Introduction

**Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being**

At the proficient level, the teacher candidate partners with families to support students’ learning and well-being by:

* Leveraging families’ cultural and linguistic knowledge and expertise as assets.
* Engaging with families about what students are learning in the classroom and expectations for student success.
* Collaboratively identifying and seeking family input on, strategies and resources for supporting student learning and growth in and out of school.

All teacher candidates in Massachusetts are required to demonstrate proficiency in CAP Essential Element III-C-1: Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being.

For CAP Essential Element III-C-1: Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being, “collaboration” refers to educators’ collaboration with families to support student learning and well-being both in and out of school. Strong collaboration between educators and families emphasizes mutual, respectful, and trusting partnerships, where educators engage families, leverage their strengths, and expand resources for learning (Henderson & Mapp, 2007; Evans, 2013; Castro et al., 2015). Partnering with families to support students’ learning raises the quality of culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and helps to close disparities in educational opportunities (Caspe & Hernandez, 2023).

**Why is Family Collaboration Important?**

Collaborating with families is a critical part of supporting student learning and well-being by ensuring that teachers develop and implement the following key skills:

* **Leveraging Families’ Cultural and Linguistic Knowledge as Assets**
  + Recognizing and valuing students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds enhances their sense of belonging and identity in the classroom.
  + Learning becomes more engaging, impactful, and relevant when teachers integrate students' home cultures into instruction.
* **Engaging with Families About Classroom Learning and Student Expectations**
  + Clear communication about what students are learning helps families reinforce key concepts at home.
  + When families understand academic expectations, they can better support their children’s success. This engagement fosters a shared responsibility for student growth, strengthening the school-home connection.
* **Collaboratively Identifying Strategies and Resources for Student Learning**
  + Families provide unique insights into their children’s strengths, challenges, and learning styles, which helps teachers tailor their support.
  + Working together allows educators and families to identify meaningful resources that address students’ academic and social-emotional needs.
  + This collaboration ensures that learning support extends beyond the classroom, reinforcing student growth in multiple environments**.**

**Ultimately, prioritizing family collaboration and engagement improves student outcomes, strengthens relationships, and provides a more inclusive, student-centered educational experience.**

How Do You Define “Family”?  
A modern-day definition of family is a diverse and inclusive unit of individuals who provide love, support, and a sense of belonging to one another, regardless of biological or legal ties. Family can include parents, children, siblings, extended relatives, chosen family, close friends, and caregivers. Any person who supports a student’s learning and well-being outside of school can be considered a family member for the purpose of demonstrating this skill.

**How to Think about Practice that Demonstrates this Element**

To demonstrate practice in III-C-1: Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being, teacher candidates are required to go beyond outreach (one-way communication initiated by the school or teacher candidate) and dialogue (two-way communication with families), to collaborate with families (using families’ input to support students).

If you are questioning if something could serve as evidence for this Essential Element, consider:

1. *Did the candidate receive meaningful input from the family?*

*AND*

1. *Did the candidate* ***use*** *information received from the family to support the student’s learning or well-being?*

**Candidate Example**

Below is an example of how a teacher candidate demonstrates III-C-1: Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being.

**Secondary Visual Arts Teacher Candidate**

In this example, this teacher candidate engages families and leverages families’ cultural and linguistic knowledge as assets by planning a project that focuses on telling a family member’s story. The teacher candidate collaborates with families by bringing their voices into the students’ learning process, and by inviting them to provide feedback on their experience at the conclusion of the lesson.

