
Family Panel



2014

Teachers will Be Able To:

- ☐ Identify actions that can shape the direction (positive or negative) of family engagement
- ☐ Develop a vision for building relationships with families and be able to take initial steps towards that vision

Guiding Principles of Family Engagement

- Building relationships with parents is a fundamental responsibility for teachers and bolsters scholar achievement over the course of their academic career.
- The family-teacher relationship is a partnership; the balance of power and expertise does not weigh more heavily on one or the other.
- The family-teacher relationship is most powerful when it is a solutions-based partnership when defensiveness or blame is absent.
- Our previous experiences or biases shape the perspectives we have about family engagement and can lead to assumptions about what parents care about or believe in, particularly families of color or from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- It is important that your relationships are authentic to who you are as a person.

Family Engagement: Please use the space below to capture notes from the Family Panel.

Actions that positively impacted the relationship	Actions that negatively impacted the relationship	Other Notes/Takeaways

Vision Setting: Imagine it is July of next year and one of your parents has been asked to speak at the parent panel for new staff training. How will you want that parent to describe their relationship and partnership with you? What actions will this parent remember that made them feel valued and included in the education of their child? You can either free write in the blank box or use the table below.

Free- Write

OR

How will parents feel about their interactions with me? How do I want them to describe me?	What actions will I consistently demonstrate to make that vision a reality?

NEXT STEPS: Use the chart below to reflect on how you will personally commit to building a strong partnership with parents. Brainstorming Questions:

- What information do I want to learn about scholars, families, and the community of our school? How will I purposefully gather that information?
- What actions do I want to demonstrate during my interactions with scholars and parents? How will I gather feedback on how I am doing?
- What actions from my vision do I need to make more specific and actionable?
- How can I learn from teachers that have already built relationships with scholars and families?

SAMPLE

Specific Next Steps	Possible Pitfalls	Ways I will ensure I keep my commitment?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a deadline to introduce myself to all families by the end of September. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will get tired at the end of sessions/end of the day and will just want to go home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a sustainable schedule to call every parent (2 parents/per night). • Send an outlook invite to myself for September 30th to keep this on my radar. • Share my goal with my coach to keep me accountable.

Specific Next Steps	Possible Pitfalls	Ways I will ensure I keep my commitment?

Resources

Promise and Pitfalls: Setting you up for success in Family Engagement

Promising Practices in Family Engagement

1. Communicate regularly throughout the school year, not only when there is a concern.

This should be guided by the fun activities happening in the classroom or the stand out things that a scholar does that day. Create opportunities to let your families know that you are truly getting to know their children as people.

2. Take an interest inventory during your introductory calls.

- a. How does this parent prefer to hear great/not so great news about their scholar? Email? Phone? In-person?
- b. How does this parent want to feel involved? Classroom volunteer? Field Trip Chaperone? Career Day Speaker?

3. Schedule an early conversation with families whose scholars have unique behavioral and learning needs.

The purpose of the meeting is to collaboratively create meeting /communication norms and to establish a positive relationship even in the face of a sensitive topic.

Based on our conversation with families, what ideas might we add to this list?

Pitfalls to Avoid

1. Making assumptions about why a parent has not attended school events/parent teacher conferences

Making the school a positive and inviting place to be will attract families. Be creative in figuring out the different opportunities you can offer to families that bring them into the building outside of the parent/teacher conference that helps to associate positive feelings to the school building and the people in them.

2. Treating all families the same

Just as we recognize that scholars need different things, so do our families. Not all parents want to be engaged in the same way. It is up to us to ask questions and find out from our families what resonates with them (see interest inventory)

3. Avoiding or delaying difficult conversations with families

This is especially true when the parent wants to have the conversation. If a parent stops you in the hallway or at an inconvenient time, let them know that you value what they have to say so much that you want to be sure to give them your 100% attention. Then, suggest a few times that work well for you when they can have a phone or in-person meeting with you. Keep that time sacred as much as you can.

Based on our conversation with families, what ideas might we add to this list?