Growing Leaders, Empowering Families: A New Perspective on Family Engagement

Sarah Ferris, ELL Specialist, M.Ed., NBCT
Matt Whitten, Principal
Esmeralda Ortiz, PTA Co-President & Parent

Session Outline:
- Introductions
- Where We Are...and How We Got There
- Video/Photos
- Where We’ve Been
- Future Goals
- Open Discussion: Q & A
Learning Outcomes
Participants will...

Explore how to build capacity for ELL parent leadership

Discuss how to create a positive, inclusive school community space for all families

Introductions

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Where We Were...to Where We Are Now

ELL Nights & PTA Family Nights
- Separate Nights
- Transmitters with an interpreter
- May or may not have food/childcare

Parent Leadership on PTA Board
- Bilingual PTA Meetings
- Pair PTA Meetings with Family Night

Whatcom Community Foundation Project Neighborly Grants:
- FLEX
- Birchwood Bash
- Bilingual Dance Fitness Classes

Personal Reflections

Our roles in this work
Impact of this work
Future Goals:

- Explore a partnership with the Bellingham Schools Foundation
- Expand the model to other elementary schools
- Continue to build and recruit parent leadership

Family Engagement Team

“One of our core values for the Bellingham School District is creating authentic partnerships with parents and Birchwood is a model school. Fostering parents’ leadership is what Birchwood has done best no matter what language families speak. Every time I ask a parent what is it what they like about Birchwood, they always say they feel welcome there. Starting with a welcoming atmosphere, empowering families to participate, and demonstrating that their voices have power has absolutely transformed parent engagement at Birchwood.”

- Isabel Meaker, Special Assistant to the Superintendent for Family Engagement

“Birchwood is a school that fosters relationships - relationships with the students AND their families. It is the foundation of those relationships that have been cared for and nurtured that have created an environment in Birchwood where all families feel welcome - and are engaged!”

-Kathe Koruga, ELL Advocate, Family Engagement
What are possible implications for your site?

What resonates? What do you connect to?

Resource:
Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships

Final Thoughts

PTA Executive team, administrators, teachers, support staff all working together

Empowering families to take ownership and leadership
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Thank you for attending!
We are happy to talk more with you!