

LEVERAGING FAMILIES AS ASSETS AND CHAMPIONS TO PROMOTE SECONDARY SCHOOL COMPLETION AND SUCCESS

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Executive summary

The Government of Bangladesh recognizes the importance of families' active engagement in their children's education to ensure student participation, outcomes, and well-being. However, national policies and plans envision a limited role for families in supporting their children's secondary education, particularly in rural and remote communities where barriers to education are notable. The ways that families engage their children's schools change over a child's education trajectory, and opportunities for parents/caregivers and educators to interact often decrease as students move into secondary school.¹ Yet, strong partnerships and relational trust are critical at this juncture in young people's lives to ensure they are not only in school but also learning and thriving.

In Bangladesh, primary education is free and compulsory through grade five, but access to secondary education is limited. Secondary schools are primarily private, with only 4% being public.² High educational costs, pressure to leave school to earn income, and early marriage are among the many barriers students face in completing school. The school completion rate at the lower secondary grades (6 to 8) is 64%; however, it drops to 20% at the upper secondary grade (9 to 12).³ There are significant disparities in school participation and completion rates between urban and rural communities. Of the students who do not complete lower and upper secondary school, eight out of ten (80%) are rural students.⁴ In addition to the challenge of low completion rates, secondary schools are struggling to provide quality instruction, prepare young people to be active and productive in their communities,

1 Jingyang Max Zhang, Barbara J. Boone, and Eric M. Anderman, *Family Engagement with Students at the Center*, Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center, 2023; Emily M. Morris and Laura Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education* (Brookings Institution, 2024). <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/six-global-lessons-on-how-family-school-and-community-engagement-can-transform-education/>.

2 Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBIES), *Bangladesh Education Statistics 2023* (MoE, 2023).

3 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and UNICEF, *Survey on Children's Education in Bangladesh 2021: Report* (UNICEF, 2022).

4 UNICEF, *Education Fact Sheets 2020: Analysis for Learning and Equity using Bangladesh MICS*, UNICEF 2020.

and safeguard students’ mental health and well-being.⁵ Meaningful family, school, and community engagement is critical to ensuring that secondary students and their families have the support they need to learn and thrive.

The purpose of this policy brief is to inform education systems leaders on strategies and efforts to deepen family, school, and community partnerships in rural and urban secondary schools and to ensure there are mechanisms in place to meaningfully engage families in their children’s learning and schools. Recommendations are designed for leaders in the national Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) at the national level but are also applicable across all levels of the education system, including leadership in districts, upazilas (subdistricts), and public and private schools.

An analysis of six national policies and plans was conducted to identify how education leaders envision the roles and responsibilities of families across education frameworks and the current approaches to family, school, and community engagement in the education system. In addition to policy analysis, research was conducted directly with 535 families, 225 educators, and 973 students in 14 rural and urban secondary schools in Bangladesh. Research was led by educators and researchers from the Education and Cultural Society (ECS), a national civil society organization in Bangladesh, in collaboration with the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the Brookings Institution from February 2023 to May 2024. The methodology used in this research was the Conversation Starter Tools, a mixed-methods participatory approach developed by CUE in collaboration with global collaborating organizations, including ECS.

This brief begins with an analysis of how family, school, and community engagement is envisioned across the national education policies and plans in Bangladesh. This is followed by a description of the Conversation Starter Tools. Finally, five key findings from the research are presented along with key recommendations for national education leaders to implement evidence-informed strategies to promote family-centric education systems.

TABLE 1

Findings and recommendations

Findings	Recommendations
1. In Bangladesh’s national policies and plans, the vision of family, school, and community engagement is limited to parental participation in school management committees and does not reflect the most common forms of engagement such as supporting learning at home and communication.	1. Ensure national policies and plans include a comprehensive definition of family, school, and community engagement, with actionable guidance for implementing and monitoring meaningful engagement.
2. National education policies and plans do not require secondary schools to develop or share school plans that outline a shared vision for education with families. Current family engagement practices in schools rarely create opportunities to listen to families’ beliefs and perspectives.	2. Support schools in developing school plans with a clear shared vision for education and family engagement; schools plans should have a process for consulting families and including their perspectives.

5 Md. Mamun-ur-Rashid, “Quality of Government Secondary School Services in Regional Bangladesh,” *Heliyon* 9, no. 1 (2023).

Findings	Recommendations
3. MoE recognizes structural and situational barriers to family engagement with schools but provides limited training and capacity building on designing and implementing strategies that respond to the needs of diverse families.	3. Build family engagement into pre- and in-service teacher professional development to ensure school educators and education leaders have the knowledge, skills, and practices to inclusively engage with families.
4. The <i>National Secondary Level Curriculum</i> does not include families as partners in their children's education, nor does it outline strategies to consult with or inform families about what is taught in schools or how it is taught.	4. Consult families during the development of national curricula to ensure that vision and learning strategies are aligned with students' needs and aspirations as well as being feasible with the available resources in schools and in homes.
5. Bangladesh does not have school-based mechanisms like parent teacher associations (PTAs) that represent the interests of families and ensure family partnerships. Families need a space to build relational trust and to develop a collaborative voice to partner with schools.	5. Reintroduce a mechanism of PTAs into the national education system to ensure family leaders can champion the interests of families in school decisions, building on existing knowledge and resources from prior efforts.

Introduction to family, school, and community engagement in Bangladesh

BOX 1

The importance of family, school, and community engagement⁶

Family, school, and community engagement encompasses the many ways that families, educators, and community groups work together to promote student learning and development.⁷ 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.⁸ 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.⁹

The education system in Bangladesh is organized into two levels: primary school (grades 1 to 5) and secondary school (grades 6 to 12). All students have access to free and compulsory primary education and as a result nine out of 10 students attend public schools. Of the 9.4 million young people who are enrolled in secondary schools, the majority (93%) attend private institutions.¹⁰ Among private schools, there are those that are independent of the

6 This definition language in Box 1 is consistent across all of the publications in the series *Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Family, School, and Community Partnerships*. Additional common language includes Box 2, the description of the Conversation Starter Tools Methodology. Original source is Morris and Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education*.

7 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," *Paideia Ribeirão Preto* 32, (2022); Geert Driessen, Frederik Smit, and Peter Slegers, "Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement," *British Educational Research Journal* 31, no. 4 (2005): 509–32; 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; 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; 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.

8 Shulamit Natan Ritblatt, Audrey Hokada, and Felicia V. Black. "Creating connections with families of young children using trauma-informed approaches." In *Family Community Partnerships: Promising Practices for Teachers and Teacher Educators*, eds. Margaret Caspe and Reyna Hernandez (IAP, 2023)

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

10 BANBIES, *Bangladesh Education Statistics 2023*.

government and typically run by a nonprofit or for-profit organization, and those that are government-funded and receive some federal funds for teacher salaries and other administrative costs.¹¹ A small proportion of secondary schools are fully public institutions and are funded and run by the government. One of the key barriers to school completion for secondary school students is the high cost of education, as both public and private schools rely on families to pay school fees, provide teaching and learning materials, and make financial contributions to schools. On average, two-thirds (61.7%) of the educational costs for a secondary student's education are covered by their family, as compared to the government (38.3%).¹²

The education system in Bangladesh is administered by two ministries: the MoE, which oversees lower and upper secondary, technical, vocational, and higher education and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) with authority over primary education.¹³ The MoE is the central institutional unit relevant to this study of family engagement in secondary education and includes multiple departments and directorates, including the DSHE, which implements policies and manages the subsector through divisional, district, and upazila offices.¹⁴ The roles of the MoE and its offices vary based on the school type. The Ministry exercises direct supervision over public and government-funded private schools. Independent private schools are required to comply by national laws, policies, and regulations, such as following the national curriculum, teacher qualification requirements, and school management committee (SMC) guidelines.¹⁵ The SMCs are a designated group of school leaders, teachers, families, students, and community members, who are responsible for making school-level decisions about budgets and administration.¹⁶

The key functions of the different offices of the MoE are summarized below.

- **Ministry of Education (MoE):** The central authority responsible for setting national education policies, plans, and strategies for secondary and tertiary education; approving national education budgets; and establishing standards for teacher training, curriculum, and assessment. These apply to public and private schools.
- **Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE):** The unit responsible for implementing policies, supporting public and private schools and institutions in curriculum and school planning, and overseeing school quality and teacher training across districts and schools. The DSHE is made up of 9 divisional offices, 64 district offices, and 480 upazila or sub-district offices.
- **District Education Offices (DEOs):** The 64 sub-units of MoE and DSHE that coordinate the delivery of teacher training, monitor curriculum and learning, and track SMCs participation across public and government-funded private schools in each jurisdiction. Independent private schools receive limited support and supervision from the DEOs.
- **Upazila Secondary Education Office (USEOs):** The 480 sub-district level clusters that provide direct support to public and government-funded private schools. For example, working with SMCs to develop school plans and collaborating with school leaders and teachers to support student attendance and learning. USEO representatives also engage directly with the SMCs, families, and community leaders, although engagement with independent private schools is less frequent than with government-funded private and public schools.

11 World Bank, *Bangladesh Engaging the Private Sector in Education: SABER Country Report 2016* (World Bank, 2017).

12 MoE, *Education Sector Plan for Bangladesh 2020/21 – 2024/25*.

13 MoE, "MoE Home Page," MoE, accessed on August 16, 2025, <https://moedu.portal.gov.bd/site/page/59c78811-3db9-4b75-8102-51f2a8b7e9f4/>.

14 DSHE, "History," DSHE, accessed on August 24, 2024, <https://dshe.gov.bd/site/page/b248fb28-7b6d-48b2-8695-fcc837e12125/History>.

