

# Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT)



## APTT Overview: Linking Home and School Learning

"The basis of APTT is quite simple, but extremely powerful: when parents, teachers, and students work together with a common focus and expectation, success is within reach."

-Gina Incorvaia, APTT School Champion  
Meadow Community School, Thornton,  
CO

*"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

## A New Paradigm for Family Engagement

Effective family engagement is parent-teacher collaboration to drive student learning and achievement. School efforts to engage families must be intentional, strategic, and systematic.

Best practices in family engagement include the following criteria as outlined in the 2013 National Dual Capacity-Building Framework:

### ***Linked to Learning***



- Family engagement efforts are aligned to district and school level achievement goals, and grade level learning goals are utilized to connect families to their child's academic progress. Student goals are developed using student assessment data and school-wide goals are established to both propel and sustain family engagement efforts.

### ***Relational and Collaborative***



- Family engagement efforts are designed to build classroom community where families feel connected to the teacher and their peers. Families establish a network of support for each other.

### ***Developmental***



- Family engagement efforts build capacity of the teachers and families to work collaboratively to achieve goals that are designed to accelerate and support student academic progress. Family engagement initiatives promote high expectations for both teachers and families and produce positive results.

To successfully implement a high impact family engagement model all stakeholders have a role in the process.

To meaningfully engage families,  
**School Administrators:**

- Understand alternatives to traditional family engagement practices.
- Collaboratively create a school family engagement vision that is tied to outcomes for students.
- Build faculty capacity to effectively engage families.
- Strengthen family capacity to support targeted student learning.
- Integrate family engagement with teaching and learning.
- Adopt a model of family engagement that is results-driven.

The role of **Families** in student learning:

- Develop a collaborative partnership with their child's teacher.
- Attend informative events facilitated by the classroom teacher.
- Support student learning at home and in the community.
- Develop and maintain high expectations for academic achievement.
- Celebrate hard work and achievement.

To meaningfully engage families,  
**Teachers:**

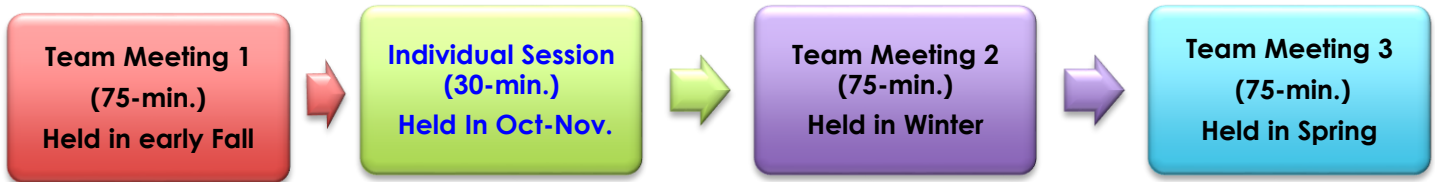
- Understand that families want their children to be successful.
- Understand that families need concrete information, skills, and resources to engage in supporting student learning.
- Understand that classroom teacher is the only direct link families have to the right information, skills, and resources they need to support their child.
- Foster a welcoming and collaborative environment for families.
- Proactively share student assessment data that is actionable.
- Set high learning expectations for students and their families.

APTT is a high-impact system of family engagement that aligns grade level learning concepts, student performance data, and family-teacher communication and collaboration. The APTT Model provides school leaders and teachers with a developmental and collaborative process for building strong relationships with families focused on student academic growth and achievement. APTT was developed by Dr. Maria C. Paredes in 2008, in Phoenix, AZ, in response to families' "need to know" how to support learning for their children. After two years of practice in nine classrooms with 247 families and students, data collection, analysis, and evaluation, the model became finalized in 2010. For this work, Dr. Paredes was awarded the Dissertation in Practice Award of 2012 from The Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate.

APTT 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. Its research-based infrastructure is rooted in aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment as it builds the capacity of educators, families, and the community to advance student achievement by linking home and school learning.

