43.8%).

Families, educators, and students were also asked what kind of teaching and learning approaches they saw as

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45   Emily M. Morris and Rebecca Winthrop, "Let's Talk: Starting Conversations with Parents and Teachers on Their Beliefs in Education," *International Journal About Parents in Education* 13 (2023): 1–28, https://doi.org/10.54195/ijpe.16408.

46   Morris and Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education.*

ideal for learning, as shown in Table 15. Educators across school types (31.9%) preferred learner-centered pedagogy where student participation is centered. Families of private school students (33.4%) and students in public schools (26.2%) also preferred learner-centered pedagogy. Families of public-school students, on the other hand (30.5%), leaned towards teacher-centered pedagogy and conventional teaching and learning, where teachers lead instruction: Pedagogical approaches where the "teacher knows best." Students in private schools (27.2%) preferred experiential learning, such as project-based learning. Families, particularly those with lower levels of education and in public schools where there is often a greater emphasis on teacher-centered pedagogy, did not fully understand the different approaches to education. Conversations around the different types of teaching and learning helped families understand changes to the curriculum and what terms like "experiential learning" or "social and emotional learning" meant in practice.

TABLE 15

What teaching and learning approach do you prefer (for your child, your students, yourself)?

Pedagogical approaches	School type	Families (n = 1,280)	Educators (n = 659)	Students (n = 2,478)
Teacher-centered pedagogy	Public school	**30.5%**	4.1%	16.2%
	Private school	15.8%	3.3%	10.0%
	Total	26.3%	3.8%	14.5%
Learner-centered pedagogy	Public school	27.8%	**35.4%**	**26.2%**
	Private school	**33.4%**	26.3%	23.5%
	Total	**29.4%**	**31.9%**	**25.5%**
Experiential learning	Public school	7.2%	17.4%	16.6%
	Private school	19.1%	24.7%	**27.2%**
	Total	10.6%	20.2%	19.6%
Technology-enabled learning	Public school	9.1%	18.2%	17.3%
	Private school	13.1%	16.0%	19.8%
	Total	10.3%	17.4%	18.0%
Play-based learning	Public school	3.6%	10.3%	10.0%
	Private school	4.8%	15.6%	13.4%
	Total	4.0%	12.3%	11.0%

Pedagogical approaches	School type	Families (n = 1,280)	Educators (n = 659)	Students (n = 2,478)
Funds of knowledge	Public school	21.8%	14.6%	13.6%
	Private school	13.7%	14.0%	6.1%
	Total	19.5%	14.4%	11.5%

NOTE: The top responses are bolded for each participant group. *p ≤ .05.

Discussions on beliefs around education and pedagogy are an opportunity to help families, students, and educators understand each other's perspectives, come to a common understanding on different beliefs, and ultimately develop a shared vision that the whole school community can champion. Taking time to have these conversations is critical to building a common understanding of Alianza Familia-Escuela and promoting both cohesion and collaboration.

Recommendation 4: Build a process into the development of school plans for understanding different beliefs and perspectives on the purpose of school among families, students, and educators. Ensure that these school plans not only emphasize academic learning but also include strategies for how families can support learning at home and work together with schools to facilitate civic learning, social and emotional development, and overall well-being.

Education systems should include diverse purposes of school and different pedagogies. To create a cohesive vision of education for the PEIs, PECs, and Manual de Convivencia Escolar, it is essential to take time to actively understand and integrate the different beliefs and perspectives of families, students, and educators. When schools have conversations on the diverse purposes of school, including discussing curricular changes and reforms to the education system with families and students, there is often more collaboration and less tension.

Without family collaboration, it is challenging to develop policies and programs that genuinely support and enhance student well-being. Family participation in the PEIs, PECs, and the Comités Escolar de Convivencia help ensure that family perspectives and voices are reflected and that these parents/caregivers can serve as liaisons to other families through Consejo de Padres. It is also crucial to ensure that diverse families participate in these committees, as their well-being is impacted by issues such as community safety, poverty, gender, race, and other factors.