15 Personal communication with education leader, Bangladesh, November 2025.

16 World Bank, *What is School-Based Management?* (World Bank, 2007).

Bangladesh's current national policies and plans provide very little vision of family, school, and community engagement beyond parental participation in SMCs,¹⁷ and offer little practical guidance on how to contribute meaningfully to school decisions and planning and building engagement partnerships to support learning as will be outlined in the analysis below. Although there is little guidance and evidence on family, school, and community engagement across all education levels in Bangladesh, it is particularly dismal for secondary school where the level of interactions and engagement with families often declines. In global studies, this decline in engagement in secondary school is often a result of fewer opportunities for family-school communication due to higher class sizes and an increase in the number of teachers a student interacts with, and because students become the mediators of relationships between families and schools.¹⁸ More evidence is needed in Bangladesh and globally on how to support meaningful engagement in secondary schools in rural and low-resource communities. Having clear roles and responsibilities for families in education system frameworks and practices is critical to ensuring young people have the supports they need to learn and thrive in school.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FAMILIES IN BANGLADESH'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

To understand the roles and responsibilities of families, six different national education frameworks, or policies, plans, and curricula were analyzed for this policy brief. Although the Third Primary Education Development Program covers only primary education, it was analyzed in lieu of the Secondary Education Development Program framework. Analyzing national programs helps illuminate the vision of family roles in the implementation of the *National Education Policy* (2010).

TABLE 2

Roles and responsibilities assigned to families in education frameworks

Framework	Roles and responsibilities of families
National Education Policy (2010) lays out the goals, strategies, programs, and operations of Bangladesh's national education system covering primary, secondary, and tertiary education.	Decision making and leadership Implementing policies and practices
National Sustainable Development Goal 4 Strategic Framework (2020) provides an overview of progress on key indicators and recommendations to achieve the targets in Bangladesh.	Decision making and leadership Implementing policies and practices
Education Sector Plan 2020–2025 (2020) is the implementation plan for the <i>National Education Policy's</i> goals, programs, and strategies.	Decision making and leadership Implementing policies and practices Being informed Providing resources
Master Plan for Information and Communication Technology in Education 2012–2021 (2013) is the implementation plan for how ICT is integrated into secondary school curricula and instruction.	No roles

17 MoE, *National Education Policy* (Government of Bangladesh, 2010).

18 Joyce L. Epstein, "Improving Family and Community Involvement in Secondary Schools," *Principal Leadership* 8, no. 2 (2007): 16–22.

Framework	Roles and responsibilities of families
National Secondary Level Curriculum (2012) outlines the learning objectives and instructional methods across subjects, grades, and topics at the secondary level. ¹⁹	No roles
Third Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-3) (2015) is the mechanism for implementing strategies and activities in the primary education subsector. There was no readily available program document for secondary schooling.	Decision making and leadership Shifting mindsets

In each of the education frameworks, five different possible roles and responsibilities of families are analyzed. This analysis sheds light on how educational leaders envision family, school, and community engagement. It also examines the political will and support offered to schools and education institutions to build family engagement and partnerships. A more detailed analysis by each of the education frameworks can be found in Appendix A.

BOX 2

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.

19 In 2021, the *National Curriculum Framework* (2021) was rolled out, which introduced competency-based learning and promoted holistic learning for primary and secondary education. However, in January 2025, this curriculum was rolled back, and the Ministry reverted back to the 2012 curriculum.

In these six education frameworks, family engagement is recognized as essential to young people's learning and development, even though the roles and responsibilities of families and communities vary across frameworks. Across all six frameworks, the most prominent role assigned to families was that of decision making and leadership, and namely through the participation of select parent/caregiver representatives to serve on SMCs. Of the 11 to 14 total members on the SMC, parents/caregivers are to make up a third of the members. Other SMC representatives include teachers, the head teacher, representatives from the USEOs, as well as local community representatives who are "interested in education."²⁰ Participation of female parents/caregivers is encouraged in these committees, but policies do not specify quotas or mandates. The SMC is typically led by a chairperson who is nominated by the central MoE.²¹

SMCs are defined as the "focal point for school's community accountability."²² SMCs are implemented in schools across all education levels, from primary to secondary.²³ The roles of the SMCs include budgetary oversight of school funds, student welfare, teacher supervision and management, and management of school property.²⁴ Guidelines for the SMCs have been developed, but they lack detailed clarity on the responsibilities of family representatives who serve on these committees. The guidelines are also outdated and typically emphasize accountability over collaboration. The most comprehensive guidelines for SMCs were first issued in 1977, and were targeted at government-funded private schools, with subsequent amendments in 1991 alongside the implementation of structural adjustment programs by the World Bank.²⁵ Structural adjustment programs aimed to decentralize education systems and transfer management and decision-making responsibilities from the central government to local authorities and schools.²⁶ SMCs were a mechanism of building greater local accountability and management in communities, with families being essential members of school communities. Training and capacity building of SMC members and head teachers have also been included in national plans, for example, in the *Education Sector Plan* (2020), training activities for family representatives on how to fulfill their roles on SMCs are noted. However, these training activities were often targeted at a handful of schools and led by donor-funded and implementing partners, including civil society organizations, and were not systemic trainings that took place in all primary and secondary schools across the country.²⁷

In the *National Education Policy* (2010), there are also details on "working committees," which are established teams of students, families, teachers, and local community members who are responsible for "student welfare" and to "improve the environment of the schools at primary and secondary levels."²⁸ There is no further mention of these working committees in the *Education Sector Plan* (2020) or other frameworks, nor was there evidence in this research that these working committees are currently operating in practice.

In both the *National Education Policy* (2010) and *Education Sector Plan* (2020), there is vague mention of the symbolic role families should play in implementing policies and practices in their schools and communities, and in participating in their child's education. The *National Education Policy* (2010) briefly mentions that "parents will be closely involved in various activities of the school."²⁹ The *Education Sector Plan* (2020) emphasizes families' roles in participating in school activities. The Plan notes that "parental and community engagement is critical to

20 MoE, *National Education Policy*, 75.

21 World Bank, *Bangladesh Education Sector Review* (World Bank, 2013).

22 Ministry of Education, *Education Sector Plan for Bangladesh 2020/21 – 2024/25*, 44.

23 SMCs are required in all schools in the primary level. In the secondary level, SMCs are required only in private schools, whereas public schools are directly managed by MoE and offer no roles for families in school decisions.

24 MoE, "Management Committee," MoE, accessed on October 13, 2025. http://www.educationboard.gov.bd/edb_rules_regulations_secondary_managing.php

25 MoE, "Management Committee"

26 Martin Carnoy. "Structural adjustment and the changing face of education." *International Labour Review*, 134, no. 6 (1995): 653.

27 World Bank, *Project Appraisal Document: Transforming Secondary Education for Results Program* (World Bank, 2017).

28 MoE, *National Education Policy*, 61.

29 MoE, *National Education Policy*, 74.

addressing the dropout factors and strengthening the back-to-school programs.”³⁰ The Plan also alludes to the impact of home factors on student learning and development in secondary school, but no strategies are outlined on how to support learning at home or student retention. At the pre-primary and primary level, families were assigned more extensive roles in implementing policies and programs, which included details on communicating with teachers and attending school events, but this level of detail is lacking for secondary schools.³¹ Finally, in the *Education Sector Plan* (2020), there is mention of how families are expected to provide resources to schools, namely in the form of school and examination fees. Due to the lack of universal access to free secondary education, these family and school costs and expectations are laid out in the plan.

Research Design

CONVERSATION STARTER TOOLS METHODOLOGY³²

The findings and recommendations in this policy brief draw on the document analysis presented above as well as data collected through the Conversation Starter Tools research methodology. 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 in their contexts and to develop a shared vision of how to build stronger family, school, and community partnerships. The process is not intended to judge or assess schools or districts but rather to facilitate greater relational trust between families, educators, and students.

The Conversation Starter Tools³³ were developed by the Family, School, and Community Engagement in Education initiative at CUE in collaboration with school and civil society organization teams around the world, including ECS in Bangladesh. 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 increase data, dialogue, and directions on how to strengthen collaboration and partnerships between families, schools, and communities.

³⁰ MoE, *Education Sector Plan for Bangladesh 2020/21 – 2024/25*, 183.

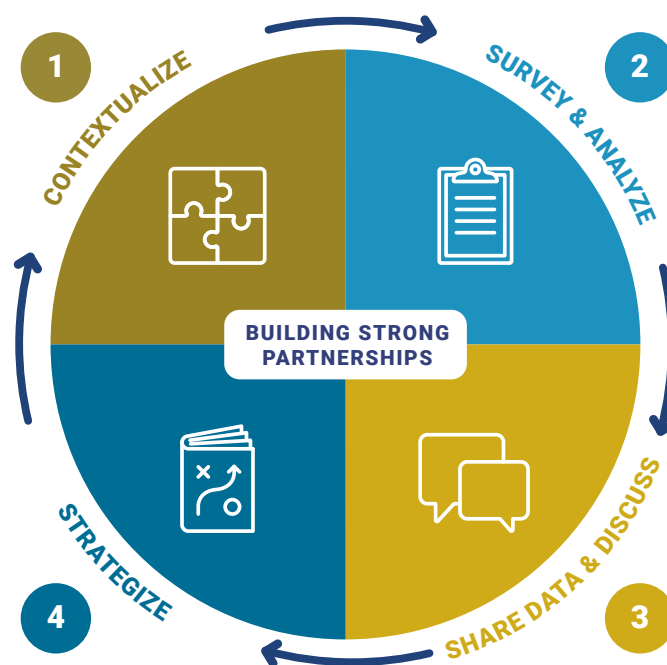
³¹ MoE, *National Education Policy*.

³² 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 how 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*.

³³ 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).

FIGURE 1

Conversation Starter Tools process



RESEARCH PROCESS

The Conversation Starter Tool surveys were administered in the Bangla language to 973 secondary school students, 535 parents/caregivers, and 225 teachers and education leaders in eight rural and six urban schools in Rangpur district in Bangladesh. The research was led by ECS between February and March 2023. ECS employed various strategies to engage as many families as possible, including meeting them at their homes or in community spaces to ensure rural communities and families with lower literacy levels and access to technology could participate.

Surveys were offered orally to all families, students, and educators. Survey data was analyzed, summarized, and presented in formats designed for low-literacy audiences. ECS shared the data with the school communities and held 16 conversations with intergenerational groups of parents/caregivers, students, and educators who participated in the surveys. The conversations provided further qualitative insights into the rationale behind participants' survey responses. These conversations allowed families, educators, and students to listen to one another's perspectives, foster deeper connections, and brainstorm strategies to strengthen family, school, and community engagement efforts.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF FAMILIES, STUDENTS, AND EDUCATORS

Gender of families, students, and educators was collected alongside disability status. The level of education of families and the household socioeconomic status (SES) was also captured.

