

# Engaging Families:

## *Supporting Student Success with Family-School Partnerships*

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# Goals for today:

Focus on

Our number one priority-the child/student

Discuss

Current family involvement activities in the schools

Examine

Ways to build relationships between school staff and families

Share

Share tips for supporting student learning

## Every Student

Our number one priority and focus

*All eyes and efforts need to be on meeting the ever-changing needs of the student.*

# Decades of research supports the importance of parent involvement in improving student success

## Benefits:

- Better attendance
- Higher academic achievement
- Improved social behaviors
- Increased adaptability and acceptance of change
- More involvement in extra-curricular activities
- Higher graduation rates
- Greater post-secondary enrollment

# Parent Involvement Takes on Many Different Forms

- Informing parents about a child's progress
- Regular communication with teachers
- Understanding student strengths, needs and progress
- Providing homework help
- Reinforcing learning goals at home
- Attending parent-teacher conferences
- Volunteering

# Family-School Partnership



Family Engagement



Parent Involvement

# Parent Involvement:

Refers to the amount of participation a parent has when it comes to schooling and their child's educational life

- Relationship building
- Focus on amount rather than quality

# Family Engagement:

- ▶ Collaborative and strength-based process that builds positive and goal-oriented relationships
- ▶ More qualitative focus and a connection to student strengths, needs and goals
- ▶ Systemic and intentional approach
- ▶ Greater number of families impacted and can lead to increased student success



# Family-School Partnerships:

- ▶ Family-school partnerships go a step further by embracing a belief system that families are equal partners in the education of their children
- ▶ In addition to a systemic and intentional approach, it is **embedded** throughout school improvement initiatives rather than a stand-alone program

# Literature on effective family/school partnerships:

- Linked to learning
- Includes a strong relationship basis
- Involves a developmental component
- Builds a welcoming educational culture

*Let's look at each of these components.....*

# Linked to learning:

- Families want and need:
  - To be connected to the academic, social/behavioral and learning goals of their children
  - To “be in the know” about classroom activities and learning goals

## Strong relationship basis:

- ▶ Focus on building strong, respectful and trusting home/school relationships
- ▶ We inherit relationships based on previous experiences- *don't take it personally*
- ▶ Remain aware of the many roles and responsibilities parents must fill

## Developmental component: focus on building the knowledge base and social capacity of all involved

- ▶ Effective family/school relationships must be built.
- ▶ *Family involvement is NOT one size fits all.* When parents have a question about school practices or policies...they need to ask.
  - ▶ *Parents should be considered a resource to school staff.*
  - ▶ *Acknowledge and affirm parent contributions and the positive impact they have on their child's development.*

# Needs and responsibilities of parents:

- ▶ Often parents initially struggle accepting a child's diagnosis/identification- please be patient and supportive
- ▶ Need for information regarding the child's disability and services
- ▶ Need for resources
- ▶ Need for social/emotional supports
- ▶ Need for affirmation of contributions
- ▶ Need for more control
- ▶ Parent/care giver
- ▶ On-call 24 hours a day
- ▶ Educational advocate
- ▶ Health care advocate
- ▶ Health care provider
- ▶ Social/emotional resource
- ▶ Parent of other children
- ▶ Partner/wife/husband
- ▶ Employee

# Roles parents/families play in a family/school partnership:

- ▶ Support learning
- ▶ Encourage and promote self-efficacy
- ▶ Monitor behavior, boundaries and resources
- ▶ Model enthusiasm for learning and school
- ▶ Advocate for learning
- ▶ Decision-makers in education
- ▶ Collaborate and coordinate with school staff

**What are some of the current family involvement activities and practices in your schools?**

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# Family Involvement Activities:

- Back to School Bash
- Open House
- Family Reading Night
- School Newsletter
- District/School Website
- Social Media
- Phone Calls Home
- Home Visits
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Parent Surveys
- etc.

# Embed family engagement into current school initiatives:

- ▶ District/school reading programs
- ▶ District/school math programs
- ▶ PBIS
- ▶ Successful post-secondary transition
- ▶ Etc.

## *Big Ideas* in building effective family/school partnerships:

- ▶ Effective and reciprocal communication is a *must*
- ▶ Parents are integral to their child's learning
- ▶ Active parent involvement is encouraged- child specific and implemented with *intentionality*
- ▶ Parents are full partners in their child's education and decision making
- ▶ Parents represented on all advisory committees that assist in the education of children

# Family-School Partnership

Beliefs and Commitment



## Family Engagement

Student Specific



## Parent Involvement

Build Relationships

## Establish effective communication:

*Plan for both public and child-specific communication*

- ▶ Include *public communication* in every initiative:
  - ▶ Encourage transparency while providing information concerning programs and supports available to all students
  - ▶ Provide periodic information on progress of the initiative and the impact on students in general- *no child specific information is released*

# Establish effective communication:

*Plan for both public and child-specific communication*

- ▶ Every initiative includes a plan for ***child-specific communication***. School staff can keep families informed of:
  - ▶ What is being studied in the classroom
  - ▶ Ways to reinforce learning at home and in the community
  - ▶ Individual student progress (successes and challenges)
  - ▶ Frequent and systematic communication is essential

***And welcome input from parents! Remember.....parents are one of your greatest resources!!***

## **REMEMBER:**

- Parents know their children best.
- Respect parents' perspectives and understand they can offer a view of the child in different settings.
- When a parent makes an unusual request or voices a concern, demonstrate mutual respect by listening.
- Expect to disagree at times.