The APTT Model supplements and elevates the efforts of traditional parent conferences by expanding opportunities for families and teachers to collaborate. APTT creates a systematic pathway for teachers to share grade level information, tools, and strategies with families that can be applied at home and in the community to accelerate learning. By implementing APTT, schools take responsibility for developing and empowering families to make concrete contributions to student growth and achievement.

## THE APTT MODEL OF PARENT-TEACHER COLLABORATION



COMPONENTS AND ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE APTT MODEL	
THREE TEAM MEETINGS	ONE INDIVIDUAL SESSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome &amp; Team Building</li> <li>• Review Foundational Grade Level Skills</li> <li>• Share Data</li> <li>• Model Practice Activities and Facilitate Family Practice of Activities</li> <li>• Facilitate Setting 60-Day S.M.A.R.T. Goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build Strong Collaborative Relationships</li> <li>• Update Family of Student Academic Progress</li> <li>• Collaborate on a Plan of Action</li> </ul>

### COMPONENT #1: TEAM MEETINGS

We are stronger and smarter together than we are as individuals. This is the notion behind *Professional Learning Communities* and it is applied here to family-school partnerships. In *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Etienne Wenger shares that learning is fundamentally an interactive and social phenomenon. Our personal competence, how we experience the world, and our social development expand through interactive networks.

Educators in many schools successfully use the practice of learning and problem solving in teams. To transform schools, families and teachers need one another, together, regularly, in one place, to help deepen learning and mutual support. The APTT Model integrates this best practice to the work of meaningfully engaging families in student learning by teachers holding three, 75-minute team meetings each year. This way, important grade level information and effective home practices are learned and exchanged consistently with and among all families in the classroom.

Team meetings have three primary objectives:

- 1) Foster a safe and welcoming team environment where all families can learn from one another and share experiences and strategies that benefit the entire classroom community.
- 2) Create the opportunity for classroom teachers to share important grade level academic information, student progress data, and strategies that can help all families as they support their children in reaching high achievement goals.
- 3) Inspire collective action and responsibility for the academic progress of every child in the classroom.

To accomplish these objectives, team meetings are strategically organized into five, fifteen- minute, essential elements facilitated by the classroom teacher. Each element in the series functions as an information building block that sets the stage for the next learning element.