GENDER AND DISABILITY STATUS OF THE CHILD

Across rural and urban schools, more than two-thirds (69.3%) of the family respondents were female. In Bangladesh, mothers tended to play a more prominent role in their children's education, but fathers and male caregivers were intentionally targeted.³⁴ Among all students surveyed, nearly two-thirds (61.9%) were female, which is consistent with national data on school enrollment by gender.³⁵ One-third (33.8%) of the educators surveyed were female, which is consistent with national data.³⁶

Only a small proportion (1.9%) of families reported having a child with a disability (CWD). The number of children with disabilities is likely much higher due to low identification and barriers to matriculation; it is estimated that in Bangladesh only one in three (35%) of children with a disability are enrolled in schools.³⁷

TABLE 3

Gender and disability status of families, students, and educators

Geography	Families			Students			Educators	
	<i>n</i>	Percent Female	Percent CWD	<i>n</i>	Percent Female	Percent CWD	<i>n</i>	Percent Female
Rural	281	68.3%	2.5%	515	69.3%	1.2%	121	32.2%
Urban	254	70.1%	1.2%	457	53.6%	1.6%	104	35.6%
Total	535	69.3%	1.9%	972	61.9%	1.4%	225	33.8%

LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF FAMILIES

The majority of all parents/caregivers (56.9%) had completed secondary education, but a quarter (27.7%) either had a primary school education or no education. Education levels of parents/caregivers varied among urban and rural families, with urban parents/caregivers on average completing higher education levels than rural families. The socioeconomic status of urban families, which is often correlated with levels of education of household heads, was higher than that of rural families. Roughly one in 10 (8.7%) families reported never or sometimes meeting basic needs, whereas it was closer to one in five (16.8%) in rural families.

34 Umme Habiba Jasmine and Mzikazi Nduna, "Parenting in Bangladesh: A Review of the Literature from 2006 to 2018," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 53, no. 1 (2022): 76–103.

35 BANBIES, *Bangladesh Education Statistics 2023*.

36 World Bank, "Secondary Education, Teachers (% Female): Bangladesh (Indicator SE.SEC.TCHR.FE.ZS)," World Bank Gender Data Portal, accessed on August 6, 2025, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.TCHR.FE.ZS?locations=BD>.

37 UNICEF, "UNICEF Concerned That More Than Half of Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh Do Not Go to School," UNICEF, accessed January 24, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/press-releases/unicef-concerned-more-half-children-disabilities-bangladesh-do-not-go-school>.

TABLE 4

Parents/caregivers' level of education and socioeconomic status

Geography	Level of Education			Percent Meeting Basic Needs (SES)	
	Primary School or Less	Secondary School	Post-secondary School	Never or Sometimes	Mostly or Always
Rural	32.0%	58.4%	9.6%	16.8%	83.2%
Urban	23.0%	55.3%	21.8%	8.7%	91.3%
Total	27.7%	56.9%	15.4%	12.9%	87.0%

Findings and Recommendations

There were five key findings and recommendations identified through the research. These recommendations are targeted at the national MoE and the DSHE leadership, as well as in districts, upazilas, and schools. The recommendations offer actionable solutions and strategies to foster deeper family, school, and community partnerships in rural and urban secondary schools to ensure students and their families have the necessary support they need to succeed in school.

Finding 1: In Bangladesh's national policies and plans, the vision of family, school, and community engagement is limited to parental participation in school management committees and does not reflect the most common forms of engagement such as supporting learning at home and communication.

In the education sector in Bangladesh, SMCs are positioned as a key mechanism for holding schools accountable for students' learning and development, yet families' roles and responsibilities in these committees are not clearly defined or substantive. Lack of guidelines and resources, as well as accountability of SMCs to the school community, have led to poor implementation and asymmetrical decision making.³⁸ SMCs are often chaired by political leaders appointed by the MoE and have unchecked power over decisions related to school finances.³⁹ Even though parents/caregivers are to compose a third of the SMC membership, power dynamics can impact whether parents/caregivers and teachers—especially female parents/caregivers—on the committees feel comfortable sharing their perspectives.⁴⁰ Although policy change in 2025 aims to ensure that political appointees can no longer participate in SMCs; these changes were not implemented at the time this report was written, and additional support is needed to help families share their perspectives and contribute meaningfully to decision making.⁴¹

During the research, families were asked to name their top types of involvement and engagement in their children's schools and learning. There are six main types of family involvement and engagement, as shown in Figure 2.⁴²

³⁸ World Bank, *Bangladesh Education Sector Review* (World Bank, 2013).

³⁹ World Bank, *Project Appraisal Document: Transforming Secondary Education for Results Program* (World Bank, 2017).

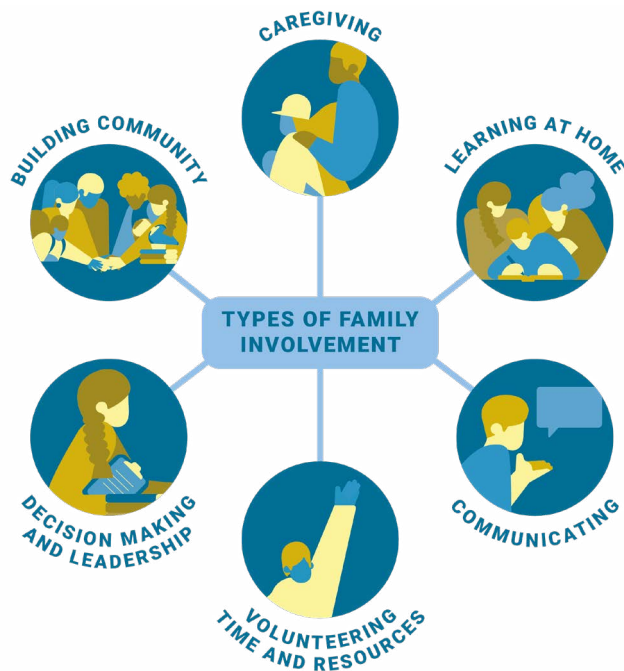
⁴⁰ Samir Ranjan Nath, Rasel Babu, and Durdana Nahid, *BRAC's Intervention in Secondary Schools: A Comparative Study* (BRAC University, 2018).

⁴¹ Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), "One can't be president of school-college managing committees more than two terms consecutively," BSS, September 1, 2025, <https://www.bssnews.net/news/307494>.

⁴² Figure 2 from Morris and Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education*. Based on Joyce L. Epstein et al., *School, Family, and Community Partnerships* (Corwin, 2008).

FIGURE 2

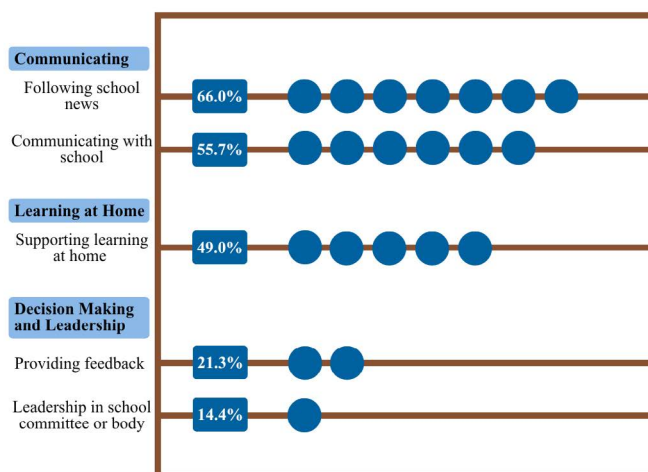
Types of family involvement and engagement



Participating in decision making and leadership were not the top forms of family involvement named by parents/caregivers. Only one in seven parents/caregivers (14.4%) named being involved as a leader in a school committee or body, which includes SMCs. However, a slightly higher proportion of families (21.3%) reported that they provided feedback on school decisions at their child's school in one form or another. Rural families reported higher levels of parent/caregiver participation leadership in a parent association and providing feedback on school decisions compared to urban parents/caregivers.

FIGURE 3

Top types of family involvement and engagement reported by parents/caregivers ($n = 535$)



Note. Responses were "select all" and do not equal 100%.

The most common type of family involvement and engagement named by parents/caregivers was communicating with schools, which included following school news (66.0%) and communicating with school staff and teachers (55.7%). Families also reported supporting learning at home (49.0%) as one of the main types of family engagement, with families from higher SES households supporting learning at home at greater rates than those in lower SES households.⁴³ Other types of involvement and engagement are detailed in Appendix B. Given that the education frameworks largely position family involvement and engagement as participating in decision making and leadership, there is a missed opportunity to include the other critical forms of family involvement and engagement in policies, plans, and curriculum, such as their role in supporting learning and promoting effective communication with schools.

Conversations with families, students, and educators revealed that the ways schools communicated with families varied considerably across communities and depended on access to technology, with social media increasingly used as a communication channel. One educator noted, “We send SMS to parents regularly, have WhatsApp and Facebook groups, and parents are connected through these media. We also send notices in the school diary for those who are not used to social media or do not use technology.” Families with limited literacy skills often relied on their children to mediate communication between their families and schools. One student noted, “Families get school news from us. They follow our progress; ask about school news, results, conditions, and teacher statuses.”

Families also reported volunteering time and resources as a main form of involvement and named making financial contributions to secondary schools in the form of tuition, educational costs, and other school contributions under this category. Given that 96% of secondary schools in Bangladesh are private, and most public schools are under-resourced, schools rely on families financially. As a form of building community, families noted their participation in events at the school, with one in three families (32.5%) reporting that they participated in such events.

In summary, national education policies and plans envision family engagement as involvement of families in decision making and leadership roles through the SMCs, yet in practice, SMCs involve a small proportion of families whose perspectives may be compromised due to power dynamics on these committees. Families, educators, and students see family engagement as the different ways families are communicating with schools and supporting learning at home, which are often not recognized in national education policies, plans, and strategies or in conversations with education and school leaders.

Recommendation 1: Ensure national policies and plans include a comprehensive definition of family, school, and community engagement, with actionable guidance for implementing and monitoring meaningful engagement.