One way to integrate families into the planning of PEIs and PECs is to use a structured process like the Global Family, School, and Community Engagement Rubrics Tool,[47] whereby families and educators work together to assess the school practices and policies and to identify strategies to support greater partnerships. Families from the Consejo de Padres could participate in this structured process. In Valledupar, four schools used the rubrics to assess their Alianza Familia-Escuela efforts. There are four elements of the Tool: creating an inclusive culture, building trusting relationships, leveraging families as assets, and sustaining meaningful family engagement practices. Two of the schools utilized all four elements to assess their practices, while two schools employed only one of the elements. Together, as a family and educator team, they assessed where they thought their school stood on each of the elements. For most of the elements, the schools rated themselves as "early/developing" in their family, school, and community engagement practices. They used the tool to identify what strategies they would need to adopt to become a school "excelling" in family, school, and community partnerships. Schools found it critical to

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47   Global Family Engagement in Education Network, *Global Family, School, and Community Engagement Rubrics Tool.*

take time to assess current practices and work together to identify concrete strategies for improving engagement. Having a safe space where they could consciously and systematically reflect on their practices helped them both think through what was happening in their school and set aspirations and goals.

Another lesson the four schools learned going through the Global Rubrics Tool was how many of the family engagement approaches currently employed did not encourage all families in practice—they tended to reach the families already comfortable and able to engage with school. Another finding was that most families did not understand the PEI or PEC. One of the schools used the Global Rubrics Tool to create a short-term plan of action to help the Consejo de Padres more closely track progress in their PEI; another school created a user-friendly summary of their school's PEI that they could share with families to make the PEI content more accessible. A third school used the exercise to create a long-term plan of action to include families beyond just academic engagement and developed ways to bring families together that were low-stakes and centered on building relationships. The PEI or PEC is intended to be a process of reflection and continuous improvement to open up participation to the wider community. To do this, schools need time and financial resources to build family, school, and community practices into their PEIs and PECs, as well as mentoring and tools. None of the schools in this research had robust or clear budgets for family, school, and community engagement, yet school leaders and families alike acknowledged how important it was to a quality education and creating convivencia. They need more guidance from the MEN and CTEs on how to balance their many priorities at school and to allocate financial resources and time to building Alianzas Familia-Escuela.

In summary, there are many purposes of school, all of which are critical for school plans. To ensure that school plans reflect diverse purposes and beliefs on school, opportunities for dialogues on these different purposes will help ensure schools are providing civic and social and emotional learning as well as academic learning.

Finding 5: Building relational trust between families, students, and educators is critical to ensuring safety, well-being, and collaboration in schools and vital to efforts to build coexistence and peaceful communities (convivencia).

Families, students, and educators reported relatively high levels of respect for one another, although families reported higher levels of trust in educators than educators reported in families. Educators reported feeling that families were not always interested and engaged in their children's learning, even though they acknowledged families were contending with issues such as poverty, violence, and migration.

Convivencia and the notion of safety, well-being, and collaboration in schools is core to education frameworks in Colombia. Each school adapts the Manual de Convivencia Escolar and the detailed guidelines for ensuring safety, well-being, collaboration, and respect among students and within schools. Critical to ensuring convivencia is relational trust between families and educators, as well as between students and educators. Relational trust is the regard and respect for others shown through care, integrity, listening, and treating each other as critical assets.

During this research, families and educators were asked to gauge their relational trust with each other, and students were asked their level of trust with educators using a relational trust scale survey composed of the seven elements indicated in Figure 4 below.[48] Using the survey, each group of participants reported their level of agreement on a scale of one to four according to seven elements. The relational trust scale was developed by CUE and piloted in Colombia and other countries that participated in the research.

