Strategies for Positive Family/School/Community Partnerships

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• Introductions
• Initial Thoughts on Family Engagement Strategies
  ○ Activity sort
• Research and Purpose
• CDE Family Engagement Standards
• Tips and Strategies for Effective Parent Communication and Involvement
• Wrapping it Up
  ○ Action items
Sort the activities along the continuum based on which ones you feel have the greatest overall impact on student learning.
Relative Impact of Family Engagement Strategies on Student Learning

Lower impact ←------------------------------------------⇒ Higher impact

Celebrations  Modeling of learning support strategies
Parent resource rooms
Classroom observations  Regular personalized communication
Parent training events
Potlucks  Performances & showcases
Home visits  Interactive homework
Parent-teacher conferences
Weekly data-sharing folders
Back to school night  Parent help on administrative tasks
Fundraisers

Generic school newsletters  Goal-setting tasks
Family support services  Parent help on learning projects
Positive phone calls homes
Relative Impact of Family Engagement Strategies on Student Learning

Flamboyan Foundation defines family engagement as collaboration between families and educators that accelerates student learning.
Research shows that there is a strong correlation between family engagement and student academic success. However, communicating with parents is one of the biggest challenges for new teachers, as reported by new teachers themselves, as well as their administrators, which can often lead to frustration and burnout.
Equity and Engagement for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Families

★ “Creating equitable spaces for parent engagement requires a triangular partnership between family, school and community to better support ELLs’ academic success” (Olivos et al., 2011 as cited in Li, 2016, p. 243).
★ The ideal relationship between parents and schools is one of mutual trust, respect and reciprocity.
★ Extend the opportunity for families to participate in their child’s academic journey in meaningful ways.
★ Consider (and value) nonstandard ways that parents partake in their child’s education.
Our Objective for Today

★ Provide practical tools and strategies for you to use to build a strong foundation and positive relationships with the families of your CLD students.

Guiding questions:

- What strategies are you already implementing?
- What are some new strategies you can apply?
Colorado Department of Education: Family, School, and Community Partnering Standards

1. Welcoming All Families into the School Community
2. Communicating Effectively
3. Supporting Student Success
4. Speaking Up for Every Child
5. Sharing Power
6. Collaborating with the Community

What do these standards look like in practice?

https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/familyengagement
Building the Foundation for Relationships

KNOW the community of your school and the background of your families before you start the school year.

- If you are new to the school, research the school website, the area of town, etc.
- Ask the administrators, other teachers or community members about the school and the families who attend.
“It’s important for educators to understand the background of what the students bring to the classroom based on the dynamics from home and what the community values. . . there are different things that our parents in our communities prioritize as important.”
Knowing the Background and Culture of Your Students

- Understand the culture from which your students come and what language their family speaks
- Understand what their culture or family prioritizes
- Tips for communication when you speak a different language
- How does the student’s background and culture impact their schooling?
  - Consider other backgrounds: foster care, homelessness, international adoptions, trauma
A Tip from an ELL Teacher

“My biggest advice from an ELL perspective is to first learn a bit about the culture of the student's family. Sometimes we think the parents don't come to conferences because they don't care or that school isn't important. While in fact, in many cultures the teacher is so highly regarded that they don't want to interfere. Or if the parents had little to no schooling, that they might feel judged or intimidated. So, first understand the culture.”
Back to School!
Starting the School Year Off Right

Introducing yourself to families before school starts

- Consider a phone call or email or even inviting parents in to meet with you one-on-one if possible. Even though it’s a time investment, it will pay off throughout the year! Connect with a translator, community liaison, other organizations (ex. Lutheran Family Services)
- Emphasize the importance of being a team, working together for the best of the student.
- Send home a letter or email that introduces yourself to your students’ families. Include: “This is how I run my classroom…”
Positive Communication with Parents

● Especially with students who have been labeled “difficult,” call or send a note home and tell parents something positive that you noticed about their child.
● Make sure the FIRST communication you have with a parent about their child is POSITIVE!
A Tip from a Veteran Teacher