Family, school, and community engagement encompasses the many ways families, educators, and community groups collaborate to support student learning, development, and well-being and school improvement.⁴⁴ Family participation in decision making and leadership roles is crucial for schools, but other forms of engagement—such as caregiving, supporting learning at home, and communicating with teachers—are vital for student learning and success. National policies and plans should adopt a comprehensive definition of family, school, and community engagement that reflects and honors the six different types. To ensure effective operationalization of a broader vision of family, school, and community engagement in all schools, clear roles and responsibilities should be established for DEOs and USEOs who support and monitor family engagement efforts across public, government-funded private, and independent private schools. This includes providing clear guidelines for the effective implementation of SMCs in public government-funded private, and private independent schools, in ways that safe-

43 A larger proportion of families from higher SES groups (who were meeting basic needs “always” and “mostly”) reported supporting learning at home at higher rates (51.4% of $n = 465$) than families from lower socioeconomic statuses (33.3% of $n = 69$), who reported meeting basic needs “never” and “sometimes.” This was tested at a significance level of .95.

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

guard parents/caregivers' participation through quotas, as well as training members to promote shared responsibility and collaborative decision making.

To inspire a framework for family engagement, the Government of Bangladesh could look at other examples in other contexts. For example, Colombia's *Alianza Familia-Escuela* (Family-School Partnerships Program), which includes a series of legal and strategic documents to implement family engagement all the way from the central Ministry into schools.⁴⁵ Another example can be found in Kenya's *Competency Based Curriculum: Guidelines on Parental Empowerment and Engagement* (2019), which outlines promising practices to empower parents/caregivers to be key stakeholders. Parents/caregivers receive training and support to participate in school governance through school councils and parent associations.⁴⁶ The framework also assigns roles and responsibilities for school leaders, governing bodies, and families, and suggests how to resource, monitor, and evaluate successful family, school, and community engagement.

Effective family, school, and community engagement varies for different student age groups. Providing a list of no-cost and low-cost strategies to support learning at home to DEOs, USEOs, and schools can ensure that educators and families are partnering effectively to support students' needs. Families also need differentiated support based on their education and literacy levels, as well as for families working in agricultural or informal jobs with limited time to dedicate to supporting or monitoring learning. Guidelines should include strategies that engage all families and support their role in their child's learning, with explicit strategies for those families who have low levels of education and literacy. One promising example is the *Guidelines for Parent Participation in Home-based Learning During School Closures and Beyond* (n.d.), published by the Indian Ministry of Education during the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes guidance for families with low literacy, families of children with disabilities, as well as suggested activities for art therapy to support children experiencing stress, trauma, or loss.⁴⁷

In summary, national policies should adopt a comprehensive definition of family engagement, and designate DEOs, USEOs, and schools clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and resources to support, monitor, and evaluate schools' family engagement in schools. Clear definitions, guidance, and roles will help ensure schools are partnering with families to support children's learning, development, and well-being.

Finding 2: National education policies and plans do not require secondary schools to develop or share school plans that outline a shared vision for education with families. Current family engagement practices in schools rarely create opportunities to listen to families' beliefs and perspectives.

The *National Education Policy* (2010) requires all primary schools to develop a school plan—a process led by the SMCs—but no such mandate exists for secondary schools. Bangladesh's primary school plans include a shared vision for education in each school and define the goals for students' learning and development. School plans promote cohesion and a shared understanding among students, educators, and families, and help guide school decisions and align efforts to achieve the vision, but family, school, and community engagement is not currently part of the school plans.

There is a process for developing a school plan in collaboration with families at the primary school level, which includes soliciting perspectives from educators, families, and students. There is no such process for the secondary level, but school plans are nonetheless critical for guiding schools in ensuring they are meeting the needs of

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

46 MoE, *Competency Based Curriculum: Guidelines on Parental Empowerment and Engagement* (Government of Kenya, 2019).

47 MoE, *Guidelines on Parent Participation in Home Learning During School Closures and Beyond* (Government of India, n.d.).

students and families and going beyond solely academic outcomes.⁴⁸ This research confirms that families, educators, and students often have different visions of and beliefs about education, which are informed and shaped by multiple factors, including one’s own experience as a learner as well as the beliefs and experiences of trusted family and community members.⁴⁹

Families, students, and educators were asked what they believed was the main purpose of schools and when they were most personally satisfied with education to understand their vision of education for their child. These perspectives are shown in Tables 5 and 6 (a complete list of the survey questions and response options are in Appendix C). More than half of the families (57.9%) said the main purpose of school was preparing for further education, or academic learning, but they were most satisfied (42.6%) when their children were developing social and emotional skills and values. For many parents/caregivers,⁵⁰ they saw academic learning as linked to securing gainful employment and social mobility. As one parent/caregiver noted, “Families in our community often have many children but limited income. Consequently, they prioritize academic learning to ensure their children can secure employment quickly.”

TABLE 5

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

Participant Group	Geography	Academic Learning	Economic Learning	Civic Learning	Social and Emotional Learning
Families	Total (n = 535)	57.9%	16.1%	8.4%	17.6%
	Rural (n = 281)	52.5%	15.0%	8.2%	24.3%
	Urban (n = 254)	63.8%	17.3%	8.7%	10.2%
Educators	Total (n = 225)	20.1%	29.9%	20.1%	29.9%
	Rural (n = 121)	19.8%	29.8%	17.4%	33.1%
	Urban (n = 104)	20.4%	30.1%	23.3%	26.2%
Students	Total (n = 973)	47.3%	14.9%	13.1%	24.7%
	Rural (n = 515)	43.2%	16.2%	15.2%	25.5%
	Urban (n = 458)	52.3%	13.4%	10.7%	23.6%

Note. The top response is bolded for each participant group.

Educators, on the other hand, saw the purpose of school differently, naming economic and social and emotional learning as the main purposes. It is important to reflect educators’ perspectives in school plans as well as those of families and students. As one rural educator noted, “While we prioritize academic learning, as teachers, I believe that the purpose of education extends beyond passing examinations or securing a fixed job. Education holds a broader value and vision, which is why we emphasize socio-emotional learning.”

48 Ariful Haq Kabir and Farjana Akter, “Parental Involvement in the Secondary Schools in Bangladesh: Challenges and a Way Forward,” *International Journal of Whole Schooling* 10, no. 2 (2014): 1–18.

49 Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, *The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn from Each Other* (Ballantine Books, 2003).

50 Parents/caregivers with less than a secondary education prioritized academic learning at higher rates (66.7% of n = 98) compared to parents/caregivers with secondary education or higher (54.4% of n = 210). Significance level of .95.

When it came to their intrinsic satisfaction with education, families, educators, and students across rural and urban schools reported being most satisfied with education when students were gaining skills to understand themselves, developing social skills or values, or social and emotional learning, as reported in Table 6. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruptions to normal routines, students' mental health and well-being were of particular concern. As one student noted in conversations, "In the post-COVID era, many boys have become addicted to games like PUBG [Player Unknown Battle Grounds] and social media. Teachers are working on developing their social and emotional skills to bring them back to a regular routine." The process of developing school plans should reflect these deep conversations and different perspectives and needs.

TABLE 6

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

Participant Group	Geography	Academic	Economic	Civic	Social and Emotional
Families	Total (n = 535)	26.9%	13.6%	16.8%	42.6%
	Rural (n = 281)	31.3%	11.7%	12.8%	44.1%
	Urban (n = 254)	22.0%	15.7%	21.3%	40.9%
Educators	Total (n = 225)	9.3%	14.7%	20.9%	55.1%
	Rural (n = 121)	7.4%	13.2%	20.7%	58.7%
	Urban (n = 104)	11.5%	16.3%	21.2%	51.0%
Students	Total (n = 973)	15.4%	11.3%	21.1%	52.1%
	Rural (n = 515)	15.0%	11.3%	22.8%	50.9%
	Urban (n = 458)	15.9%	11.4%	19.2%	53.5%

Note. The top response is bolded for each participant group.

In summary, secondary schools in Bangladesh are not required to develop a school plan and shared vision of education and family engagement. Families, educators, and students have different beliefs on the purpose of education and diverse needs, with no current process for consulting families or reflecting on beliefs and perspectives as a school community. It is important to ensure school plans include a shared vision of education that reflects diverse beliefs and ideas of students, families, and educators in a school community.

Recommendation 2: Support schools in developing school plans with a clear shared vision for education and family engagement; schools plans should have a process for consulting families and including their perspectives.

As is the practice in primary schools, national policies and plans should require all secondary schools to create a school plan at the start of the academic year that includes a commitment to family, school, and community engagement. School plans should include a shared vision of education that centers not only students' academic learning, but also addresses civic and economic learning, as well as the social and emotional well-being of the school community. Ideally, school plans should include key family, school, and community engagement strategies to achieve this vision and a consultative process with family representatives, as well as input from students.

Like in primary schools, SMCs should lead this process and ensure that family representatives are involved in the following key steps. First, outlining the needs of the school community. This includes reviewing school data, such

as student attendance and achievement, and soliciting feedback and insights from students, families, and educators on the needs and challenges of the school community. The SMC should create a school plan with a vision and strategies based on these needs. Finally, the SMC and school leadership should communicate the school plan and vision to the school community. Leaders from DEOs and USEOs should have a role in supporting schools in developing and implementing these school plans.

The SMCs can draw from examples in other countries on how to gather needs and perspectives from diverse families, including communities serving low-literacy families. For example, SMCs could also consider using the *Global Family, School, and Community Engagement Rubrics Tool (Global Rubrics Tools)* to guide this process.⁵¹ The *Global Rubrics Tool* provides a structured approach for schools to reflect on and assess current school plans and family engagement practices, identify strategies that promote trusting relationships that center the school communities' needs and student well-being. One approach to engaging families with low literacy levels in school planning is using pictorial tools that indicate different priorities, such as high grades on exams, well-being, good jobs, and beyond. A pictorial approach was developed by a civil society organization in Sierra Leone that engaged families with low literacy levels in conversations to strengthen learning at home; this approach could be adapted to school planning.⁵²

In summary, MoE should provide a process for helping secondary schools and SMCs develop school plans with a shared vision of education in consultation with families. These school plans should include a vision for family, school, and community engagement. The process of developing a school plan should include intentional strategies for understanding the diverse needs of the school community.

Finding 3: MoE recognizes structural and situational barriers to family engagement with schools but provides limited training and capacity building on designing and implementing strategies that respond to the needs of diverse families.

