

School districts report to the United States Department of Education on multiple variables related to student demographics and outcomes. The Home Language Survey typically gathers information on the language used most often at home, as its name suggests. This allows school districts, the Department of Education, and others to analyze the changing demographics and current language needs and usage of all students in the United States. For example, 17% of kindergarten students across the country are identified as English learners, and the five most common home languages, in order, are Spanish (including Castilian), Arabic, Chinese, English, and Vietnamese (McFarland, 2016). Gathering this information allows districts, states, and the federal government to accurately identify students' backgrounds to ensure matches between students' backgrounds and programming.

### **Parent and Family Engagement in Current Law**

Parental involvement, a long-standing tenet of the Elementary Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), was recently strengthened through the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). The term “parental involvement” has been replaced with “parental and family engagement,” thus suggesting (and rightly so) that many family members have the potential to positively influence a child’s development. Fathers and father figures, for example, are often “left out” of important school-based conversations pertaining to their children (Noggle, 2017). Perhaps confusing to some is the fact that the ESSA does not define “family.” However, the original ESEA definition of “parent” includes parents, legal guardians, and other individuals who are standing *in loco parentis*, such as a grandparent or step-parent with whom the child lives, or a person legally responsible for the child’s welfare (ESEA, Sec. 8101, 38). ESSA’s change in nomenclature gives us pause and suggests that, as practitioners, we must expand our lens when considering who to include in formal meetings, informal conferences, day-to-day talks, and other school-related events.