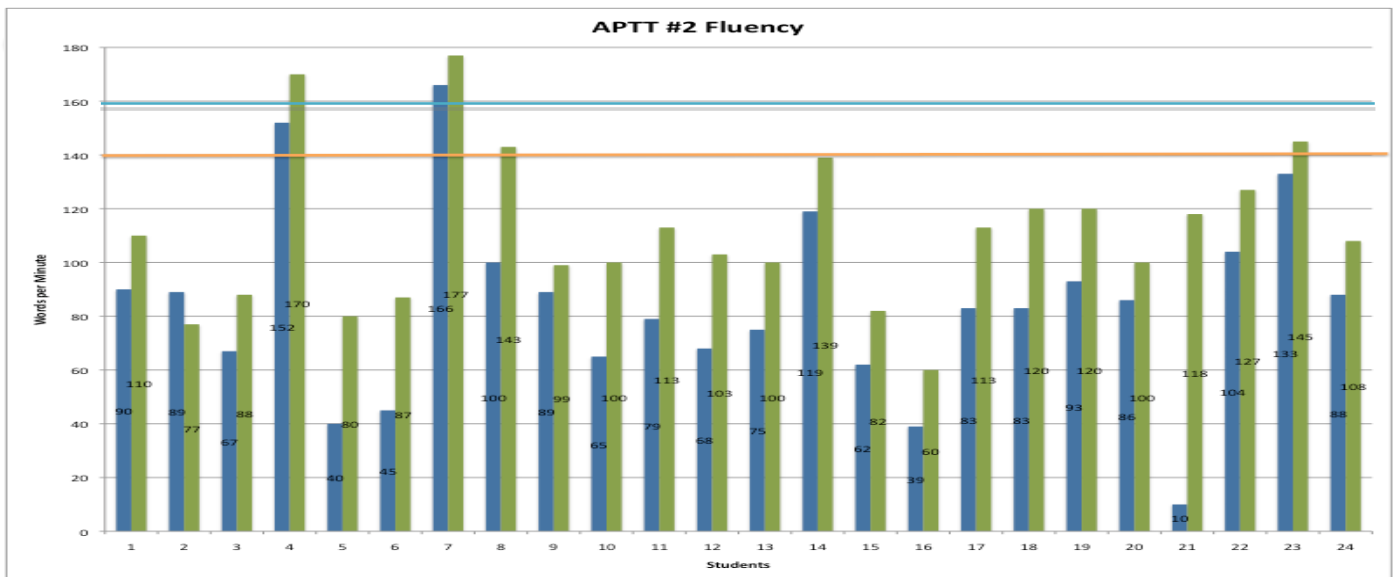
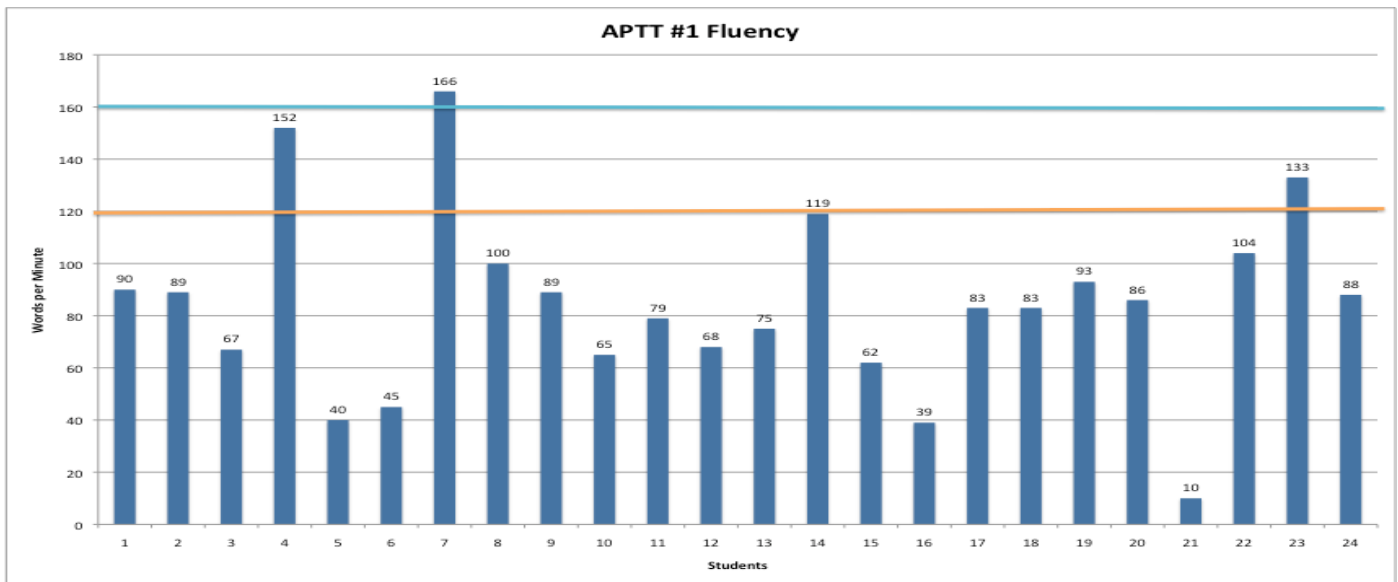
## THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF TEAM MEETINGS

- 1. WELCOME AND TEAM BUILDING:** The teacher starts the team meeting by welcoming families and acknowledging the value their role and contributions play toward student academic growth. Everyone is reminded that as a team, each person is critical to the overall success of all students in the class. To set the stage for a fun and engaging meeting, the teacher first models a team-building activity and then the teacher and the families participate in the activity. Effective and creative activities are fun and facilitate movement around the room to ensure families become better acquainted with one another. By the end of the team-building activity, families should be having fun and feeling comfortable. In team meetings two and three, the team-building activity is designed to allow families to share strategies they use at home and in the community to support and expand grade level learning concepts. The team-building element, that occurs during the team meeting serves as a first step toward building strong and meaningful relationships steeped in mutual learning and as a network for families to support each other.
- 2. REVIEW FOUNDATIONAL GRADE LEVEL SKILLS:** This element is an introduction or review of the foundational grade level skills that have been selected as the focus of the team meeting. This is followed by sharing data results collected from the assessment of students in those skills. The goal of introducing foundational grade level skills, paired with assessment results, with families is to create alignment and transparency with home and school learning. This allows families an objective view and understanding of their own child as a learner in the classroom.

