



Getting Parents Involved

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Problems Faced by Parents

1. They may have grown up in families devoid of good parenting skills. They have experienced no models of effective parenting themselves. They may not be sure how to do it even if they want to.
2. They may have had a very negative school experience themselves. They may be hostile and bitter about how they believe they were treated, and they are ready to project those perceived injustices onto you.
3. They may doubt their own literacy or academic skills. They are unwilling to put themselves in a position to look foolish or ignorant.
4. They may be totally overwhelmed by situations outside of school. Lack of money and resources, problems with other children, dysfunctional relationships, job stresses, difficulties with the law, illness, and other pressures can leave a parent feeling disoriented and disenfranchised.
5. They may speak little or no English.
6. They may come from a different culture and are intimidated by the unfamiliar customs and protocols at your school.
7. They may feel hopeless and/or powerless. Some parents have become so disillusioned with their realities that they feel that nothing they do makes any difference.
8. They may be unable to attend school functions because of job responsibilities, the demands of younger children, obligations to elderly relatives, or lack of transportation.



Other Reasons?

Top 10 Ways to Keep in Touch With Parents

- **Phone**
- **E-mail**
- **Voice mail**
- **Fax**
- **Web site (school or class)**
- **Personal contacts**
- **Newsletters**
- **Academic calendar**
- **News bulletins/community bulletin boards**
- **Notes and cards (if all else fails, send them a registered letter.)**
- **Make your first contact a positive one!**

“Using the McDonald’s Approach to Generate Parent Involvement”

Joan Moorman

Principal, Barranca Elem. Covina, CA

1. Tell students about upcoming presentations.

2. Remind parents-and remind them often.

3. Offer the parents something free.

4. Make it snappy.

5. Advertise for free.

6. Involve students.

Building Partnerships That Work

From "Building Family Partnerships That Last" by Mavis G. Sanders
Education Leadership, November, 1996.

Ingredients for success:

Increasing Volunteerism:

Making Partnerships Work:

- 1) Partnerships are share responsibilities.
- 2) Partnerships take time.
- 3) Partnerships reach out to all family members.
- 4) Partnerships improve incrementally.
- 5) Partnerships are important throughout the grades.
- 6) Partnerships need students.
- 7) Partnerships include the community.
- 8) Partnerships include the hard-to-reach
- 9) Partnerships link to the curriculum and student learning.
- 10) Partnerships follow the 6 types of involvement.
 - a) parenting
 - b) communicating
 - c) volunteering
 - d) learning at home
 - e) decision making
 - f) collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995).

Getting Parents More Involved

By Debbie Silver

In *Because You Teach: A Dynamic Musical Resource for Innovative Staff Development*. Hunt, K.: Selby, M.: Silver, D.: Wormeli, R. Nashville, TN: Incentive Publications, 2006.

Objectives: To explore reasons that parents are not more involved
To generate additional means of enlisting parental support

Time: 30 – 40 minutes

Materials: Poster Paper
Markers

Process:

Part A Have the group brainstorm ideas about why parents are not more involved in your school. On the group's poster list reasons you know or suspect why some parents are hesitant to come to your school.

On a second poster list all of the things your school or individuals in your school are currently doing to try and get more parents involved. Beside each listing put the words, "working," "not working," "kind of working," or "don't know yet."

Compare the two posters and see if there are gaps between perceived problems for parents and solutions being tried by the school. On a third poster list some possible strategies the school as a whole and individual teachers could do to help motivate parents to be more involved in their children's education.

Part B Brainstorm about ways parents could help the school (besides fund raisers). Include both large and small jobs. Compile your ideas as a checklist you can send home to parents asking them to indicate the things they would be willing to do. Be sure to include specific job descriptions

including precisely what would be required, how much time it would take, and other important data. Provide a place for parents to tell you how much time they are willing to give. Have designated volunteers (parents) follow up and schedule parents to help.

Teacher Outreach

Objective: To encourage teachers to initiate a positive outreach to the parents of every child

Time: ongoing

Materials: Student records
Templates and/or spreadsheet software

Process:
Generate a list of every student you teach. Include the parents' names, addresses, and phone numbers. Set a goal for how many parents you will contact each week with something positive about her/his/their student. Keep a record of whom you call or write. Make notes beside each name about what you said or wrote. (Remember this contact is to be a positive, encouraging message.)

Creating a Parental Resource File

Objectives: To start teachers generating a variety of resources to help parents better understand the problems and solutions of their particular situation

To keep teachers current on topics regarding typical characteristics and predicaments of their student population

Time: ongoing

Materials: Access to NAESP's *Report to Parents*
Various journals, periodicals and other sources of information for parents
Annotated bibliographies about books that are helpful to parents

Process:

Create files of 1- to 2- page hand-outs and articles on various topics of concern to parents. Make sure they are simple, to the point, and easy to read. Include a bibliography when appropriate. At parent conferences have your files available so that you can pull out information sheets to give to parents (for them to keep). (Parental information sheets written in both English and Spanish are available from the National Association of Elementary School Principals – NAESP. They are provided to members in quarterly newsletters with permission to reprint. Topics cover everything from dealing with bullies to healthy food choices to overscheduled children to fostering honesty in kids.) It is a good idea to form an “exchange club” at your school so that all teachers get copies of relevant and helpful information for parents who are interested.

Create a book list on various topics of concern to parents. Poll other teachers for recommendations of helpful books for parents. When a parent asks for help or more information, give them a copy of the list with a notation about which book(s) you think they will find beneficial.

Suggested Readings:

Beckwith, Harry. *Selling the Invisible*. New York: Warner Books, (1997).

Epstein, J.L. “School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share.” *Phi Delta Kappan* 76, 9: (1995) 701-712,.

Henderson, Anne T.: and Berla, N., eds. *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement*. Washington, D.C.; Center for Law and Education, (1997).

Seefeldt, Carol: and Goldsmith, N. Family Night Out: A Way to Involve Low-Income Parents. National Association of Elementary School Principals 16, 4: (1998).



Roses

“When we plant a rose seed in the earth, we notice that it is small, but we do not criticize it as ‘rootless and stemless.’ We treat it as a seed, giving it the water and nourishment required of a seed.

When it first shoots up out of the earth, we do not condemn it as immature and underdeveloped; nor do we criticize the buds for not being open when they appear. We stand in wonder at the process taking place and give the plant the care it needs at each stage of its development.

The rose is a rose from the time it is a seed to the time it dies. Within it, at all times, it contains its whole potential. It seems to be constantly in the process of change; yet at each state, at each moment, it is perfectly all right as it is.”

--Timothy Gallaway