First, the teacher candidate assigns students the task of creating a detailed close-up rendering of a human hand. Students choose a family member to feature for this project and are challenged to put the hand in a context that communicates something meaningful about that family member’s story. As students brainstorm plans for their project (F.V.Cr.02), they analyze the work of other artists from a variety of cultural backgrounds that are focused on the human hand (F.V.Cr.01), photograph the hands of their own family members, and interview one or more family members  with questions, such as, “When you think of Grandma’s hands, what do you think of? What ideas, emotions, or actions do you associate with her hands, and why? What stories do the lines on her hands tell?” The students each elicit feedback from a family member on the message that is communicated in a draft of the project before working on the final piece. At the conclusion of the project, students put together a virtual art gallery that families can visit that includes reflections on decision-making in the art-making process (F.V.P.06). The candidate provides all text in multiple languages to ensure accessibility for all families.  The candidate culminates the unit by issuing both student and family surveys about whether the unit was effectively delivered to meet learning goals in order to inform adjustments to practice for future units.

The candidate demonstrates their proficiency in this Essential Element by annotating samples of student work with their reflections on how they were able to incorporate the elements of Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being into the assignment (candidate artifact), and asking the program supervisor and supervising practitioner to observe the class period with the virtual art gallery (observation).

**Collecting Evidence of Practice During CAP**

When engaging in CAP, candidates collect multiple sources of evidence to demonstrate their proficiency in each Essential Element. Sources of evidence for each Essential Element will vary from candidate to candidate depending on their individual experience and preparation context. No one piece of evidence will fully demonstrate an Essential Element. In fact, a source of evidence might demonstrate only part of an Essential Element, while another source of evidence collected later might demonstrate another part of the Essential Element. When evidence collection is viewed as a repeated process rather than a single activity at one moment in time, it is more likely that teacher candidates will be able to demonstrate proficiency in the entire Element.

Below are examples of evidence that candidates might use to demonstrate practice related to III-C-1: Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being. These are examples, not exemplars, and should not be considered an exhaustive list. However, they may help to guide candidates and supervisors in what to look for when supporting practice in this Essential Element.

***Examples of Evidence Related to III-C-1: Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being***

**Leveraging Families’ Cultural and Linguistic Knowledge and Expertise as Assets**

* Conduct a family survey at the start of the year to learn about students' home languages, traditions, and learning preferences.
* Ask families to send photos or objects representing their culture for a "Family Wall" or classroom culture box.
* Assign a "Family Interview" project where students learn about family traditions.
* Invite families to present about parts of their heritage or traditions that overlap with relevant curricular units or topics.
* Encourage students to interview elders about historical or cultural events.
* Explore number systems from different cultures (e.g., Roman numerals, Mayan counting), make connections to number systems that students have in their home cultures.
* Assign students to ask their families how they use math in their everyday lives.

**Engaging with Families About Classroom Learning and Expectations**

* Participate in a meeting with a family. Prepare and deliver an explanation of learning expectations in the classroom.
* Send weekly or biweekly newsletters (email, print, or video) outlining students' learning.
* Utilize classroom apps (like ClassDojo, Seesaw, or Remind) to provide real-time updates and share student progress.
* Assign a "My Family’s History" timeline project.
* Create a Family Book Bag Program where students bring home books to read with caregivers.
* Offer and help plan a "Family STEAM Night" where students and parents solve challenges together.
* Assign a weekly journal that tells families what students learned in math that week. Invite families to make connections to how they use math at home.
* Offer a Family Resource Library that students can “sign out” with books, games, and websites for home learning.
* Share a monthly math challenge for families to solve together.
* Send home maps or globes for students to mark their family's origins.
* Assign at-home family science projects (e.g., building a simple machine, growing seeds, etc.).

**Collaboratively Identifying Strategies and Resources for Student Growth**

* Use survey results that families provide about their student’s learning preferences to incorporate changes to classroom practice.
* Use survey results about students’ home languages or cultural traditions to research materials that might relate to the student’s experience that could be used in class. Ask families if they agree that the materials would be relevant and if they have any ideas to supplement the materials.
* Work with families to create study schedules for major projects and tests.
* Draft, with parent input, a guide on "How to Support Reading at Home." Offer translated versions.
* Assign students an assignment to draft a plan for exploring a career that uses the math they are studying and consult with their families about possible contacts whom they know who the student could contact about their math experience.

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