“I called each parent before the first day of school to say how excited I am to meet their child and to introduce myself. Then after a week of school, I sent home individual, hand-written notes to all of my students’ parents, thanking them for entrusting me with their baby. I said I am so lucky I got him/her in my class and get to be their teacher. . . . · I built that foundation of trust, and showed parents that I truly care about them and their kiddo, which meant the world to them! I would recommend doing something similar to any of my colleagues and future teachers out there. It’s crazy how far a little kindness can go.”
A Tip from an Administrator

“Even though it takes a long time, having one-on-one conferences with all of the parents before school actually starts makes a big difference. Start with saying, ‘You know (name of child) better than anyone, what should I know? What are some things I can do to make sure his/her year is successful?’”
A Tip from a SPED Teacher

“When the kids know you are speaking positively about them, that is so powerful for the parents and the kids. Especially when all they’ve heard is negative.”
Family Engagement in the Classroom

- Ask families to share their interests and skills in the classroom - include CLD families as classroom volunteers and ask for their help directly
- Class parties, field trips, “mystery reader”
- Parent expertise - share their vocation, life experiences with the class
- DEAR Time - Family Style
  - [https://www.teachingchannel.org/video/dear-reading](https://www.teachingchannel.org/video/dear-reading)
“Have parents volunteer in your classroom whenever possible. I have parents come in as a “mystery reader”, where they simply come in and read a book to the class. You could have them do housekeeping things in your classroom like stuffing those “Monday Folders”, or even set up a fun activity for the kiddos to do. When they see you teach, and how HARD it is to juggle a bajillion things at once with grace, they have a much better understanding of the job. They also have more compassion when an issue arises. And the kids LOVE it when their parents come in!!”
Ongoing Classroom Communication

Provide parents with ongoing communication in their home language about what is happening in the classroom, what you are studying, and how they can support their child at home.

- Include questions parents can ask their students at home and how parents can stay engaged.
- Consider a weekly newsletter or e-mail.
- If parents are divorced or do not live together, provide two copies so each parent has their own.
A Tip from a Veteran Teacher

“The more communication and the earlier you have it, the better. This is true for matters related to academics as well as behaviors. It is always important to ‘fill the bucket’ and have a strong positive relationship with parents as soon as you can, so that you can ‘dip into the bucket’ when you need their support at school.”
When an Issue Arises . . .

Communicate with parents as soon as possible. BE PROACTIVE! Have an interpreter or other resources on hand as needed.

Love and Logic strategy:

“I’ve got this situation, don’t want it to become a problem for you. Do I have your support with this?”

“We’ve got this situation. I need your help so we can best support (student’s name).”

https://www.loveandlogic.com/articles-advice/educators
A Tip from a Veteran Teacher

“Be proactive! It is so much easier to get ahead of a situation and contact the parent before the student goes home and it becomes an even bigger issue. The parents are more receptive when they hear it coming from you first, because it shows that you are on top of things, you want them to be included in the issue, and that you are dealing with it the best way that you can.”
A Tip from an ELL Teacher

“Get an interpreter whenever possible to make phone calls or be present at meetings. Some of my advanced English speaking adults still are too intimidated to go to a meeting if there is no interpreter. By law, schools are required to find interpreters and translators whenever possible since there is no official language in the US. Use this resource as much as possible to help build relationships. You may find that after a few times of talking through an interpreter, the parent will reach out or be willing to talk in their imperfect English.”
Making a Lasting Impact

Send a note home to each student and their family on the last day of school.

- What were the student’s strengths over the school year? How did they grow? What did you appreciate most about the student/their family?

Send a thank-you note to all parent volunteers as well!
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• Identify two action items that you want to implement in your own practice. Write on a sticky note.
• Final thoughts, questions, key take-aways
For Questions or More Information, Contact Us!

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Links:

- https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/familyengagement
- https://www.loveandlogic.com/articles-advice/educators