

Family Involvement Strategies

Parent Involvement

The guidebook includes more than 80 promising practices that have been implemented effectively by schools to encourage family involvement in education. These practices have been organized into the following eight “cluster strategies”, each of which is described more fully in corresponding sections of this sourcebook:

Strategy 1: Creating a family-friendly school environment

- Host family-friends social events
- Develop a family-school-community partnership policy
- Establish policies that recognize the variety of parenting traditions and practices within the school community
- Establish an “open-door” policy and a responsive climate for parents
- Provide translations of printed materials in all languages spoken in the school and/or hire minority language teachers
- Provide interpreters for all languages spoken in the school
- Provide flexible options for routine tasks that accommodate family needs
- Consider varied family needs when scheduling events
- Coordinate school tours and orientations for new families
- Offer child care, transportation, and refreshments to encourage family involvement
- Foster “total teacher commitment” to family involvement among school faculty
- Maintain a parent-friendly office
- Hire a family coordinator/liaison
- Post welcome signs in all languages spoken in the school
- Post user-friendly school maps
- Reserve parking places for family visitors
- Create classroom/school environments that reflect the school’s diversity
- Maintain a welcoming bulletin board
- Create a welcoming booklet and/or videotape for new families
- Link new families with mentors
- Adopt “father-friendly” practices

Strategy 2: Building a support infrastructure

- Create a family center
- Hire a family coordinator/liaison
- Provide administrative support for family involvement activities
- Devote staff time to family involvement activities
- Commit resources to family involvement activities

Strategy 3: Encouraging family involvement

- Hire a family coordinator/liaison to coordinate volunteer program
- Take an inventory of family involvement
- Involve parents in planning, implementing, and evaluating family involvement activities
- Survey family and community members for prospective volunteers
- Identify barriers to family involvement in your school
- Acknowledge the many different ways families can be involved
- Create culturally appropriate volunteer opportunities
- Host an orientation program to prepare volunteers
- Invite family involvement with a family-friendly letter
- Host a “You Can Make a Difference” orientation to volunteer activities
- Match volunteers with meaningful activities
- Announce volunteer opportunities throughout the school year
- Develop a screening process for potential volunteers
- Provide volunteer information packets
- Develop a volunteer database and directory
- Encourage local businesses to support family involvement
- Establish a process for evaluating the volunteer system
- Involve parents in decision-making roles

Strategy 4: Developing family-friendly communication

- Community-Coffee With the Principal (Monthly)
- Host neighborhood meetings (Go to Community Center)
- Organize neighborhood walks
- Hold family focus groups
- Make home visits
- Host informal principal meetings
- Make positive “warm” telephone calls
- Exchange home/school communication
- Host conferences
- Communicate via newsletters
- Use a variety of technology tools
- Make audiotapes of written materials for families with emerging literacy – Podcasts
- Translate all written information into families’ native languages
- Develop a process for resolving family concerns
- Text – Remind 101 <http://www.remind101.com>

Strategy 5: Supporting family involvement on the home front

- Develop programs that involve home front activities
- Provide guidance on developmentally appropriate practices
- Provide guidance on student learning
- Involve parents in action research projects
- Involve parents in behavioral assessments
- Provide homework assistance

Strategy 6: Supporting educational opportunities for families

- Conduct assessments of educational needs of families
- Involve diverse parents and community members in planning
- Make home visits
- Offer parent workshops
- Offer opportunities for parents and children to learn together
- Offer opportunities for parents to develop leadership skills
- Organize family support groups
- Develop teen parenting programs

Strategy 7: Creating family-school-community partnerships

- Bring together families, schools, and community organizations for mutual benefit
- Develop comprehensive, wraparound services for families
- Develop schools as community learning centers
- Develop full-service schools
- Cultivate school-business partnerships

Strategy 8: Preparing educators to work with families

- Provide ongoing professional development in family involvement
- Provide opportunities for staff, families, and community members to learn together
- Imbed family involvement in pre-service education programs
- Include family involvement in educational policy
- Make encouraging family involvement an expectation of new faculty and staff members
- Include parents as teachers and faculty members
- Include parental perspectives in planning and implementing professional development opportunities

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