Given low rates of secondary school completion in Bangladesh, students need their families and educators to work together to ensure they have the foundations and conditions to succeed. National education policies and plans provide no guidance for primary or secondary schools, DEOs, or USEOs on how to plan and support teachers or school leaders in implementing family engagement.

In Bangladesh, teachers, school leaders, and education officers do not receive professional development on implementing family engagement strategies that are responsive to the diverse needs of families. There are no universal pre-service professional preparation requirements to qualify to be a teacher, only a senior teacher (junior teachers only need a school completion certificate).⁵³ For those teachers who receive pre-service teacher preparation, their training focuses heavily on classroom management, pedagogy, and curriculum, and does not cover family engagement.⁵⁴ In-service professional development is offered by different entities in Bangladesh and does not include family engagement as a component.⁵⁵ Similarly, professional development courses for school leaders, DEOs, or USEOs, rarely cover family engagement.⁵⁶ With a lack of training on family engagement, teachers, school

51 Global Family Engagement in Education Network, *Global Family, School, and Community Engagement Rubrics Tool* (Brookings Institution, 2024).

52 Emily Markovich Morris, Max Lieblich, and Laura Nóra, *Building Partnerships Where Families, Schools, and Communities Stand Together in Sierra Leone* (Brookings Institution, 2024).

53 MoE, "Management Committee," MoE, accessed on October 13, 2025. http://www.educationboard.gov.bd/edb_rules_regulations_secondary_managing.php.

54 Zohra Khanam, "B.Ed Professional Training: A Case Study of Secondary School Teachers in Bangladesh." *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6, no. 5, 2024: 1–7.

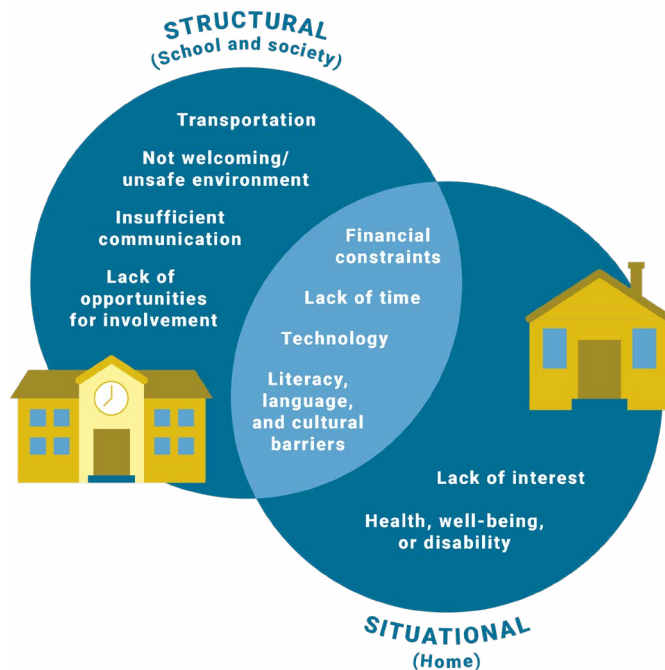
55 World Bank, *Program Appraisal Document: Learning Acceleration in Secondary Education Operations* (World Bank, 2023).

56 National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM), *NAEM Annual Report 2020–21* (MoE, 2021).

leaders, and education officers are forced to develop and implement strategies with limited resources or support, and in consequence these strategies may not be intentionally or effectively designed.⁵⁷

In this research, families identified the top barriers they faced in being involved in their children’s schools. Barriers were then classified as structural or situational, or as a combination of structural and situational barriers, as shown in Figure 4.⁵⁸ Structural barriers are those barriers perpetuated by schools and society, whereas situational barriers are challenges experienced in the home and that depend on familial circumstances. Overlapping barriers are both structural and situational in nature.

FIGURE 4
Barriers to family involvement and engagement



As shown in Table 7, families and educators across rural and urban schools named financial constraints as the main barrier to family engagement. Two out of five parents/caregivers (40.7%) and over two-thirds of educators (70.7%) named this as a barrier. In addition to financial constraints, a third of all families (33.3%) and educators (30.2%) named lack of time as a main barrier. Families working in informal jobs, such as day laborers, often lacked the job flexibility needed to engage with their children’s schools. During conversations, a rural parent/caregiver noted, “If I go to my children’s school, I will lose a day’s work as I am a day laborer. If we could earn the same amount of money for attending a school program or parent teacher meeting, then we could attend.”

Educators also noted the predicament of low-income households working in the informal economy. One teacher noted, “Most fathers are farmers, auto rickshaw or van drivers, day laborers, and struggling for their daily earnings. Mothers are busy with household work, agriculture, childcare, and caring for elders. Some work in factories or in tobacco farming.” The teacher explained, “None of them can find the time to attend any school program, and it is a financial burden for them to spend money from their limited income on public transport” to get to school events.

57 Michelle LaRocque, Ira Kleiman, and Susan M. Darling, “Parental Involvement: The Missing Link in School Achievement,” *Preventing School Failure* 55, no. 3 (2011): 115–22

58 Figure 4 from Emily M. Morris and Laura Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education*.

TABLE 7

Top barriers to family involvement and engagement by participant groups

Barriers	Participant Group	Total	Across Geographies		
			Rural	Urban	p value
Structural Barriers					
Transportation	Families (n = 535)	10.5%	12.1%	8.7%	
	Educators (n = 225)	32.0%	38.8%	24.0%	*
Not welcoming or unsafe environment	Families (n = 535)	15.9%	14.6%	17.3%	
	Educators (n = 225)	17.8%	21.5%	13.5%	
Insufficient communication	Families (n = 535)	31.0%	28.8%	33.5%	
	Educators (n = 225)	44.4%	48.8%	39.4%	
Situational Barriers					
Lack of interest	Families (n = 535)	9.7%	10.0%	9.4%	
	Educators (n = 225)	45.8%	47.1%	44.2%	
Health, well-being, or disability	Families (n = 535)	9.0%	8.5%	9.4%	
	Educators	26.2%	35.5%	15.4%	*
Overlapping Barriers					
Financial constraints	Families (n = 535)	40.7%	42.0%	39.4%	
	Educators (n = 225)	70.7%	71.9%	69.2%	
Lack of time	Families (n = 535)	33.3%	30.2%	36.6%	
	Educators (n = 225)	36.4%	38%	34.6%	
Lack of technology	Families (n = 535)	32.9%	32.7%	33.1%	
	Educators (n = 225)	55.1%	62.8%	46.2%	*
Literacy, language, and cultural barriers	Families (n = 535)	7.7%	8.2%	7.1%	
	Educators (n = 225)	37.3%	42.1%	31.7%	
No challenges	Families (n = 535)	30.7%	32.7%	28.3%	
	Educators (n = 225)	13.3%	8.2%	19.2%	*

Note. Responses were “select all” and do not equal 100%. Bolded percentages are the top two selections for each group. For significance, * $p \leq .05$.

Other barriers to family engagement included lack of access to technology, the Internet, and digital literacy needed to communicate with schools and engage with social media forums and online resources. As an educator explained, “Many poor parents do not own mobile phones, and smartphones are unavailable in most families. Consequently, schools cannot communicate through messages, email, or WhatsApp, as many parents will not be able to access these technologies.” This educator continued, “parents who are illiterate cannot follow messages,” and this creates digital divides and equity issues.

In addition to structural barriers, half of all educators (45.8%) cited families' lack of interest in being involved in their children's education, which they saw as a situational barrier. As one educator noted during conversations, "Parents may not fully understand the role they need to play in their children's learning and the necessity of their engagement." This blaming of families for lack of engagement was a mindset that families and students often challenged, and only one in 10 (9.7%) parents/caregivers noted lack of interest as a factor beyond their lack of engagement. As one student reported in conversations, "I have to travel to school by bicycle because my home is 2 kilometers away. It's impossible for my mother to come to my school, and my father works as a driver in the capital, Dhaka. This creates a gap where my school may think parents are not interested in my studies, but in reality, parents have the willingness to be involved, but they are hindered by limitations and barriers."

High levels of poverty and pressure to work, particularly in rural communities, not only compromised family engagement but also contributed to students being absent from or discontinuing school. As one rural educator noted, "Engaging students at the secondary level is a significant challenge, let alone their parents. Many parents are engaged in informal jobs, agriculture, and day labor. Their children start working to support the family from an early age." A student noted, "Some boys mentioned that from grade 6 onwards, their fathers pushed them to help in tobacco or rice fields or even start van driving." For female students living in poverty, the pressure to leave school to marry was noted in conversations. Across Bangladesh half of all female students (51%) in 2017 married before the age of 18, with higher rates in rural areas (53.8%) compared to urban areas (44%).⁵⁹ Although the *National Education Policy* (2010) notes the importance of family engagement in ensuring school completion, few details are provided to support schools and families to work together to ensure students can complete their education.

In summary, financial constraints and lack of time were the most significant barriers to family engagement. Families were often engaged in agricultural and informal jobs, substantial domestic responsibilities, and lacked the flexibility needed to engage with their children's schools and learning. Educators tended to recognize these structural barriers, which impacted both family engagement as well as student attendance and completion. However, some educators also assumed families lacked the motivation to be involved, but did not have the strategies, training, or resources to engage families in their children's learning in ways that are responsive and relevant to students' ages and needs.

Recommendation 3: Build family engagement into pre- and in-service teacher professional development to ensure school educators and education leaders have the knowledge, skills, and practices to inclusively engage with families.

One of the challenges to building more inclusive family engagement strategies in schools is lack of awareness, skills, and professional development for teachers, school leaders, and representatives from the DEOs and USEOs on how to engage diverse families in different contexts. Including family engagement as a mandatory component of teacher professional development, including pre-service and in-service training, rather than as elective topics would ensure that educators have the knowledge of how critical family engagement is to student learning and development, and how to implement practical strategies that can be incorporated in the school calendar. Pre-service and in-service training should ideally build the cultural competency of teachers, school leaders, and DEOs and USEOs to work in the diverse geographical, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts of Bangladesh, including understanding factors that hinder engagement in rural and marginalized communities. Pre-service and in-service training should encourage educators to reflect on their assumptions about families, adopt an asset-based mindset, and expand their repertoire of strategies for building trusting relationships and partnerships with families. Strategies include using two-way communication to listen to families' concerns and ideas and to build empathy and awareness of how to support learning in homes that are resource-constrained.

