

Tips for Creating Effective Parent and Family Engagement Programs

Please note that we are using the words parent and family interchangeably. Anywhere you read parent(s), include family(ies), and vice versa.

Be sure that the parent and family engagement programs in each school ...

- Involve parents of students at all grade levels in a variety of roles at home and in the school building.
- Are comprehensive and coordinated in nature.
- Recognize that communication between home and school must be regular, two-way, and meaningful.

Have each school prepare family kits which consist of:

- The school's parent and family engagement program.
- The recommended role of the parent, student, teacher, and school.
- Ways for the parents to become involved at home as well as at school.
- Activities planned throughout the school year to encourage parent and family engagement.
- A description of the system which allows parents and teachers to communicate in a regular, two way, and meaningful manner.

Each school can:

- Encourage communication with parents by scheduling **no less than two** parent-teacher conferences per year. Plan and engage in other activities determined by the school to be beneficial to encourage communication with parents.
- Purchase parenting books, magazines, and other informative materials regarding responsible parenting through the school library, advertise the current selection, and give parents an opportunity to borrow the materials for review.
- Create parent centers.
- Plan and engage in other activities determined by the school to be beneficial to promoting and supporting responsible parenting.
- Schedule regular "Parent Make the Difference" evenings where parents are given a report on the state of the school and an overview of: What students will be learning; How students will be assessed; What parents should expect for their child's education.
- How can parents assist at home and at school, and make a difference in their child's education? Remove any school, policies or procedures that would discourage a parent from visiting the school, specifically including:
 - Policies requiring parents to pick-up their child outside the school building.
 - Policies prohibiting the parents from visiting a child's classroom during

school events.

- Publish a volunteer resource book, listing the interests and availability of volunteers for school staff members' use, specifically including:
 - Survey parents regarding their interests, for developing volunteer activities.
 - Determine how frequently a volunteer would like to participate, including the option for those who are available to help at home.
 - Use the resource book to help match school needs with volunteer interests.
- Frequently publish the school's process for resolving parental concerns, including how to define the problem, who to approach first, and how to develop solutions.
- Engage in other activities that the school determines will encourage parents to participate as full partners in the decisions that affect their child and family.
- Contact alumni from the school to create an Alumni Advisory Commission to provide advice and guidance for school improvement.
- Develop paycheck size cards with tips for how parents can foster their child's success, with explicit examples of at home and at school activities, and contact employers about including the cards with employee paychecks.
- Designate one willing staff member, or hire a parent in your school, to serve as a family facilitator. The goals of this family facilitator would include organizing meaningful training for staff and parents that promotes and encourages a welcoming atmosphere for parent and family engagement in the school, and undertaking efforts to ensure that parent and family participation is recognized as an asset to the school.

At the District Level...

- Require a minimum number of hours of professional development opportunities for teachers, staff and administrators designed with the input of parents, and created to enhance understanding of parent and family engagement. Such professional develop may be included for Act 48 credit, and could include subjects such as:
 - Effective parent and family engagement strategies.
 - The importance of administrative leadership in setting expectations and creating a climate conducive to parent and family participation.