

Space Launch



A Metaphor for Family, School, and Community Engagement.

The main idea:

Effective family, school, and community engagement works like mission control, launching children's learning.

In more detail:

Just as many engineers, scientists, and mathematicians must work together to launch rockets into space, families, schools, and communities need to work together to launch children's learning. Like a team at "mission control," families, schools, and communities need to engage with each other to plan, implement, and complete their shared mission of children's successful learning. Regular, reliable communication and engagement by everyone involved helps learning take off, helping children to reach their goals.

Use *Space Launch* to explain key aspects of engagement:

- Compare the learning process to a rocket that must be launched to explain how successful learning relies on engagement
- Talk about engagement as "mission control" to show how it is an ongoing, dynamic activity that relies on communication and teamwork
- Equate the many different but vital roles of teachers, parents, community organizations, and others involved in engagement to the many specialists involved in a space launch, e.g., scientists, engineers, mathematicians
- Explain how ineffective policies and practices hold students back, just as gravity keeps rockets on the ground

Why talk about engagement this way?

- Expands thinking about engagement to include more than just discipline or occasional parent-teacher conferences
- Makes it easier to see engagement as a policy issue, not just a matter of individual parents and teachers
- Builds understanding of the role of contexts and environments in supporting students' learning

Flip Me Over >

Check out the other side of this sheet for practice using the *Space Launch* metaphor.

Framing Practice



Time to Get Creative!

The *Space Launch* metaphor can be used to explain many aspects of family, school, and community engagement. Practice using the *Space Launch* metaphor to talk about engagement by filling in the sample metaphor extensions in the table below.

Sample: If engagement is a space launch...	...Then improved learning is the mission
Sample: If learning is the rocket being launched...	...Then mission control is made up of families, schools, and communities
If everyone in mission control stays in constant communication to launch the rocket...	...Then schools will... [Fill in the blank]
If a mission control team has regular meetings...	[Fill in the blank]
If gravity is a force that has to be overcome to launch a rocket...	[Fill in the blank]

Next Level Framing

Use these reflection questions to consider how the *Space Launch* metaphor can be incorporated into your messaging.

- Community partners work together to launch a rocket successfully. What kinds of community partnerships—common goals, sharing responsibility, contributing funding—are you focused on?
- Think about the engagement practices you want to adopt or strengthen. What part of a space launch do they best match? For example, planning and preparation for a mission? Coordinating and partnering with other people working on a mission? Preparing for lift-off? Monitoring a mission in progress?
- Can you give an example of how policy supports the work of mission control (engagement) and makes a launch (student learning) possible?

Flip Me Over

Check out the other side of this sheet for more information about the *Space Launch* metaphor and how it can strengthen your messages about engagement.