

Family Engagement Checklist

Climate

- Family members feel comfortable entering the space.
 - It is accessible.
 - When individuals enter my building, the front office is easy to find.
 - If they are arriving for an event, there clear signs to direct them where they're headed.
 - TIP: Consider taping signs or lines on the floor for an extra-easy path.
- Every person who walks into the front office is acknowledged and greeted, always, without exception.
 - TIP: Help front office staff work out a "script" for welcoming people, in case they aren't sure what to say. Have some fun and personalize this greeting with your school's mascot, values, or themes!
- The space is one where family members are invited to spend time.
 - There are things on the walls for family members to look at.
 - TIP: Consider student artwork, bulletin boards about classroom activities and student projects, and school norms presented a friendly and welcoming manner.
- The office is a warm and welcoming space.
 - If family members need to wait in an office, there are seats that can accommodate diverse bodies.
 - There is a specific space where flyers, posters, and announcements are regularly updated. Office staff know they can point people toward that space for extra information.

Strategy

- Family engagement starts every year on a positive note.
 - During the first month of school, work with all school staff to make sure every family gets a phone call welcoming them (not just their student) to the new school year.
 - Use this opportunity to make sure family members have access to necessary contact information for building leadership and their student's teacher(s).
- Family engagement events are planned regularly throughout the school year.

- Parents can always take a look at an online calendar to see what is coming up so that they have plenty of time to plan (at least two-three weeks in advance).
- Events are well communicated.
 - The school website stays up to date with event information so families know it is a resource they can trust.
 - If flyers are sent home, they are sent at least a week in advance and never only the night before.
 - Multiple communication channels are used to communicate events including your website, robo calls, and social media.
 - Event communication is clear and helps families know what is expected of them at different events. (Do they need to bring a dish to pass? Will they be sitting in an auditorium or outside for a picnic? Will they be walking and, if so, have you made accommodations for different abilities?)
 - TIP: Actively encourage ways they can plan to participate such as bringing cameras to performances or asking their child to lead them in a tour).
- Events are always assessed for success after the fact.
 - Unless you need a sign in sheet, try to just get a head count of attendees.
 - Event planners find time the following day to talk through (and ideally, write down) what worked and what could be changed about that particular event. These notes can be referenced year after year.
 - Family members thoughts about events are always welcomed and documented.
 - TIP: Provide post it and encourage attendees to write an “exit ticket” with either their favorite part of the event or something they would tweak for the future. Collect these notes and use them for planning.
- There are a variety of event options from classroom level to full school level throughout the year.
 - Family engagement events include curriculum nights, student performances, social times, planning meetings, and information sessions.
 - Events occur both in the mornings and evenings to accommodate different schedules.
 - Event options are both structured and unstructured to meet the interests of different people.

Needs

- Family members are routinely asked what kinds of engagement experiences they are interested in.
 - This happens through phone calls, paper surveys sent home, online portals, social media polls, and suggestion boxes in offices and classrooms.

- TIP: When you plan an event in response to a suggestion, (with permission) share whose idea it was! Let family members know that an event was their peer's idea and it may resonate more than if it came from school staff.
- Family engagement events include community partners that serve your school's families.
 - The school building can be the perfect hub for connecting families to those things they need.
- If your location offers extra services like a clothing closet or food pantry, work to make sure those resources are discrete, but easy to access.
 - All staff members should know about and be able to help family members access resources. Looping in extra people or spending time finding information can make family members feel uncomfortable and create unnecessary barriers.

Inclusion

- When families come to engagement events, they are the most important people in the room.
 - Name tags are always provided. Staff make sure to try to address family members by name and encourage them to get to know each other.
 - TIP: Provide colored markers and stickers to encourage creativity with name tags. Let family members show their unique personalities!
- During group activities staff frequently model how to pull in hesitant or quieter family members.
- Student voices are valued and included in family engagement events.
 - Students can be invited to open events with a performance, help facilitate meetings, and share their unique perspectives when planning for the future.
- Staff members are frequently reminded that events may include individuals from many cultures and to never make assumptions about why someone is behaving in unexpected ways.
 - Things like eye contact, shaking hands, and speaking in front of groups can be new or challenging experiences for some individuals.
 - TIP: Staff facilitators frequently invite people to engage by defining that engagement as both speaking out and quietly taking in information. Let people know that their presence is always welcomed and appreciated, without judgement.
- Staff members work to provide multi-lingual channels of communications
 - Try to get fliers translated to include languages other than English.
 - Record robocalls in additional languages, and state at the beginning that an alternate language recording will be read, encouraging families to listen and not hang up.

- TIP: Students are an excellent resource for this. Student leaders and volunteers may be interested in working with staff to translate and speak their language, helping their own families and others.

Processing

- Family members are given opportunities to process information they receive
 - Opportunities to ask questions during the event
 - Opportunities to discuss with other family members
 - Opportunities (and contact information) to reach out later in the future with any questions or concerns
- Families are encouraged to discuss information they have received, discussion prompts, and other topics with their students.
- Staff members model different ways to process information and provide prompts to encourage thought.
 - Things like exit tickets, anonymous drop boxes with “one thing I am still wondering is...” slips of paper, and opportunities to poll the room are all useful strategies in helping individuals work through and retain information.