

Tier 2 Notes: Family Engagement



SPP Community Meeting - Family Engagement

November 22, 2014, 10:00am – 12:30pm

Key objectives

- Identify best practices for family engagement
- Share community partnership strategies

Question 1: What are some of the strategies used to engage families?

- Why do they work?
- When they don't work, what are the challenges?

Strategies Used to Engage Families - by Theme

1. Theme: Meeting families where they are
 - Home Visits
2. Theme: Holding meetings and conferences
 - Parent meetings x3
 - Family/Parent Teacher Conferences x2
3. Theme: Offering accessibility for families
 - Open door policy
 - Offering Childcare for meetings and events
 - Providing Food for meetings and events
4. Theme: Providing a platform for families to give input and feedback
 - PTA
 - Open door policy (repeat from accessibility)
 - FEAT – Family Engagement Action Team
5. Theme: Engaging families with social events
 - Family Nights
 - Cultural
 - Student Performances
 - Parent social connectors
 - Dances
6. Theme: Engaging families with educational events
 - Open House x2

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- Orientation
 - Orientations/Program expectations
 - Family Strengthening Training
 - Info night 1-10x/year
 - Subject-focused
 - Curriculum Nights
 - Cooking classes
 - “Bullying Seminar”
7. Theme: Providing information using other modes of communications
- Phone calls, emails, text
 - Family/school communications: newsletters, bulletins
 - Newsletter
8. Theme: Inviting families to engage with volunteer opportunities
- Field trips (volunteering) x2
 - Volunteer opportunities
 - Fundraising
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Why these strategies work – by Theme

1. Theme: Build meaningful relationships with and between families
- Build relationships
 - Parent networking
 - Build parent confidence
 - Home Visits:
 - Can build trust.
 - Relationship-based.
 - One on one, child focus, insight for all parties.
 - Parent social connectors
 - Natural leaders (can be teacher or administrator) and eliminates isolation.
2. Theme: Create a sense of community
- Build community
 - Families feel welcomed and valued
 - When families feel involved
 - Teacher connection
 - School-home connections
 - Create sense of fun with meaningfulness
 - Engaging activities
 - Fun
 - Invitation process using the kids

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3. Theme: Offer non-traditional ways of engaging families
 - Engaging families in non-traditional settings:
 - Church
 - Mosques
 - Community Centers
 - Farmers Market
 - Curriculum Nights
 - International Potlucks
 4. Theme: Honor cultural differences
 - Translation/interpreters
 - Translation/interpreters
 - ESL
 - “Graduation”
 5. Theme: Make engagement accessible for families
 - Food x2
 - Childcare
 - Available for their schedule
 - Evening events
 - Home visits
 - Phone check-in’s
 - Various modes of communication (phone, email)
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What are the challenges with these strategies – by Theme

1. Theme: Involve families in planning engagement strategies
 - Solution is not to “train” parents to be better parents.
 - Lack of families involved in the planning (doesn’t meet families’ needs and families don’t feel ownership)
 - Families blamed when not successful
2. Theme: Provide more opportunities for accessibility
 - Attendance/Participation
 - Timing (date/time of day)
 - Conflicting schedules
 - Get usual suspects attending – never get hardest to reach families, shallow touch.
 - Not enough notice
 - Flexibility
3. Theme: Families face challenges and barriers to engagement that include childcare, transportation and employment responsibilities