⁵⁹ Quentin Wodon et al., *Economic Impacts of Child Marriage: Global Synthesis Report* (World Bank, 2017).

A starting point for developing teacher professional development and training is establishing clear standards on the knowledge, skills, and practices necessary for educators to know how to effectively engage families. There are professional standards for primary school teachers, school leaders, and education leaders, but these do not reflect evidence-based practices on impactful family-school partnerships. Developing clear professional standards that include family, school, and community engagement for secondary school teachers will help enable them to more inclusively engage with families and students. The MoE can draw on several examples of teacher professional development standards for family engagement from Australia, Scotland, and the United States. For example, in Australia, family engagement is included across several domains of the professional standards developed for teachers. Teachers are expected to communicate and collaborate with families regularly to support students' learning and school priorities using strategies that are responsive, clear, and respectful.⁶⁰ Similarly, professional standards in the US are organized into eight competencies, including honoring families from diverse cultures and understanding the inequities that affect them; reflecting on individual biases and using an asset-based lens; and building trusting relationships and community partnerships that promote student and family well-being.⁶¹

In summary, pre- and in-service professional development will encourage educators to learn about and reflect on diverse contexts and the needs of students and build their capacity to partner with families. A first step in developing this professional development is establishing teacher professional standards for secondary schools that establish clear knowledge, skills, and practices necessary for educators to engage students and families inclusively.

Finding 4: The National Secondary Level Curriculum does not include families as partners in their children's education, nor does it outline strategies to consult with or inform families about what is taught in schools or how it is taught.

Curriculum frameworks and reforms in Bangladesh have rarely envisioned meaningful roles for families as partners in their children's learning or included a role for them in supporting learning at home. When families are not actively given a role in supporting learning at home in curricula, teachers may not think of them as key partners or create strategies to engage families in learning.⁶²

There are two key policies and frameworks related to curriculum and pedagogy. First, the *National Secondary Level Curriculum* (2012), which covers the learning objectives and topics across all different secondary grades (6 to 12). Second, the *Master Plan for Information and Communication Technology in Education 2012–2021* (2013) outlines a vision for establishing ICT infrastructure in schools, ICT-enabled teaching and learning, accompanying textbooks and other learning materials, and teacher professional development on ICT.⁶³ Neither policy includes strategies to inform families about the curriculum or pedagogy, or to envision any role for families in supporting their children's learning at home.

Successful curriculum reform ideally ensures that families, in addition to teachers, understand the vision, objectives, and teaching and learning approaches of the national curriculum and can support learning at home.⁶⁴ When families do not understand what is being taught and/or how it is being taught, they may oppose or resist new curricula or pedagogical approaches if they don't understand the benefits.⁶⁵ In January 2025, the Bangladesh MoE

60 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), "Australian Professional Standards for Teachers," AITSL, accessed on October 15, 2025, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/standards>.

61 NAFSCE, *Educator Preparation for Family School Partnerships* (NAFSCE, 2022).

62 Garry Hornby and Rayleen Lafaele, "Barriers to Parental Involvement in Education: An Explanatory Model," *Educational Review* 63, no. 1 (2011): 37–52.

63 MoE, *Master Plan for Information and Communication Technology in Education 2012–2021* (Government of Bangladesh, 2013).

64 Bobo A. Segoe and Thomas Bisschoff, "Parental Involvement as Part of Curriculum Reform in South African Schools: Does It Contribute to Quality Education?" *Africa Education Review* 16, no. 6 (2019): 165–82.

65 Education Development Center, *Radio Instruction to Strengthen Education (RISE) in Zanzibar* (EDC, 2009).

rolled back the newly introduced *National Curriculum Framework* (2021) and reverted to the 2012 curriculum due to poor implementation and significant opposition from educators and families, who did not understand the vision of this curriculum or how to implement it successfully. The curriculum proposed the removal of school examinations to reduce the fear and stress of high-stakes examinations and instead introduced a continuous evaluation. Without examinations, parents/caregivers found it difficult to assess students' learning and feared that students were not learning anything at school.⁶⁶

Therefore, it is important to ensure that new curricular reform efforts include a process for consulting with families and understanding their diverse perspectives as part of the development and piloting process. As stated in Finding 2, families often have diverse beliefs about education, including beliefs on curriculum and pedagogy. When schools do not take time to listen to and understand these beliefs, it may create tension and erode trust, and ultimately is a lost opportunity to bridge learning in school and home.⁶⁷

In this research, families and educators recognized the potential of technology to enhance teaching and learning and prepare students with 21st-century skills in their surveys and conversations. Yet, they were concerned that unequal access to digital devices, connectivity, and resources would exacerbate inequities between urban and rural families and schools. They recognized that rural households with lower SES do not have the same infrastructure and skills for supporting learning at home through ICT as higher SES households. As one educator shared during conversations, "Both parents and teachers agree that technology has created a divide between high-tech, low-tech, and no-tech communities. Because we cannot provide our children with laptops, tablets, or mobile phones, they face challenges in reaching their educational goals and showcasing their talents." National policies and plans offer no concrete strategies to help families understand how these technologies are integrated into teaching and learning or to ensure students have equal access to technology and infrastructure at home.

In summary, secondary school curricula and surrounding frameworks in Bangladesh do not designate a role for families in supporting learning at home. Families are key partners in supporting students' learning, and as such, should be consulted on and informed about curricular and pedagogical policies and practices in schools, and serve as key stakeholders in curricular development and reforms.

Recommendation 4: Consult families during the development of national curricula to ensure that vision and learning strategies are aligned with students' needs and aspirations as well as being feasible with the available resources in schools and in homes.

The Government of Bangladesh has proposed to launch a new curriculum framework by 2027.⁶⁸ The MoE should ensure that diverse families are consulted as it prepares the new curriculum framework. Consultations during the policy development process would provide opportunities to elicit and include diverse perspectives, increase knowledge on the policy among a wider audience, and provide legitimacy.⁶⁹ These consultations could help ensure that the curriculum framework is realistic and feasible with available resources across urban and rural communities. One prominent example of family consultations can be found in Ontario, Canada. Policymakers leveraged multiple procedures to listen to family perspectives, including written and online submissions, in-person regional forums, and focus group discussions with targeted families, such as families of children with disabilities and

66 Nabila Islam Ridi, "Navigating Challenges and Opportunities: Classroom Challenges to Implement the New National Curriculum of Bangladesh in Secondary Education" (PhD diss., BRAC University, 2025).

67 Rebecca Winthrop, "Solving the trust equations in schools," Edelman Trust Institute, 2023. <https://www.edelman.com/trust/edelman-trust-institute/Publication/2023/communities-schools-relationships>

68 Mamun Abdullah, "NCTB to Launch New Curriculum in 2027 Based on Global Models," Dhaka Tribune, July 17, 2025, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/education/386691/nctb-to-launch-new-curriculum-in-2027-based-on>.

69 Ank Michels and Laurens De Graaf, "Examining Citizen Participation: Local Participatory Policymaking and Democracy," *Local Government Studies* 36, no. 4 (2010): 477–91.

recent immigrants.⁷⁰ Parent organizations also played a role in gathering feedback from parent associations from schools around the region. Another example is in Zanzibar, Tanzania, where families were consulted in the process of the development of their new competency-based curriculum.⁷¹

Families should also be informed about the vision and purpose of a new curriculum framework or reform, using public engagement and community mobilization to help build awareness. School, DEO, and USEO leaders can lead community meetings with families to discuss changes to the curricula and share strategies to support learning at school and home. Leveraging trusted community and religious leaders can also ensure higher participation and engagement at these meetings. In India, schools have invited families to attend showcases, where students shared teaching and learning materials or performed street plays to demonstrate how and what they are learning.⁷² Radio and television programs are also a cost-effective approach to building public awareness. These approaches help reach a wide audience, including rural and remote communities that lack connectivity and access to the Internet and may not be able to read complex government documents.⁷³

In summary, consultation with families in the development of curriculum frameworks can ensure parents/caregivers are providing unique insights and feedback on policies and curriculum frameworks, and ensuring frameworks are relevant and feasible. It is critical to ensure that diverse participants are included, such as families from rural areas and families of children with disabilities. Sharing new curriculum frameworks through radio, video, news, and community mobilization efforts is critical to ensuring families are not only aware of these changes but also can learn about strategies to support learning at home.

Finding 5: Bangladesh does not have school-based mechanisms like PTAs that represent the interests of families and ensure family partnerships. Families need a space to build relational trust and to develop a collaborative voice to partner with schools.

In Bangladesh, schools, families, and educators have few opportunities to collaborate with one another to support student learning and well-being, family engagement, and school improvement. Beyond SMCs, which are only present in some secondary schools, families and educators have no mechanism to contribute to school decision making and leadership or build community among families. Where they exist in schools, the SMCs often focus solely on management of school budgets and reporting, and not on family relationships.

When schools ensure that families and educators have formal and informal opportunities to communicate and collaborate, this can foster authentic relationships built on empathy, care, and respect.⁷⁴ PTAs are one mechanism for ensuring families and educators have representation in school decision making and leadership. They promote collective problem solving, transparency, and shared accountability and can weigh into school culture and family engagement strategies. As one parent/caregiver noted during conversations, “It is better if we can create a platform or association where parents, students, and teachers sit together to discuss changes, students’ progress, the role of parents, community challenges; then it could be an effective triangular engagement.” PTAs are also important spaces for families to build relationships with other families and build more responsive communication.

70 Ontario Ministry of Education, *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools* (Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2010).

71 Zanzibar Institute of Education, *Pre-Primary and Primary Education Curriculum Framework* (Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, 2022).

72 Arddhendu Shekhar Dash, “Creating a Culture of Strong School, Parents and Community Ties,” *Learning Curve* 19 (2024): 23–26.

