

# WHAT IS APTT?

**Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT)** is a model of family engagement that is grounded in the notion that schools can thrive when families and teachers work together, as genuine partners, to maximize student learning inside and outside of school. The model is research-based and aligns grade-level learning concepts, student performance data, and family-teacher communication and collaboration.

The APTT model supplements and elevates the efforts of traditional parent conferences by expanding opportunities for families and teachers to collaborate. The format creates a systematic pathway for teachers to share grade-level information, tools, and strategies that families can apply at home and in the community to accelerate student learning. By implementing APTT, schools take responsibility for engaging in a collaborative process to build strong relationships with their students' families and to empower those families to make concrete contributions to student growth and achievement.

APTT was developed by Maria Paredes in 2009 in response to families' expressing a need to know

how to support their children's learning. After two years of practice with 247 families and students in nine classrooms in Phoenix, AZ, along with data collection, analysis, and evaluation, the model was formalized and scaled up when Paredes joined WestEd in 2011. For developing APTT, Paredes was awarded the Dissertation in Practice Award of 2012 from The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate.

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The real strength in the APTT model is that it is all about building capacity – the capacity for teachers to gain better understanding of families and their unique circumstances; the capacity for parents to provide meaningful, focused support for student learning at home; and the capacity for students to succeed on foundational grade-level skills.”

— Beth Long, Principal,  
Canton Elementary STEM Academy, Georgia

## How does APTT work?

At the core of the APTT process are two types of teacher-family meetings, each facilitated by a classroom teacher.

### Team Meetings

In the APTT model, teachers facilitate three 75-minute team meetings each year — each consisting of the teacher meeting with the families of all of the teachers' students. The team meetings give families opportunities to learn and contribute in a collaborative environment. Important grade-level information and effective home practices are learned and exchanged with and among all families.

### Individual Session

Once per year for each student, the teacher holds a 30-minute individual session with the student and the student's family to provide individualized, personal support. Individual sessions offer opportunities for families and teachers to deepen their relationship as partners, discuss each student's progress at home and at school, and collaboratively create a course of action to support student growth and improvement.

## How can my school prepare for success with APTT?

Research indicates that teachers often are not prepared with the skills, knowledge, belief systems, and confidence needed to engage in meaningful partnerships with their students' families.<sup>1</sup>

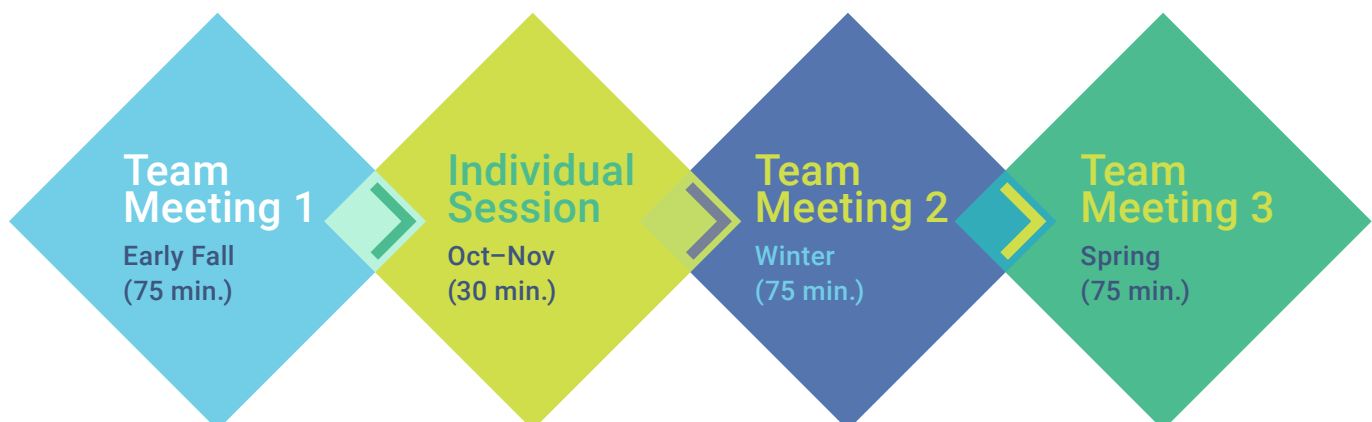
Preparing your school staff for APTT training and implementation is the most important first step in ensuring a successful family engagement experience on your campus.

To prepare your school for success with APTT:

1. Cultivate an inclusive climate where everyone in the school learns and understands family engagement research and how it connects to school improvement and student achievement.
2. Develop a mindset of respect for all families and honor their expertise about their own children.
3. View an APTT video as a school team and discuss how it may or may not fit with your school goals and vision.

[continued >](#)

<sup>1</sup> Caspe, M., Lopez, M. E., Chu, A., & Weiss, H. B. (2011). *Teaching the teachers: Preparing educators to engage families for student achievement* (Issue Brief). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.



4. Review the school-readiness criteria below to determine your school's readiness for APTT adoption and implementation.
5. Model excitement and commitment to a new and more effective approach to engaging families and how this approach will support student learning.

The following criteria are intended to help schools assess their level of readiness for APTT adoption

and implementation. Please check the criteria that currently apply to your school.

**Readiness Scale:** Tally up the number of check marks on the list of criteria. If the total number is 13–14, your school has “optimal readiness” to implement APTT; 11–12 indicates “approaching readiness” for APTT implementation; 10 and below corresponds to “not ready” for APTT implementation.