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48   The relational trust scale was developed over the course of two years and went through many iterations (source: Morris and Nóra, _Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education)._
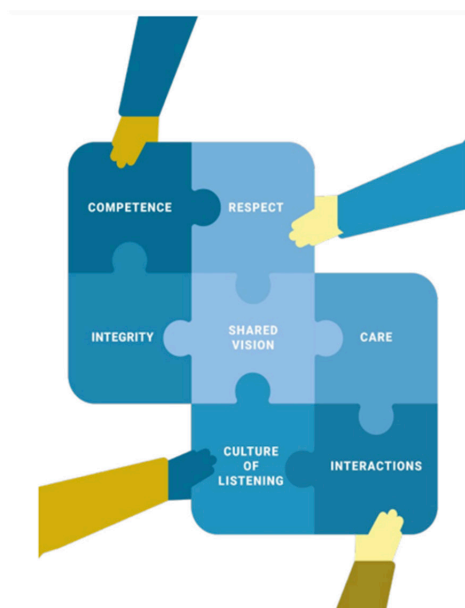
FIGURE 4

Relational trust scale

TABLE 16

Relational trust across participant groups

Elements of relational trust	School type	Families (trust with educators) (n = 1,280)	Educators (trust with families) (n = 659)	Students (trust with educators) (n = 2,478)
Competence	Public school	**3.27**	n/a	**3.09**
	Private school	3.35	n/a	**3.11**
	Total	3.29	3.23	3.09
Shared vision	Public school	3.17	2.99	2.88
	Private school	3.21	3.06	2.81
	Total	3.18	3.02	2.86
Respect	Public school	3.15	**3.13**	2.97
	Private school	3.25	**3.18**	3.05
	Total	3.18	**3.15**	3.00
Culture of listening	Public school	3.15	**3.13**	2.97
	Private school	3.25	**3.18**	3.05
	Total	3.18	**3.15**	3.00

Elements of relational trust	School type	Families (trust with educators) (n = 1,280)	Educators (trust with families) (n = 659)	Students (trust with educators) (n = 2,478)
Interactions	Public school	**3.27**	2.62	**3.09**
	Private school	**3.38**	2.90	3.02
	Total	**3.30**	2.73	**3.11**
Integrity	Public school	3.08	2.64	2.81
	Private school	3.17	2.81	2.88
	Total	3.11	2.70	3.07
Care	Public school	3.08	2.54	2.58
	Private school	3.27	2.58	2.72
	All schools	3.13	2.55	2.83
Mean across seven elements	Public school	3.19	2.81	2.93
	Private school	3.31	2.93	2.94
	Total schools	3.23	2.93	2.97

NOTE: Bolded means are the highest rated elements of trust. Educators were not asked to comment on their competence.

On average, families reported moderate levels of trust in educators. Public school parents/caregivers scored slightly lower levels of trust (3.19 out of 4) than private school parents/caregivers (3.31 out of 4). Students also reported moderate levels of trust in educators, albeit at slightly lower levels of trust than their parents/caregivers (2.93 out of 4 in public schools and 2.94 out of 4 in private schools). Families from higher socioeconomic statuses reported significantly higher levels of trust (3.30 out of 4) than families with lower socioeconomic statuses (3.16 out of 4). The elements of trust that families and students scored the highest across schools and demographics were competence, feeling that educators were doing a good job in teaching, and interactions with each other. Students scored the element of care the lowest, questioning how much teachers cared about them and their families.

Educators reported lower overall levels of trust in families than families in educators. On average, public school educators scored levels of trust significantly lower (2.81 out of 4) than private school educators (2.93 out of 4). They scored respect, or feeling respected by families, and a culture of listening, where families listened to what they said, the highest. Educators scored care and integrity the lowest and felt that families did not always follow through on promises and expectations as parents/caregivers. As one educator in northern Santander described parents/caregivers, "They do not attend scheduled meetings or calls made by teachers." Another educator described how the lack of clear information to educators, families, and students on expectations contributed to this problem.