Three to five skills are introduced during the course of a school year. During the first team meeting of the year, it is recommended that only one skill be introduced to allow teachers and families time to adjust to this new system of engagement. For team meetings two and three two skills are introduced, one in mathematics and one in English language arts. To select the appropriate grade level skills to share with families, the grade level team of teachers, along with the principal and instructional coach, determines the appropriate skill based on summative or formative assessment data results. The data may reveal a need to address a particular skill in all three team meetings. In addition, skills selected need to be aligned with the school achievement goals so that family engagement and parent-teacher partnerships become an integrated effort with the overall school improvement plan.

The teacher introduces each skill using family friendly language, sharing real examples of students' work, and checking for understanding each step of the way. Families need to be clear on why the skill is important, how it is used and applied in the classroom, and how it connects to the overall learning continuum in the subject area. A foundational grade level skill often supports multiple standards. The skill functions as a necessary building block for more complex standards in the subject area. When teachers make these learning connections simple and clear, families are able to apply and integrate practice and learning of the skills into everyday life.

**3. SHARE DATA:** With the introduction and explanation of each skill, student assessment data results are, in turn, shared with families using a bar graph as a visual aide that includes all students in the class. To protect the privacy of student information, each student is assigned a random number, known only by the teacher and student's family. Over and above that, the data graph incorporates two horizontal lines. One line depicts benchmark at the time of the meeting. The second line at the top of the graph depicts benchmark at the end of the year. The data graph during team meeting one, will reveal one bar per student reflecting pre-assessment results on the skill, and during team meeting two, the graph will reveal two bars per student with pre and post-assessment data results. The update on assessment results, provides families with timely feedback, and visually crystallizes the gains students make when parents and teachers work together as partners.



- o Bottom horizontal line (orange) is the current benchmark
- o Top horizontal line (teal) is the end of the year benchmark
- o Vertical bar (blue) is where the child started at the beginning of the year
- o Second vertical bar (green) represents post assessment results or growth in the skill
- o Random numbers at the bottom of the graph (x-axis) represent students
- o Numbers on the vertical side of the graph (y-axis) represent words per minute

**4. MODEL PRACTICE ACTIVITIES AND FACILITATE FAMILY PRACTICE OF ACTIVITIES:** During each team meeting, teachers model two practice activities, one for each foundational skill they introduce. For team meeting one, when only one foundational skill is introduced, both activities support practice in that skill. The activities teachers select and model during the team meeting become a foundation for the support families will provide their children. In the same way that teachers use best instructional strategies with their own students, they will use best instructional strategies to model and explain the activities to families. Using the “I do, we do, you do” modeling approach, paired with visual aides, manipulatives, and checking for understanding: first, the teacher will model how to do the activity on her own, then, she and a partner will model doing the activity together, followed by families practicing the activity with other families.

To select the best possible practice activities to share with families, ask yourself the following questions:

- Will the activity engage the student and the family for several weeks?
- Is the activity adaptable to become more challenging as students become more experienced?
- Is the activity directly developing the skill you want the students to master?

Because not all students in the class are learning and performing at the same level, it is important to differentiate the practice activities for students and their families. The skill students are trying to master is the same for the whole class, but the level and rigor of the activity should match the student's ability and build from there. The teacher explains to families how they can increase the rigor of the activity as students progress in mastery, and lets them know that more challenging activities are available when the students are ready.