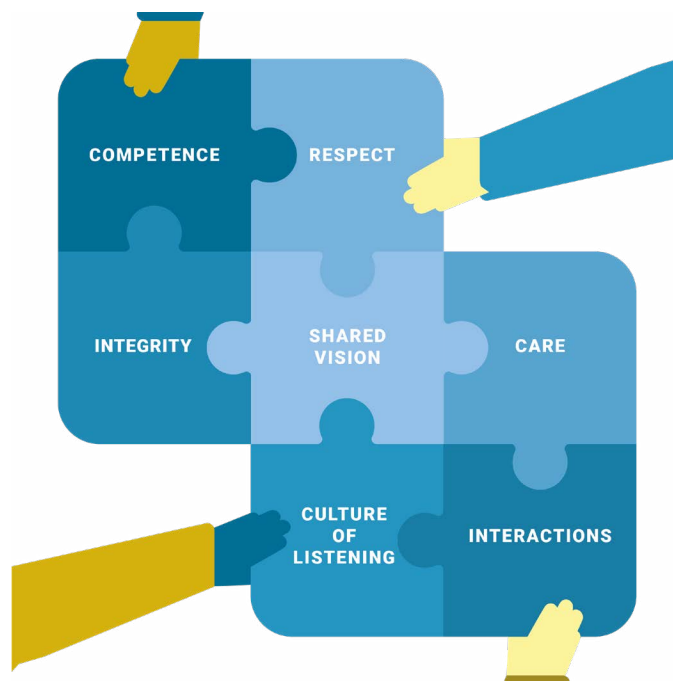
73 UNICEF, “As Learners Return to School, Parents Urged to Embrace the #PowerOfPlay,” UNICEF, January 16, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/press-releases/learners-return-school-parents-urged-embrace-powerofplay>.

74 National Center for Families Learning, *Parent Advisory Councils: Elevating Family Voice and Leadership in Education* (NCFL, 2025).

Improved communication and collaboration ultimately foster relational trust.⁷⁵ Relational trust is the care, respect, and regard shown for one another.⁷⁶ In this research, relational trust between families, students, and educators was studied because it is critical to building strong family, school, and community partnerships. The Conversation Starter Tools capture seven elements of relational trust using a 4-point Likert scale rating trust from low to high.⁷⁷

FIGURE 5

Elements of relational trust



High trust in schools benefits students, families, and educators.⁷⁸ Families tend to feel welcomed and included in schools, are active partners in their children's learning, and support school activities when they have high trust with educators.⁷⁹ Educators are more likely to feel motivated when they feel trusted and valued by the school community, and they have opportunities to communicate with families.⁸⁰ Ultimately, a high-trust school environment promotes a greater sense of belonging and academic achievement for students.⁸¹

Overall, families in this research reported that they had moderate levels of trust with educators, whereas educators had low to moderate levels of trust with families. Educators felt that families respected them and sought their perspectives and opinions (culture of listening), but felt parents/caregivers did not often follow through on their promises with actions (integrity). PTAs are one mechanism for building a culture of listening and creating oppor-

75 Julia B. Stoner and Maureen E. Angell, "Trust and Communication: Perspectives of Mothers of Children with Disabilities on the Role and Importance of Communication in Trusting Relationships with Teachers," *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals* (2014): 141–62

76 Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider, *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2002).

77 Figure 5 from Morris and Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education*.

78 Richaa Hoysala and Emily Morris, "Strengthening trust in school and communities," Education Plus Development (blog), Brookings Institution, June 9, 2025, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/strengthening-trust-in-schools-and-communities/>.

79 Socorro G. Herrera, Lisa Porter, and Katherine Barko-Alva, *Equity in School–Parent Partnerships: Cultivating Community and Family Trust in Culturally Diverse Classrooms* (Teachers College Press, 2020).

80 Diah Pranitasari, "The Influence of Effective Leadership and Organizational Trust to Teacher's Work Motivation and Organizational Commitment," *Media Ekonomi dan Manajemen* 35, no. 1 (January 2020): 75–91.

81 Elisabetta Fenizia and Santa Parrello, "School Trust and Sense of Belonging: Restoring Bonds and Promoting Well-Being in Schools," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 22, no. 4 (2025): 498; Steven B. Sheldon and Sol Bee Jung, *The Family Engagement Partnership Student Outcome Evaluation* (Johns Hopkins University, 2015).

tunities for families to be engaged in and to interact with schools and their children's learning, building a shared vision of education—which was addressed in Recommendation 2.

In summary, in Bangladesh, there are few opportunities for families and educators to form authentic relationships and collectively identify and solve problems. PTAs are one mechanism to ensure families and educators have meaningful opportunities for collaboration that foster relational trust, but they do not exist in practice. Relational trust is critical to building strong partnerships between families and schools, and to ensure that students have the support they need to stay in school and thrive.

Recommendation 5: (Re)introduce a mechanism of PTAs into the national education system to ensure family leaders can champion the interests of families in school decisions, building on existing knowledge and resources from prior efforts.

In Bangladesh, all secondary schools are required to form PTAs as of a mandate issued January 2024.⁸² However, there are limited details on the purpose, composition, or roles and responsibilities of PTAs. Previously in 2010, PTAs were introduced in primary schools with the aim of involving families in student learning and school activities. However, PTAs were not implemented consistently across schools, and families lacked awareness of this mechanism.⁸³

PTAs offer families and educators a mechanism for advocating for their needs and collaborating on school decisions. PTAs are often seen as a key mechanism to elevate family voice in school decisions. They can provide a formal mechanism for ongoing dialogue where families and educators can build relational trust, co-develop solutions, and work together to improve student learning, development, and well-being. Furthermore, they can ensure that family engagement is not ad hoc or event-based but rather continuous, structured, and embedded in school activities. PTA members are parents/caregivers who understand their communities' contexts, and can design family, school, and community engagement strategies that are relevant and responsive.

In order to guide schools on how to establish PTAs equitably and effectively across all types of primary and secondary schools, the Government of Bangladesh needs national guidelines. Such guidance should include: a) clear objectives for PTAs; b) a suggested process for forming and sustaining PTAs based on global evidence and promising practices; c) defined roles and responsibilities of families and schools, including how PTAs liaise with SMCs; and d) quotas to ensure equity, such as requiring at least half of PTA members to be female. Such quotas can safeguard family voice in school decisions, particularly those of female parents/caregivers, who may otherwise be excluded due to social and cultural norms.⁸⁴ One example of clear guidelines for a PTA can be found in the Philippines, where there is clear guidance for PTAs and where the responsibilities of its members and the processes to select and elect members are clearly laid out. A key feature of the Philippines guidelines is the requirement for the PTA to convene regularly to discuss key issues related to student learning and well-being and liaise with other governing bodies like SMCs.⁸⁵

To ensure the successful adoption and implementation of the PTA model, PTAs can be piloted and studied across different contexts—urban, rural, semi-urban, private, and public schools. The MoE can learn from a similar PTA pilot that was implemented in Tanzania. PTAs were introduced in a few schools and districts before being scaled

82 MoE, *Approval of Parent Teacher Association Policy, 2023 for all Secondary Level Education Institutions* (MoE, 2024).

83 Md. Nazmul Islam and Al Mansor Helal, "Primary School Governance in Bangladesh: A Practical Overview of *National Education Policy-2010*," *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education* 9, no. 4 (December 2018): 3917–21.

84 Ariful Haq Kabir and Farjana Akter, "Parental Involvement in the Secondary Schools in Bangladesh: Challenges and a Way Forward," *International Journal of Whole Schooling* 10, no. 2 (2014): 1–18.

85 Department of Education, *Revised Guidelines Governing Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) at the School Level* (Government of Philippines, 2011).

nationally. Based on feedback from schools and families, and lessons learned from the pilot, national guidelines were developed.⁸⁶ This process ensured that the PTA objectives, roles of its members, and mechanisms for collaboration considered the cultural contexts and needs. Such a pilot program can surface successful strategies to safeguard representation of diverse families and educators, promote trust, and ensure that all families—especially those often excluded—have a meaningful voice in school decisions.

In summary, PTAs provide a formal mechanism for parents/caregivers and educators to partner, contribute meaningfully to school decisions, and build relational trust. National guidelines for PTAs should include clear goals, roles, and responsibilities of the PTA to develop contextually relevant and responsive family, school, and community engagement strategies to support student learning, development, and well-being. The MoE can pilot PTAs in a few schools and districts and use the lessons learned to improve and make the national strategy culturally responsive.

Conclusion

Strengthening Bangladesh's education system requires a systematic and inclusive approach to family, school, and community partnerships that promote student learning, development, and well-being, as well as school improvement. Current policies and plans narrowly define family engagement as participation in SMCs, offering little guidance or support to schools on how to build meaningful partnerships with families.

National education frameworks should include a comprehensive definition of family engagement that encompasses the many forms of family engagement and provides clear guidance, training, and tools for schools, DEOs, and USEOs to operationalize this vision. Schools should be supported to develop shared visions and plans with families and communities that reflect the academic, social, and economic priorities of their students.

While the Government of Bangladesh recognizes the barriers families face, educators often lack training on how to engage inclusively with diverse families. Embedding family engagement competencies into pre- and in-service teacher education will ensure educators and leaders are equipped to listen, consult, and collaborate effectively with families. Families should be consulted in national curriculum development to ensure that what and how students learn aligns with their aspirations and realities, and builds their capabilities in supporting learning at home. Finally, reintroducing PTAs alongside SMCs can offer families meaningful, ongoing opportunities to collaborate with educators and to build relational trust. Leaders at the national, DEO, and USEO levels should guide and foster such partnerships. By expanding the vision of family engagement and supporting schools in implementing it, Bangladesh can build a family-centered education system where all students stay in school, learn, and thrive.

86 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, *Guidelines of Parent Teacher Partnership* (United Republic of Tanzania, 2022).

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Appendix A

An in-depth analysis of each education framework is presented below.

The [National Education Policy](#) (2010) establishes a comprehensive vision, objectives, and strategies to promote equitable access to quality education from pre-primary to higher education. This policy does not feature family, school, and community engagement in the goals and principles, nor does it recognize parents/caregivers as key actors in achieving its goals. The only two roles ascribed to families and communities are *decision making and leadership*, and *implementation of policies and practices*. Family, school, and community engagement is discussed in primary and secondary education, with a more substantial role in the primary level. Family, school, and community engagement is not included in pre-primary education, or as a strategy to promote access to education for children of ethnic minorities or children with disabilities.