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- Lack of transportation x2
 - Different economic levels – multiple jobs
 - Working 2 jobs
 - Childcare
 - Need childcare to attend events
 - Lack of childcare especially for infant and toddlers
4. Theme: Allocate a reasonable budget for family engagement
- Food
 - Staffing – lack of subbing staffing for home visits, OT
 - Budget – additional funds for training, supplies, staff
 - Better family-leave policy – more paid-time off for parents.
5. Theme: Address cultural competency and language barriers
- Communication, language barriers (some languages are not writing-based)
 - Language barrier x2
 - Language barriers, using kids as interpreters, anxiety provoking, relies on skilled communication by teacher which is no always present
 - Language differences
 - Training/Workshops – Not working: language, cultural challenges
 - Cultural Competency- Help parents understand/navigate dual-cultures (native vs US)
 - Cultural barriers
 - Cultural differences
 - Some cultures not involved traditionally in school
 - Parent social connectors:
 - Challenge – Bias, racism
6. Theme: Provide greater transparency and inclusiveness
- PTA and \$, name recognition, support of community and administration. Challenge: elitist, cliquey, Roberts Rules, can be intimidating
 - Home visits/conferences:
 - Expensive, can foster mistrust, can be siloed, apart from pre-k, K-12.
 - Uncomfortable, power dynamics, intrusive.
7. Theme: Offer communication support and resource referral
- Best mode of communication
 - Connecting providers with school district to smooth kindergarten transitions
 - Lack of extended network
 - Challenge: Mail fatigue (flyers)
8. Theme: Explore other approaches that work for the kids
- The wrong philosophy/approach “deficit-model”
 - Need to include measure of love and quality time with kids (not just vocabulary)
 - Community Programs like Play and Learn

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- Why they work: in neighborhoods, strength-based, low cost or free, start early
 - Challenges – not evidence-based, not at scale
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Question 2: What policies, procedures or practices are needed to support family engagement?

1. Theme: Provide a welcoming and inclusive environment
 - Welcoming environment within classroom and school (policy and practice).
 - Parent space within building or classroom
 - Prioritize relationship-building with parents, starting at enrollment.
 - Home Visits – gain comfort level between parents and educators; get to know families.
 - Events that are all family inclusive.
 - Build parent confidence through experiences.
2. Theme: Create and implement policies and practices around flexible engagement
 - Meeting times/places at times that can include working people and working childcare providers.
 - Open door policy
 - Flexibility in participation rather than mandating parents to be involved. Encouragement is key!
3. Theme: Create policies and procedures that support and ensure family input
 - If you don't state it and write it down, it's as if it doesn't exist – therefore, must have policies stating family input and voice are needed and provide \$\$ recognition (pay childcare, mileage costs).
 - Creating a budget for family engagement
 - Designate the budget
 - Inviting families input on
 - Consider networking across providers to leverage resources.
 - Family Input: But also, families need to be part of decision-making, governance and advisory boards.
 - Encourage parents to gain deeper understanding of ECE and potential career pathways.
 - More comprehensive family leave policy –
 - Program needs to be conscious of burden on families (e.g. financial, time, transportation).
 - Family engagement support beyond preschool.
4. Theme: Develop effective and comprehensive communication policies
 - Policy regarding communication.
 - Communication
 - Active listening.
 - Be aware of your communication style.
 - Child development.
 - Two-way conversation about the system.

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- Sharing and identifying responsibility.
 - How to create a shared agreement about goals and expectations.
 - Regular availability of language assistance.
 - Connecting families and educators in other settings; social connection.
 - Preschool for 3 and 4 year olds.
5. Theme: Provide training and professional development for teachers and staff
- Include family partnership why's and how's in teacher and administrator training.
 - Policy regarding home visits-
 - Training supporting practices such as home visits.
 - Training for Teachers
 - Cultural competency, inter racism
 - Meeting families where they are at
 - Child development
 - Teacher introduction (bio/poster/pictures) – School staff included
6. Theme: Implement policies, procedures and practices that address and reflect diversity, language and cultural differences
- Interpreters and translation.
 - Hiring practices regarding diversity of staff (staff reflect the community served):
 - Bilingual (multi-lingual)
 - Multi-racial
 - Disseminate all info in multiple languages and venues.
 - In-language resources: online, books, information, data.
 - Regular availability of language assistance (repeat).
7. Theme: Implement procedures that allow families to engage with each other and share information
- Connect families with each other –
 - Social activities
 - Directory
 - Introductions
 - A way to vet childcare quality – parent reviews?
 - Planning volunteer opportunities and parent training.
 - System navigators – childcare, pre-k, family support, early learning.
 - Connecting families and educators in other settings; social connection. (repeat)
8. Theme: Other recommendations
- Food Works.
 - Gender divide.
 - Digital divide.
 - FLASH. Child sex education and development is needed.