Educators, families, and students alike alluded to a lack of direct and clear communication between educators and families, which impacted trust, particularly for older students who are mediators of communication between

their parents/caregivers and their teachers.[49] Lack of communication influenced trust. As an educator in Bolivar described, "There is a direct communication bridge between families, and that channel is the student. However, teachers agree that many times the information provided by the student distorts the parent's perception of the teacher…oftentimes the information reported by the student to the parent is not correct, and that predisposes parents/caregivers [to think a certain way]." Sometimes this lack of communication is due to insufficient systems and opportunities for reaching all families; other times, it is the culture of communication. As was discussed in a conversation among educators and families in Antioquia, parents/caregivers "fear what they [educators] think of their child or their family," and that this inhibits trust and communication. Breaking the blame game and fostering deeper trust between families, students, and educators in schools is vital to the successful implementation of Alianza Familia-Escuela.

Recommendation 5: Identify and share different family, school, and community engagement strategies that create multiple opportunities for deep listening and dialogue, and which lead to concrete actions to improve trust in schools. Ensure that these strategies reflect the diverse contexts, demographics, and realities of the families and their surrounding communities and align with efforts to foster coexistence.

Building two-way communication and opportunities to understand families' perspectives and realities is critical to creating engaging Escuela de Padres convenings and building trust between families and schools. During the COVID-19 pandemic, school communities that had deeper trust were able to quickly pivot to alternative schooling arrangements and ensure that students and families had the networks they needed to support their learning and well-being.[50] Building relational trust is an ongoing process that requires more meaningful interactions through Consejos de Padres and convenings like Escuela de Padres, but also through opportunities that break down the idea that "families are hard to reach" and acknowledge that schools are often "hard to access."[51] This recommendation suggests strategies that make schools easier for families to access—both literally and figuratively.

Opportunities for families and educators to interact with each other in low-stakes and friendly environments outside of the school have been shown to help build trust. For example, schools across the rural and urban U.S. (Pennsylvania) found that connecting at sporting events, over food, and at cultural celebrations helped families and educators develop care and respect for each other and a culture of listening.[52] In Sierra Leone, research indicated that when events were held closer to where families lived, such as their village plaza or market center in their town, parents/caregivers were more able to attend events and felt more comfortable.[53]

Creating interactive spaces of listening has also been shown to be critical in building positive interactions and trust between families and schools. For example, Red PaPaz's monthly parent-school meetings organized through parent networks have given parents/caregivers in Colombia a space to share their concerns and suggestions.[54]

49   Vikki S. Katz, *Kids in the Middle: How Children of Immigrants Negotiate Community Interactions for Their Families* (Rutgers University Press, 2014), https://www.rutgersuniversitypress.org/kids-in-the-middle/9780813562186/.
50   Rebecca Winthrop et al., *Collaborating to Transform and Improve Education Systems: A Playbook for Family-School Engagement* (Brookings Institution, 2021).
51   Gill Crozier and Jane Davies, "Hard to Reach Parents or Hard to Reach Schools? A Discussion of Home–School Relations, with Particular Reference to Bangladeshi and Pakistani Parents," *Oxford Review of Education* 33, no. 3 (2007): 295–313, https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920701243578.
52   Kidsburgh, Parents as Allies: *A Guidebook for Bridging the Ocean Between Home and School Through Innovative Family-School Engagement* (Kidsburgh, 2024).
53   Emily M. Morris et al, *Building Partnerships Where Families, Schools, and Communities Stand Together in Sierra Leone* (Brookings Institution, September 2024), https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Sierra-Leone-Policy-Brief.pdf.
54   Brookings Insitution, "*Case Study: Red PaPaz*," accessed July 8, 2025, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/case-study-red-papaz/.

During this research, a school in Bogotá and a rural school in Santander created a monthly space where families and educators could sit together to share hot cocoa, coffee, cheese, and bread and engage in informal conversations about their schools, communities, children, and beyond. Building on the culture of sharing hot cocoa or coffee, schools became an extension of the family. In other schools in Colombia, Consejos de Padres hosted "ask-me-anything" tables at morning drop-off where parent/caregiver representatives sat at the entrance of schools, and other families could go to their table to ask questions or collectively help address problems—from academic to caregiving to other school- or child-related issues. For example, a parent/caregiver who wants to help their child who is struggling in mathematics could speak to the parent/caregiver representative and learn where they can go/ what they can do to help support learning at home.