# Active family engagement should be encouraged by all:

- What is your school's "curb appeal"? Does it present as a welcoming place for parents?
- Are there multiple ways to volunteer?
  - Use parent/guardian, community volunteers in the classroom
  - Volunteers reading to students in the library, classrooms or as student incentives
  - Volunteers working in non-instructional locations/duties
  - Parents assisting children with art projects/posters etc. to be displayed at school
  - Encourage participation in volunteer activities from home- some parents have responsibilities that limit physical participation at school



# Benefits are many when parents are full partners in education and decision making:

- Student benefits:
  - ▶ Higher test scores, better grades and attendance
  - ▶ Improved homework completion
  - ▶ Positive student motivation and attitudes about school work
  - ▶ Improved behavior and self-confidence
  - ▶ Improved self-confidence
  - ▶ Decreases in at-risk behaviors such as alcohol use and violence

*(according to National PTA, 10/28/2005)*

## ▶ Benefits to teachers and schools:

- ▶ Improved classroom behavior through increased knowledge of families and mutual respect for all
- ▶ Higher ratings of teacher skills from parents and school administrators
- ▶ Higher ratings of school effectiveness
- ▶ Greater job satisfaction as reported by teachers and other staff

*(adapted from PBIS 2018)*

# Parents are included in decision making and are represented on advisory committees that assist in educating children:

- ▶ SBDM Councils
- ▶ Family Resource and Youth Service Center Councils
- ▶ Positive Behavior Intervention and Support Committees
- ▶ Special Education Advisory Councils
- ▶ School Improvement Committees
- ▶ PTA/PTO
- ▶ Including any extra-curricular, academic and college and career readiness committees

***Nominate family members to serve on regional and district councils/committees.***

# Additional ways to encourage family engagement

- ▶ Host a “Back to School Family Night” to share information
  - ▶ Schoolwide expectations
  - ▶ Discuss ways to volunteer and be involved
  - ▶ Share program specific information
  - ▶ Provide a clear picture of what students are learning and doing at school
  - ▶ Promote high standards for all students
  - ▶ Provide avenues for parent/family input

# Joint Trainings:

- ▶ Provide opportunities for staff and parents to learn together
  - ▶ Post-secondary transition
  - ▶ Information on SSI
  - ▶ Due process training

# Advise Parents to Prepare for ARC Meetings in Advance:

- ▶ Take note of the meeting purpose listed on the invitation and who is invited
- ▶ If you want to request a specific teacher or provider be present, make that request in advance
- ▶ Review the last IEP and Conference Summary
- ▶ What are your goals for your child....goals after public school
- ▶ Make a list of any concerns and celebrations you want to share
  - ▶ New interests
  - ▶ Strengths
  - ▶ Medical concerns or changes
  - ▶ Behavioral concerns or changes
  - ▶ Your child's concerns

# What should parents bring to the ARC meeting:

- ▶ Notes prepared in advance, including:
  - ▶ List of celebrations
  - ▶ Reports they want considered such as outside evaluations
  - ▶ Any potentially beneficial medical records
  - ▶ A list of medications and potential side effects

***Provide parents with an ARC planning form (sample handout)***

# NEXT STEPS

- ▶ Discuss Family Engagement at the first staff meeting for the 2019-2020 year
  - ▶ Share the Family/School Partnership graphic and a brief definition of each level
  - ▶ Guide staff to generate a list of current parent involvement activities used in the school
  - ▶ Choose 2-3 parent involvement activities and discuss ways to elevate them to a “family engagement” level (Sample Parent Involvement Activities- handout)
  - ▶ Commit to discuss family engagement at each staff meeting throughout the year
- ▶ Embed family engagement into any new student initiative adopted
  - ▶ Include at least one parent on the advisory council or planning/implementation committee
  - ▶ Include a communication plan that specifies both public and student specific communication regarding the implementation and progress of the initiative (sample communication plan provided)
  - ▶ When appropriate, specify family engagement activities that will support the initiative



**Getting to know your families will go a long way towards developing an effective family-school partnership and will enhance the learning and educational experience for every child.**

***ADDITIONAL PARENT INVOLVEMENT MATERIALS :***

<https://www.hdi.uky.edu/spdg/parents>

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