During the 23-24 school year, staff in Denver Public Schools created the first UIP Family Engagement Playbook. This initiative was a group effort led by DPS' School & Unified Improvement Planning department and the Family and Community Engagement (FACE) team. The goal of this playbook is to provide school leaders with a guide on how to engage and share power with their families during the UIP process. The playbook provides background on the importance of family participation in improvement planning and three different ways that schools could go about engaging their families: 1) creating a UIP family task force, 2) conducting empathy interviews, and 3) administering family surveys.

The playbook begins by explaining why diverse perspectives from families are important in the improvement planning process. Throughout the playbook, leaders are provided with many tools and resources including mock agendas, before/during/after meeting checklists, meeting best practices, family outreach strategies, and more. Leaders are also given templates and tips on learning new skills around empathy interviews, developing effective surveys, and analyzing survey results. playbook concludes with additional resources that the FACE team can provide to schools including consultation support, slideshow templates, an event planning toolkit, and more.

The playbook received high praise when the School & Unified Improvement Planning Manager shared it with school staff in February 2024. Because the playbook is such a new resource, the plan is to follow-up with school leaders to learn more about what was most helpful and what could be improved for the next year. The biggest challenge throughout the creation of this playbook was creating low-lift, high-impact strategies to share with school leaders.

For any district wanting to create their own UIP Family Engagement Playbook, be sure to think about which parts of the UIP process makes sense for families to be engaged and create resources and tools for school leaders that are easy and ready to use. Also, do not be afraid to include other experts along the way to provide material and feedback prior to creating the final version.