While parent-teacher conferences and Consejos de Padres are critical mechanisms for family engagement, regular informal interactions between families and educators help foster the trust needed for families to see schools as accessible and part of their collective convivencia. Creating these low-stakes and culturally responsive activities should not just be the responsibility of the school, but also of the families and communities. If Consejos de Padres, student councils, and community groups have a chance to help co-design contextually relevant strategies intended to reach families of different ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds, parents/caregivers of different genders, and families working in informal work and with different family arrangements, schools will not only be more accessible to families but will also honor the diversity of Colombia's schools and communities.

In summary, relational trust between families, educators, and students is essential to partnerships. Schools need ideas and examples of strategies for building family, school, and community partnerships that they can try in their own contexts.

Conclusion

As this policy report has indicated, Alianza Familia-Escuela is critical to the education system in Colombia and is reflected in numerous education frameworks. More needs to be done, however, to ensure that this well-intended vision is translated into practice. One way of doing this is to promote leadership within the MEN and CTEs responsible for overseeing planning and monitoring of Alianza Familia-Escuela and creating a multi-sectoral steering group to ensure that family-school partnerships work with other critical sectors. Precedence for such a steering group already exists in Colombia. Another important approach is utilizing Consejos de Padres more effectively for developing a shared vision for schools—through the PEIs and PECs—and guiding schools on how to foster more inclusive and diverse parent councils. Additionally, it is important that schools cultivate more authentic two-way communication through mechanisms like Escuelas de Padres and create safe spaces for families across different demographics to connect with each other and educators, with special attention to promoting inclusion of families from marginalized communities. Building relational trust within school communities and in collaboration with the CTEs is important to ensuring that schools are not just implementing a mandate on family-school engagement but actually building it into the ethos of their schools. If convivencia is going to be realized in Colombia's schools, resources, guidance, and support in building family-school partnerships are absolutely essential.

Appendix

Ley General de Educación 115 of 1994 (National Education Act of 1994) is the foundational education framework that governs Colombia's education system and provides the overall structure, objectives, and governance of preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education. The Ley 115 also sets standards for curriculum, school management, community and family involvement, and teacher training and development. The law recognizes the centrality, or "nucleus," of the family in Colombian society and the critical role they play in their children's holistic education and mandates participation of families and communities in decision making and educational processes.

The law explicitly assigns three key responsibilities to families: implementing policies and practices, decision making and leadership, and being informed. The law underscores implementing policies and practices by requiring families to "educate their children and provide them with an adequate home environment for their holistic development." (Article 7g)[55] Although there are no specific details on what constitutes an "adequate home environment," Ley 115 also grants families both the rights and responsibilities to be informed about their children's academic performance and behavior and to have a basic understanding of how schools and educational institutions operate. The law states that families should "Stay informed about their children's academic performance and behavior, as well as about the progress of the educational institution, and in both cases, participate in improvement initiatives." (Article 7c)

According to Ley 115, families are also expected to be engaged in decision making and leadership, which is tied to school accountability, both in the schools and within the education system. There is a mandate for families to "Participate in Consejo Directivo [Board of Directors for every school], associations, or committees to ensure the proper provision of educational services." (Article 7, e) The law (Article 143) specifically sets guidelines for parental involvement in school governance, also known as the Consejo Directivo. This provision requires that at least two parents/caregivers serve on every school's governing board. These boards are responsible for resolving conflicts, reviewing internal regulations, defending the educational community's rights, planning and evaluation, and approving the budget for revenues and expenses, among other duties.

As part of their role in decision making and leadership, families are also expected to take part in the development of each school's education plan, or the Institutional Educational Project (PEI) or Community Education Project (PEC). The PEI or PEC encompasses the school's vision, mission, philosophy, and structure and must be "formulated with the participation of school leaders, teachers, students, and parents" (Article 6 and 73).