✓ Yes	Criteria for School Readiness for APTT Implementation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our school is welcoming to all families.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Families in our school receive regular updates on student academic progress.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our school team has identified meaningful family engagement as a missing essential component in school improvement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our school has determined that the APTT model is aligned to our vision for family engagement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our school principal is ready to lead and support APTT implementation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our school has time set aside for two days of initial APTT administrative and teacher professional development.
<input type="checkbox"/>	We have an instructional coach on campus ready to support teachers with APTT planning and implementation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our teachers have common grade-level planning time (PLC).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our teachers are willing to facilitate evening APTT family meetings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our school has a culture of data-driven decision-making.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our school uses ongoing assessments to evaluate student progress.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our school has the ability to invest approximately \$25/student/year for APTT implementation expenses (at-home practice materials, translation, and childcare).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our school understands the time and effort required for APTT implementation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Our school has the ability to provide teachers (who need it) with basic Excel and PowerPoint training.

# What services support APTT implementation?

WestEd's APTT facilitators work side-by-side with school and district leaders and teachers across the country, in urban and rural schools, to develop capacity for effective APTT implementation. Building meaningful partnerships with families focused on student learning and achievement takes time and requires professional training, coaching, and technical assistance. In addition to providing professional development and coaching, APTT facilitators share documents, tools, and resources to support the learning and implementation process.

## APTT Training and Support Services

- 1 Initial two-day professional development for administrators and teachers
- 2 Support teacher planning with each grade-level team  
*(Teacher planning support sessions take place three times per year during each implementation cycle.)*
- 3 Conduct APTT classroom observations alongside the school principal and instructional coach  
*(Classroom observations take place three times per year during each implementation cycle.)*
- 4 Facilitate debrief sessions and planning for improvement with school leadership team  
*(Debrief sessions take place three times per year during each implementation cycle.)*
- 5 Support principal readiness to conduct a family focus group  
*(The family focus group takes place at the end of the school year.)*



## Request a Quote for APTT Family Engagement Services

The cost for APTT school services is calculated based on the goals and needs of a school or school district. Implementation support for multiple schools in a school district provides a significant cost savings as onsite time and effort from APTT facilitators are maximized during each cycle of support to schools. To schedule a time to discuss your needs and service options please contact:

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# APTT client impact statements

## Jefferson County Public Schools (Colorado), Research and Assessment Department, 2016

The purpose and chief benefit of APTT is to make movement toward the development of meaningful academic partnerships between families and schools. This process helps create a deeper understanding of the ways in which families prefer to engage in their child's education and provides additional supports and techniques to strengthen engagement strategies at home. Feedback from schools and families involved in APTT during its 2015/16 implementation indicated that this process helped to create a deeper connection between families and schools by shifting the focus of conferences from student behavior to academics. This new focus helped schools and families begin to create a data-driven community of practice centered on supporting student learning at school and home.

## Aaron Corley, Principal, Ruth Hill Elementary School (Georgia), 2016

Our training to effectively implement Academic Parent-Teacher Teams at Ruth Hill Elementary challenged us to rethink how we defined parent engagement and streamline our efforts as a school to focus on the core business of school, which is to help students to learn, grow, and be successful. The process has helped teachers see parents as partners as they work to mentor and coach parents on how to help their child at home master grade-level skills and has helped parents build capacity and understand just how valuable they are in their child's education. The process has brought what really matters to the forefront in our school, as we truly engage parents in meaningful, student-centered dialogue that promotes common expectations and shared responsibility between all stakeholders in a child's education.

## Houston Independent School District (Texas), Implementation Report, 2015

WestEd conducted analyses to determine if there was a difference in student scores for families who were instructed in supporting their children in building word fluency skills through APTT meetings and those families who did not attend any APTT meetings. The results indicated that there is a significant difference ( $p < .03$ ) between families who attended APTT meetings 1 and 2 and those families who attended no meetings at all. This finding reveals that families who attended the combination of meetings 1 and 2 benefitted from the skills they learned and that their children showed greater improvements in word fluency assessment scores. Furthermore, it is this combination of skills families learned in APTT meetings 1 and 2 specifically that contributed to an increase in academic performance in word fluency.

## Parent Statements, Houston Independent School District (Texas), 2015

- This year my relationship was better because I was able to actually get information on how to help my child. I really liked it because the teacher gave me more information about my child and ideas to help my child at home. The teacher gave me flash cards to do at home and we did the activities at home.
- This has helped me in the way of knowing what [my child] needs to do. It has helped for me to learn how to help my child at home.
- I learned to motivate my child, it's different from how I raised my others — I love it and saw progress.



# For more information...

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## Videos

### Anchorage School District (Alaska)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wx0u7UH6p68>

### Stanton School (Washington, DC)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YNsWrFiYfY>

### New York City Schools (New York), Middle School Quality Initiative

<https://vimeo.com/169255699>

### Palm Beach County Schools (Florida)

<https://vodcast.palmbeachschools.org/player/85UEW>

## Articles

### To Reach Parents, Schools Try Universal Language of Data

*EdSource*

<https://edsources.org/2016/to-reach-parents-schools-try-universal-language-of-data/562348>

### Empowering Families to Improve Student Learning

*WestEd, R&D Alert*

<https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/1458327364rd1601-3.pdf>

### The Power of Academic Parent-Teacher Teams

*Edutopia*

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/academic-parent-teacher-teams-anne-obrien>

### Preparing Teachers to Engage Families Around Student Data

*Harvard Family Research Project, FINE Newsletter*

<http://hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/preparing-teachers-to-engage-families-around-student-data>

### Academic Parent-Teacher Teams: Reorganizing Parent-Teacher Conferences Around Data

*Harvard Family Research Project, FINE Newsletter*

<http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/academic-parent-teacher-teams-reorganizing-parent-teacher-conferences-around-data>