Before transitioning to the next element of the meeting, teachers check for understanding by asking open-ended questions and allowing time for reflection and discussion. This way, teachers can tap into families' past experience and expertise. *Allow families to share what they know works well for them, this will add practicality and depth to the information and personalize the experience of the meeting for families.*

At this point in the meeting families have seen and experienced how the activity is put into practice and all their clarifying questions have been addressed. Teachers now provide families with the materials to start practicing with other families and which they will take with them for at home practice. Practice can be done in pairs or as table groups, ensuring that each family has the opportunity to lead and be led during the activity.

The level of efficacy that families develop with using the activities and their ability to implement at home is directly related to the time they have for practice. It is this time that solidifies learning and application of the skill. During practice time, the teacher checks with each group and connects with each family to ensure they are feeling confident to do at home practice.

**5. FACILITATE SETTING 60-DAY S.M.A.R.T. GOALS:** Each element of the meeting the teacher has facilitated to this point, has been preparing families for the final element which is setting learning goals for their child that are data-driven (O'Neil & Conzemius, 2006). Now families have a clear understanding of the grade level skill they are working to improve and why it is so important. They also know, through assessment data results, how their child has scored on the skills. Additionally, the activities the teacher modeled and their practice of those activities have given families a full and practical picture of what is necessary to do to support learning progress in the skills. Families are now prepared to move into the goal-setting portion of the meeting.

Setting S.M.A.R.T. learning goals is a common practice among educators but not among families. To help families with this practice, teachers introduce the meaning and purpose of setting goals using the S.M.A.R.T. goal protocol.

To facilitate this process, the teacher has created a S.M.A.R.T. goal template or guiding document that she will use to model, and simultaneously display the data graph as a reference for families. The teacher completes the goal template document using a visual display for families and talks through the process out loud to ensure all families understand the activity and they have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions. At this time, families complete their own goal template and the teacher walks around the room and individually connects with families to address any questions or concerns. Families complete one copy to take with them as reference and one that is left with the teacher, which used for monitoring and data collection.



### Specific

- Clearly and specifically explain what you are going to do.



### Measurable

- Define the evidence that will show that you reached the goal.



### Attainable

- With a challenging degree of difficulty but within range of your child's ability and skill.



### Results focused

- Measure outcomes and not activities.



### Time bound

- Linked to a timeframe that creates a practical sense of urgency.