Ley 1620 de 2013 (National Systems of School Coexistence of 2013) puts into place the legal framework for "the development of active citizens who support the construction of a democratic, participatory, diverse, and multicultural society" in accordance with the Ley General de Educación Ley 115 de 1994. Ley 1620 encompasses three national frameworks that ensure civic engagement as well as human and sexual reproductive rights of students, alongside the prevention and mitigation of school violence. These frameworks are: Sistema Nacional de Convivencia Escolar para el Ejercicio de los Derechos Humanos (National Systems of School Coexistence and Human Rights), Educación para la Sexualidad (Sexual and Reproductive Health Education), and Prevención y Mitigación de la Violencia Escolar (Prevention and Reduction of School Violence). Ley 1620 builds on the earlier Ley 1098 of 2006, or the Código de la Infancia y la Adolescencia (Code for Children and Adolescents), where the co-responsibilities of families, society, and state are jointly responsible for ensuring "attention, care, and protection." (Article 10)[56]

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55   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Ley 115 de 1994,* article 7. g.

56   Colombian Institute of Family Welfare, *Código de la Infancia y la Adolescencia: Ley 1098 de 2006 [Code of Childhood and*

One of the purposes of Ley 1620 is to prevent, detect, and manage incidents that disrupt the peace, safety, and human rights of schools and students; the other is to enhance the capacities of schools to support the rights of children and adolescents. The law assigns two explicit roles to families: implementing policies and practices and decision making and leadership.

The law states that families "must participate in the formulation, planning, and implementation of strategies that promote school coexistence and human, sexual, and reproductive rights." (Article 22)[57] Families contribute to implementing policies and practices through the co-design of coexistence strategies with teachers, and they support learning and well-being at home, reinforcing a safe, inclusive, rights-respecting school climate and helping to develop students' civic engagement outside of school.

Families also participate in decision making and leadership through a representative on the Committee of School Coexistence (Comité Escolar de Convivencia). The president of the Consejo de Padres sits on the Comité Escolar de Convivencia (Article 12). One of the main tasks of the Comité Escolar de Convivencia is to draft, revise, and monitor each school's Manual de Convivencia Escolar (School Coexistence Manual). The Manual guides schools to "identify ways to encourage and strengthen school coexistence that correspond to the realities and context of each institution," and it includes "strategies to strengthen the exercise of human, sexual, and reproductive rights in the school context and processes that address and manage conflicts and situations that affect school coexistence within a framework of respect and human dignity."[58] This school framework must be "constructed, evaluated, and adjusted by the educational community, with the active participation of students and parents." (Article 21)[59]

Ley 2025 de 2020 (Education of Fathers, Mothers, and Caregivers Act of 2025) outlines the guidelines for implementing the Escuelas de Padres y Madres de Familia y Cuidadores (Escuela de Padres) across preschool, primary, and secondary school levels. The primary objective of the law and the accompanying Escuela de Padres program is to promote family participation in schools and in their children's learning and development, as well as to build families' knowledge and capacity around key topics. Ley 2025 covers all levels of education, from early childhood through secondary, and aligns with other education policies that mandate family involvement. For example, the National Policy for Holistic Early Childhood Development (Ley 1804 de 2016)[60] places families at the center of children's development and learning. This law supersedes Ley 1404 de 2010, which established the initial mandate for an education program for families. The law assigns three key roles to families: implementing policies and practices, decision making and leadership, and being informed. Families play a crucial role in implementing policies and practices by actively attending and participating in the Escuela de Padres. This includes signing a commitment at the beginning of the school year where families agree to participate in three annual convenings under the Escuela de Padres program.

Families participate in the design of the Escuela de Padres in collaboration with the Consejo Directivo. "Educational institutions, in partnership with the School Board of Directors, based on the principle of autonomy, [...] will define and design the structural proposal for the Escuela de Padres..." (Article 5)[61] The design of the Escuela de Padres program must be included in the PEI or PEC, and families are expected to be informed about the PEI or

Adolescence: Law 1098 of 2006] (Republic of Colombia, 2006).

57   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Ley 1620 de 2013*, article 22.