Families are expected to contribute to *decision making and leadership* through SMCs, whose responsibilities include “school management, quality education monitoring, and community participation.”⁸⁷ This includes management of school development activities and supporting the annual evaluation of teachers and head teachers. The composition of the SMC at the secondary level includes local government representatives in addition to school-teachers, families, and local community representatives who are “interested in education.”⁸⁸ The policy highlights the need to promote participation of female parents and guardians in these committees but does not specify quotas or other guidelines for its composition. SMCs also play an important role in “decentralizing the existing primary education system.”⁸⁹ Separate from the SMC, a school “working committee” consisting of students, families, teachers, and local community members may be established in each school to promote student welfare and “improve the environment of the schools at primary and secondary levels,” however there are few details on what this entails.⁹⁰ Families and communities are also assigned roles in *implementing policies and practices* which are limited to being “closely involved in the various activities of the school,” with no clarity on what roles families can play in these events.⁹¹

The [National SDG 4 Strategic Framework](#) (2020) “reinforces the Government’s ongoing efforts implementing education-related policies and plans” in alignment with the United Nations’ SDG 4 goal “to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.”⁹² This strategic framework presents eleven overarching foundational principles with corresponding strategic approaches to achieve the SDG 4 targets. Among these eleven foundational principles, family, school, and community engagement is featured in two: education as rights-based and a public good and effective governance, accountability, and partnerships.

Families and communities are assigned the role of *implementing policies and practices* that ensure education is rights-based and accessible to all communities. The framework recommends the involvement of civil society organizations and other community members “in all aspects of education planning and provision.”⁹³ The framework also assigns the role of *decision making and leadership* to ensure effective governance, accountability, and partnership, and proposes engaging “parents, and communities in the planning, implementation, review and trans-

87 MoE, *National Education Policy-2010*, 16.

88 MoE, *National Education Policy-2010*, 75.

89 MoE, *National Education Policy-2010*, 74.

90 MoE, *National Education Policy-2010*, 61.

91 MoE, *National Education Policy-2010*, 74.

92 MoE and MoPME, *National SDG 4 Strategic Framework: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All*, (Government of Bangladesh, 2022), 1.

93 MoE and MoPME, *National SDG 4 Strategic Framework: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All*, 6.

formation of educational policies and programs in pursuit of achieving SDG 4 goals and targets.”⁹⁴ The framework does not provide further details on how families, communities, and civil society organizations may be involved, or which policies and programs they must support. The framework also recommends strategic directions for individual SDG targets, namely 4.1 primary and secondary education, 4.2 early childhood development and pre-primary education, and so on. Families and communities are not included as key actors in supporting the achievement of any goals associated with secondary education.

The [Education Sector Plan 2020– 2025](#) (2020) details how to achieve the SDG 4 goal alongside a sector-wide analysis of opportunities and challenges facing the education system. In addition to subsector goals and interventions, the plan highlights key areas that cross sectors, including how to implement Information and Communication Technology (ICT), prepare for climate and human emergencies, and carry out inclusive education. The sector plan names key actors as families, students, and teachers and states that “there should be a common understanding of quality of education among these three groups.”⁹⁵

The roles and responsibilities of families in the *Education Sector Plan* varies across education levels. In secondary school, families are designated roles in *decision making and leadership* through SMCs and *providing resources* such as school fees. The framework designates the “School Managing Committee as the focal point for school’s community accountability,” and proposes capacity development programs for head teachers and SMCs to support them in fulfilling their roles.⁹⁶ Most families *provide resources* in the form of tuition fees due to the lack of universal access to free secondary education. Families incur further costs such as examination fees and private tutoring. The framework recognizes that “parental and community engagement is critical to addressing the drop-out factors and strengthening the back-to-school programs,” but provides no actionable guidance for schools or families.⁹⁷ The framework also recognizes the impact of home factors on student learning and development in secondary school; no strategies are outlined to promote families’ role in supporting learning at home. In pre-primary and primary school, families play roles in *decision making and leadership* through the SMCs and parent teacher associations, as well as in *implementing policies and practices* by attending parent teacher meetings and maintaining regular communication with schools.

Among the cross-sectoral priorities, significant emphasis is given to ICT in education and its role in developing students for the modern workforce. The framework calls for reforms in school infrastructure, curriculum and pedagogy, and teacher training to support the vision. Families’ role is limited to *being informed* of “the appropriate use of technology” to dissuade worries about the “bad influences arising from the use of the Internet and mobile phones.”⁹⁸ However, the framework provides little guidance on how families must be made aware of the use of technology in schools and beyond. Family, school, and community engagement is a prominent feature in the plans and targets for climate education, highlighting the importance of “school-community-parents cooperation” in ensuring young people develop the “ethics and values” for sustainable living, but there is no assigned clear role for families in the plan.⁹⁹ Families and communities are not designated any roles to promote the other cross-sectoral priority of inclusive education.

The [Master Plan for Information and Communication Technology in Education 2012-2021](#) (2013) envisions a “digital Bangladesh”¹⁰⁰ that uses ICT to ensure efficiency, accessibility, and accountability in education. Although

94 MoE and MoPME, National SDG 4 Strategic Framework: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All, (Government of Bangladesh, 2022), 9.

95 MoE, *Education Sector Plan for Bangladesh 2020/21 –2024/25*, 184.

96 MoE, *Education Sector Plan for Bangladesh 2020/21 –2024/25*, 44.

97 MoE, *Education Sector Plan for Bangladesh 2020/21 –2024/25*, 183.

98 MoE, *Education Sector Plan for Bangladesh 2020/2 –2024/25*, 113.

99 MoE, *Education Sector Plan for Bangladesh 2020/2 –2024/25*, 111.

100 MoE, *Master Plan for Information and Communication Technology in Education 2012-2021*, (Government of Bangladesh, 2013), 3.

ICT in education is a prominent feature across multiple frameworks, this framework outlines the key objectives and strategies for implementation within the education system. In secondary education, the framework emphasizes the critical role of ICT in improving the quality of education and responding to the needs of the 21st century. In particular, it identifies the need for students to develop ICT skills for future success. It focuses on ensuring ICT-enabled teaching and learning environments, ICT infrastructure, textbooks and other learning materials, and teacher professional development are available to support this goal. Despite calls for “ensuring people’s participation in the implementation of every single activity” of the framework, families and communities are not included as key actors or assigned any roles.¹⁰¹ Non-governmental organizations are invited to coordinate with the government to support implementation, but there are no details on their specific roles. Given the significant emphasis on ICT and the many curricular changes proposed, the exclusion of families and communities from the planning, implementation, or monitoring of this policy may have negative implications on the success of this policy.

The [National Secondary Level Curriculum](#) (2012) outlines the learning objectives and instructional methods across subjects, grades, and topics at the secondary level.¹⁰² There are no explicit roles or mentions of families or family engagement in the curriculum.

The [Third Primary Education Development Program](#) (2015) elaborates the goals, objectives, and strategies for the primary education subsector for the time period of 2011 to 2017. This framework was analyzed in lieu of the Secondary Education Development Program, which was publicly unavailable. Although this framework states “[to] involve parents and community to give support to their children’s education” as a key objective, family, school, and community engagement is not widely incorporated within the various programs and activities. Families are designated *decision making and leadership* roles within the School Management Committees to promote decentralized school management and governance. The specific role of the SMC is to develop a School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP), which will outline “how a school’s resources will be applied to improve its performance.”¹⁰³ Families and communities are key audiences of a communication and social mobilization strategy, designed to *shift mindsets* to improve “access and quality education, promote enrollment and retention in pre-primary and primary education, child-friendly teaching, inclusiveness and no corporal punishment in classrooms, mobilizing local, subnational and national support for schools and reinforcing the value of education through positive social norms.”¹⁰⁴

101 MoE, *Master Plan for Information and Communication Technology in Education 2012-2021*, (Government of Bangladesh, 2013), 3.

102 In 2021, the *National Curriculum Framework* (2021) was rolled out, which introduced competency-based learning and promoted holistic learning for primary and secondary education. However, in January 2025, this curriculum was rolled back, and the Ministry reverted back to the 2012 curriculum.

103 Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, *Third Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-3) – Revised*, 34.

104 Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, *Third Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-3) – Revised*, 25.

Appendix B

TABLE 8

Top types of family involvement and engagement by participant groups

Type of Family Involvement and Engagement	Participant Groups	Total	Across Geography		
			Urban	Rural	p value
Caregiving and Supporting Learning at Home					
Supporting or monitoring learning	Families	49.0%	50.8%	47.3%	
	Educators	26.7%	24.0%	28.9%	
	Students	31.3%	30.6%	32.0%	
Communicating					
Communicating with school staff and teachers	Families	55.7%	53.5%	57.7%	
	Educators	50.2%	50.0%	50.4%	
	Students	65.4%	62.2%	68.2%	
Following school news	Families	66.0%	65.4%	66.5%	
	Educators	41.3%	42.3%	40.5%	
	Students	57.1%	54.8%	59.2%	
Building Community					
Attending school events	Families	32.5%	36.6%	28.8%	
	Educators	35.1%	37.5%	33.1%	
	Students	32.1%	31.4%	32.6%	
Volunteering Time and Resources					
Donations (Financial contributions)	Families	42.4%	42.5%	42.3%	
	Educators	20.4%	24.0%	17.4%	
	Students	39.4%	34.9%	43.3%	*
Volunteering in school activities	Families	7.7%	6.7%	8.5%	
	Educators	16.0%	8.7%	22.3%	*
	Students	17.6%	12.7%	21.9%	*
Decisionmaking and Leadership					
Providing feedback on school decisions	Families	21.3%	20.1%	22.4%	
	Educators	33.8%	31.7%	35.5%	
	Students	33.5%	28.4%	38.1%	*

Type of Family Involvement and Engagement	Participant Groups	Total	Across Geography		
			Urban	Rural	p value
Leadership role in a parent association	Families	14.4%	11.4%	17.1%	
	Educators	17.8%	15.40%	19.8%	
	Students	22.7%	18.8%	26.2%	*
Not Involved					
Not involved	Families	2.1%	0.8%	3.2%	*
	Educators	10.2%	9.6%	10.7%	
	Students	2.0%	3.5%	0.6%	*

Note. Responses were “select all” and do not equal 100%. Bolded percentages are top 2 selections for each group. For significance, $*p \leq .05$.

Appendix C

TABLE 9

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		

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