## THE APTT TEAM MEETING PRESENTATION PROCESS

TIME	ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS	STRATEGIES FOR DELIVERY	EVIDENCE
15 Min.	<b>Welcome &amp; Team Building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓞ Emphasize purpose and value of APTT meetings</li> <li>Ⓞ Express gratitude to families in attendance</li> <li>Ⓞ Icebreaker activity is explained and modeled</li> <li>Ⓞ Activity gets families moving around the room</li> <li>Ⓞ Families get to know other families better</li> <li>Ⓞ Families share strategies that support learning</li> <li>Ⓞ Teacher participates with families</li> <li>Ⓞ Families are more relaxed and interactive</li> <li>Ⓞ Concluded by emphasizing the importance of building a strong, collaborative team that works together to improve student outcomes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explained purpose and value of APTT meetings</li> <li>• Explained and modeled activity</li> <li>• Explained importance of team</li> <li>• Expressed the value that each family brings to student learning</li> <li>• Emphasized the classroom as a safe space for sharing and learning</li> </ul> <p><b>Families:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All participated in activity</li> </ul>
15 Min.	<b>Review Foundational Grade Level Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓞ Clear explanation of the skills using visuals</li> <li>Ⓞ Clear explanation of why the skill is critical to grade level success and beyond</li> <li>Ⓞ Check for understanding with open ended questions and opportunity for discussion</li> <li>Ⓞ Academic vocabulary is explained in family friendly terms</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly explained the skill and why it is critical to master it (urgency)</li> <li>• Used visuals for instruction</li> <li>• Checked for understanding by asking open ended questions</li> <li>• Allowed think/process time</li> </ul>
15 Min.	<b>Share Data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓞ Clear explanation of how to read the bar graph</li> <li>Ⓞ Clear explanation on how to interpret data</li> <li>Ⓞ Families are clear that data is actionable</li> <li>Ⓞ Families use graph and assessment in the family folder to follow instructions and find their student</li> <li>Ⓞ Check for understanding with open ended questions and opportunity for discussion</li> <li>Ⓞ Families examine and discuss data outcomes</li> <li>Ⓞ High expectations are clearly articulated</li> <li>Ⓞ Families are informed that follow-up data will be available to them at the next APTT meeting</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly explained and modeled how to read the graph in its entirety</li> <li>• Clearly explained and modeled how to interpret the data</li> <li>• Gave opportunities for questions and discussion</li> <li>• Set high expectations (urgency)</li> <li>• Took time to celebrate student growth (APTT 2 &amp; 3)</li> </ul>
15 Min.	<b>Model Practice Activities &amp; Facilitate Family Practice of Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓞ Two activities are modeled and practiced</li> <li>Ⓞ Use visuals and manipulatives to model activities</li> <li>Ⓞ Use the “I Do, We Do, You Do” teaching strategies</li> <li>Ⓞ Check for understanding with open ended questions and opportunity for team discussion</li> <li>Ⓞ Ask families to provide ideas for extending the activity for added challenge</li> <li>Ⓞ Circulate around the room and interact with families to ensure engagement and understanding</li> <li>Ⓞ Encourage help and support among families</li> <li>Ⓞ Encourage families to contact the teacher anytime they have questions or need additional resources</li> <li>Ⓞ Activity is wrapped up by emphasizing the value of practice and good study habits at home</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modeled two activities using visuals</li> <li>• Used “I do, we do, you do” strategy for modeling</li> <li>• Checked for understanding with open ended questions and dialogue</li> <li>• Interacted with families and ensured engagement and understanding during practice</li> </ul> <p><b>Families:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practiced two activities</li> <li>• Expressed confidence with using activities at home</li> </ul>
15 Min.	<b>Facilitate Setting 60-Day S.M.A.R.T. Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ⓞ Model S.M.A.R.T. goal-setting by providing a visual example using a fictitious student on the graph and completing the goal template for all to see</li> <li>Ⓞ Check for understanding with open ended questions and opportunity for team discussion</li> <li>Ⓞ Express high expectations and encourage rigor</li> <li>Ⓞ Articulate urgency, ownership, and accountability</li> <li>Ⓞ Tell families that you believe they can do it</li> <li>Ⓞ Collect the teacher copy of the family goal</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teacher:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modeled goal-setting</li> <li>• Checked for understanding</li> <li>• Supported families as they wrote their goals</li> </ul> <p><b>Families:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully completed goal sheet and turned in teacher copy</li> </ul>

## COMPONENT #2: INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS

The same way that learning is an interactive and social phenomenon, parental role construction is shaped socially, and it is subject to change. It is created from parents' experiences over time with individuals and groups related to schooling. These often include the parents' personal experiences with schooling, prior experiences with involvement, and ongoing experiences with other parents and teachers related to the child's schooling (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Hoover-Dempsey, 2005, also argues that parents' self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1997) is a significant factor. Parents make decisions about active engagement based on their appraisal of their own knowledge and ability to influence the outcomes for their children's schooling.

Given that learning, parents' self-efficacy, and parents' role construction for engagement are socially constructed, the APTT Model gets at the heart of development and capacity building at the group and individual level. The first team meeting, in early fall, provides families, in a social setting, concrete knowledge, skills, and strategies to be meaningfully engaged. The 30-minute individual session between the student, the teacher, and the student's family, in the fall, provides individualized, personal support. Individual sessions lend an opportunity for families and teachers to deepen their relationship as partners, discuss the student's progress at home and at school, and to collaboratively create a course of action to support growth and improvement.

### THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF INDIVIDUAL SESSION

- 1. BUILD STRONG COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS:** Dauber and Epstein, 1993, reported that teachers' invitations and encouragement to families were the strongest predictors of family engagement in the elementary and middle schools. Individual sessions offer personal time, where families and teachers can get to know one another and share the humanness that connects them to the child. This relationship building is highly consequential, as they, together, influence and shape a child's love, motivation, and mindset for learning and personal effort.
- 2. UPDATE FAMILY ON STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRESS:** At this time, the family and the teacher update one another on the progress, at home and school, toward the S.M.A.R.T. goals that were set during the first team meeting. This offers an opportunity to monitor and adjust. In some cases, families are ready for more challenging practice materials or want tips for increasing rigor. In other cases, families need additional school-based support. In this case, together, the family and teacher may uncover a need for tutoring, counseling, testing, or additional family learning opportunities. The collaborative nature of individual sessions works to empower families and teachers to take appropriate and timely action on behalf of the student.
- 3. COLLABORATE ON A PLAN OF ACTION:** The context and outcomes of the conversation on progress, determines the plan of action. At this juncture, the teacher and the family come to consensus on the remediation or enrichment that is appropriate for the child. The action plan makes next steps clear and concrete, and it describes how these steps will be put into practice.

The action plan describes:

- **What** actions or changes will occur
- **Who** will carry out these changes
- **By when** they will take place, and for how long
- **What resources or support** are needed to carry out these changes
- **Communication protocol** that updates the family and the teacher on progress

A written plan of action solidifies, in concrete terms, the partnership as a collaborative strategy that puts the child first.

# APTT Individual Meeting Process

TIME	ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS	STRATEGIES FOR DELIVERY	EVIDENCE
10 Min.	<b>Build Strong Collaborative Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⑥ Express gratitude to family for making time to meet</li> <li>⑥ Emphasize purpose and value of collaboration</li> <li>⑥ Help student and family feel relaxed</li> <li>⑥ Ask family about their goals and dreams for the child</li> <li>⑥ Discover the student’s interests beyond academics</li> <li>⑥ Get to know the family at a personal level</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expressed gratitude to family for taking time to meet</li> <li>• Invited personal conversation</li> <li>• Included in conversation</li> </ul> <p><b>Families:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share goals for their child</li> <li>• Share personal stories</li> </ul>
10 Min.	<b>Update Family on Student Academic Progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⑥ Ask family about progress on 60-day S.M.A.R.T. goals</li> <li>⑥ Ask family to share how learning time is structured at home and how it is working for the student and the family</li> <li>⑥ Recognize family support efforts</li> <li>⑥ Provide family with samples of updated student work and assessments related to their goal and other areas</li> <li>⑥ Show families what students are learning in class; tell them about expected outcomes</li> <li>⑥ Create dialogue and exchange ideas and strategies</li> <li>⑥ Tell families about assessments coming up, why they are important, what is tested, how items are tested, when the testing dates are</li> <li>⑥ Give families exact strategies for helping to prepare their child</li> <li>⑥ Set high expectations for assessment outcomes</li> <li>⑥ Be open, honest, and supportive</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requested update on at home practice</li> <li>• Provided update on skill progress in the classroom</li> <li>• Shared samples of student work (poor, good, best)</li> <li>• Included the student in conversation</li> <li>• Created ongoing dialogue</li> <li>• Updated families on upcoming assessments and share strategies for preparation</li> </ul> <p><b>Families:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed student progress</li> <li>• Engaged in two-way communication</li> </ul>
10 Min.	<b>Collaborate on Student Academic Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⑥ Outline a collaborative plan for meeting or exceeding 60-day academic goals</li> <li>⑥ In writing, provide family with next steps for support</li> <li>⑥ Ensure family is clear on the expectations and feels confident about what they need to do to achieve the goals</li> <li>⑥ Check for understanding with open ended questions and opportunity for discussion</li> <li>⑥ Secure additional academic assistance and support if needed</li> <li>⑥ Remind the family that they are not alone, improvement is a team effort</li> <li>⑥ Encourage family to contact the teacher anytime they have questions or need additional resources</li> <li>⑥ Give the family ideas for fun, free, or low-cost activities to do as a family (e.g., show them games they can play together, movies to see, “story time” at the library, community sports, and the zoo).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outlined in writing a plan of collaborative action</li> <li>• Reviewed mutual expectations</li> <li>• Checked for understanding with open ended questions and dialogue</li> <li>• Included the student in conversation</li> <li>• Offered additional assistance at the family’s request</li> </ul> <p><b>Families:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulated that they are clear with next steps</li> <li>• Expressed confidence about being able to do the work</li> </ul>