58   Bogotá Secretariat of Education, *Guía Pedagógica para la Revisión de los Manuales de Convivencia [Pedagogical Guide for the Review of School Coexistence Manuals]* (Bogotá Secretariat of Education, 2025), p. 4.

59   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Ley 1620 de 2013,* article 21.

60   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Ley 1804: Política de Estado para el desarrollo integral de la primera infancia de Cero a Siempre* (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 2016).

61   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Ley 2025 de 2020,* article 5.

PEC, as well as the Escuela de Padres program. Namely, Ley 2025 states that "Every educational institution […] must include a special section in the Institutional Educational Project (PEI) that defines how the conditions of the Schools for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers Program will be developed…" (Article 3)

Decreto 1286 de 2005 (Decree 1286 of 2005) operationalizes Articles 67 and 38 of the Constitution and Article 7 of Ley 115 of 1994 by creating mandatory democratic bodies for parents/caregivers—the Asamblea General de Padres and the Consejo de Padres—in every public and private preschool, primary, and secondary school. The overarching intention of the decree is to "promote and facilitate the effective participation of parents in the improvement of educational processes." (Ley 2025 de 2020, Article 1) The decree touches all five rules and responsibilities for families and creates norms and procedures for ensuring family participation in various aspects of school leadership.

As essential community members in implementing policies and practices, parents/caregivers must "contribute to building a climate of respect, tolerance, and mutual responsibility that fosters education" and "support implementing actions that lead to the improvement of educational services." (Articles 3d, f)[62] Through school-based mechanisms like Consejos de Padres, families are to participate in implementing strategies in the PEIs and PECs that strengthen and improve schools (Article 6).

The decree grants parents/caregivers a formal role in school decision making and leadership. Namely, it assigns families the right to select and elect parent/caregiver representatives for the bodies laid out in the National Education Act of 1994 (Article 2i). This includes representatives in the Consejo Directivo (School Board of Directors). Decree 1286 also lays out guidelines for family leadership in the Asamblea General de Padres de Familia (National Assembly of Families) and the Consejo de Padres de Familia (Council of Families). The Asamblea General de Padres de Familia ("Asamblea de Padres") is to meet twice a year, led by the school leader, and is to include all families (Article 4). The Consejo de Padres is mandated to include one to three parent/caregiver representatives by grade, confirmed through a quorum at the Asamblea de Padres, and they are to participate in the PEI and PEC processes (Article 4).

According to this decree, schools must provide families with timely and detailed information to ensure that parents/caregivers are informed. For example, upon matriculation, families should be provided with information on the school, including demographics and data about the school, the PEI or PEC, the Manual de Convivencia Escolar, the curricular approach, and the evaluation system, among other relevant details (Article 2c). Families can also expect to receive periodic reports on their children's academic progress (Article 2g) and access examination scores (Article 2h). Finally, school leaders are obligated to provide all necessary data and information to the Consejo de Padres so that they can fulfill their roles and responsibilities (Article 7, Paragraph 1).

There is one mention of how families are providing resources to education institutions. Namely, the Consejo de Padres is responsible for controlling its own resources, including the receipt, management, and expenditure of any financial and other resources (Article 11). This positions families as potential contributors of financial or in-kind resources, while safeguarding transparency and prohibiting obligatory fees (Article 12).

Finally, according to Decree 1286, families are encouraged to participate in shifting mindsets. Parents/caregivers must "contribute to the construction of a climate of respect, tolerance, and trust" (Article 11b) and "promote a culture of coexistence, and a peaceful resolution of conflicts and commitment to legality." (Article 10e) This implies working together as a community to try to create a climate of mutual belonging and respect among all families. The Consejo de Padres is tasked with implementing ways to improve coexistence and foster an ethos of inclusion

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62   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Decree 1286 de 2005,* article 3 d, f.

and respect to school leaders (Article 7g).

Decree 1286 delivers the most detailed blueprint for parental participation in Colombia's education frameworks. It translates the broad mandates of Ley 115, the National Education Act, into concrete procedures for the selection and election of representatives, the frequency of annual meetings, and the objectives and roles of the various family leadership bodies and their representatives. It also situates families in the implementation and transformation of school climate and coexistence.

Decreto 1075 de 2015 (National Education Act Decree of 2015) is the framework for implementing the National Education Act, and it reiterates that families "actively participate as a key player in building and strengthening the Alliance to promote the comprehensive development of girls, boys, and adolescents." (Article 2.3.4.1.2.4)[63] There are sections for the rights and responsibilities of families and students, as well as the responsibilities of the MEN and CTEs. This language on rights and responsibilities is repeated again under Decree 459 of 2024.

In addition to following their children's academic development and progress, families have an explicit role in decision making and leadership. Families "participate through school governance bodies in defining criteria and procedures for assessing student learning and promoting students" through mechanisms such as the Consejo Directivo (Article 2.3.3.3.3.15). Families are also expected to support in shifting mindsets and to contribute "knowledge and experiences on care practices, parenting, identifying capacities and mobilizing strategies" to support Alianza Familia-Escuela (Article 2.3.4.1.1.1).

Decreto 459 de 2024 (Family Participation in Education Decree 2024) is the framework for ensuring and regulating family participation in education through Alianza Familia-Escuela, which includes more detailed definitions of families, holistic education, and other key terms critical to family engagement, as well as principles for Alianza Familia-Escuela. The objective of this decree is to promote the active involvement of families in the Alianza Familia-Escuela. Decree 459 repeats the roles of the MEN, CTEs, schools, and families in ensuring Alianza Familia-Escuela as detailed in Decreto 1075.

Under the roles for families, it explicitly assigns three roles: implementing policies and practices, decision making and leadership, and shifting mindsets. Families' roles in implementing policies and practices are relatively broad and include providing demographic information at the beginning of the school year, which helps the school develop a better profile of its community's population and understand families and their contexts. It also designates that families should participate in the Alianza Familia-Escuela, which includes signing a commitment at the beginning of the year to attend all related events (Article 2.3.4.1.2.4 b, c). Decreto 459 de 2024 includes families in decision making and leadership through governing bodies as already articulated in the laws and decrees named above. As in Decreto 1075 de 2015, this decree includes language on shifting mindsets, and specifically contributing "knowledge, practices, and skills that can be shared with students or other families, as a contribution to the comprehensive development and education of children and adolescents." (Article 2.3.4.1.2.4e)[64]

Plan Nacional Decenal de Educación (PNDE) 2016-2026 (Ten-Year National Education Plan 2016-2026) is the roadmap for a quality and equitable education and all the strategies for reaching this goal. The plan was developed through a mass consultation that reached 1,010,000 citizens in 96% of municipalities, as well as through guidance from teachers and parents/caregivers. Over 6,000 children's drawings describing the school they hope for in 2026 were used in the plan.[65] There was no mention of consultation with families, although it is assumed

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63   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Decreto 1075 de 2015*, 2.3.4.1.2.4.
64   Congress of the Republic of Colombia, *Decreto 1075 de 2015*, 2.3.3.3.3.15.
65   Ministry of National Education, *Plan Nacional Decenal de Educación*, p. 15-16

that they fall under the larger category of citizens.

Like the governing laws and degrees, the PNDE includes family participation as a key component of providing a quality education. While there is an emphasis on the co-responsibility between schools and families in children's learning and development, there are few concrete details on families' roles and responsibilities. The plan emphasizes the importance of collaboration among family, society, and the state in ensuring children's rights to education. It highlights the role of families and communities in the learning and development of students. The plan also indicates that education authorities should provide accessible digital resources to families, alongside educators and students, to keep them informed about their children's education, and create a continuous information system tailored to the needs and contexts of the school and community. Finally, the plan emphasizes the need to strengthen teachers' capacities for collaborating with families and communities on coexistence.[66] These roles and responsibilities fall predominantly under implementing policies and practices, although families' roles in decision making and leadership through school-based mechanisms are also acknowledged.

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66   Ministry of National Education, *Plan Nacional Decenal de Educación*, p. 40, 50, 54, 55.

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