Meet families where they are

Educators can build relationships with families by offering to meet parents where they are. That can be as simple as translating messages to a family’s native language, or it can be more involved home visits in which teachers meet with parents at their homes or at local parks or cafes. The idea is to bring the school to the parents, rather than expecting the parents to put in all of the engagement effort.

Make space for parents in school buildings

Creating a designated space for families, such as a parent resource room, where they can meet with educators, use Wi-Fi to get work done, or just gather with each other, signals to families that they are welcome in schools and helps build trust. Even if there isn’t room for a dedicated space, schools can implement “open-door” policies for families, allowing families to visit during the school day.

5 Ways Schools Can Engage With Families as Partners

Any school can have effective parent and family engagement. Fundamentally, what it takes is a commitment to building trusting, reciprocal relationships with families, regardless of their circumstances. Here are five key suggestions every school should consider when looking to improve family engagement.

1. Use technology as a tool, not a crutch

A growing number of companies offer products to help schools and families connect online. These tools, such as ClassDojo, Seesaw, and Zoom, can allow educators to meet parents where they are, give parents an inside look at the classroom, and build two-way communication. But schools should be careful not to let technology replace in-person connections.

2. Bring in community and cultural partners

At a minimum, schools should translate communications into parents’ native languages. But they can go far beyond that by partnering with religious organizations, universities, and community groups to provide resources and host events for families that reflect their cultures and community.

3. Maintain a focus on academic achievement

Parent events are a great way to get parents familiar and comfortable with the school, but they can have more impact if they incorporate student learning. Schools can use events to provide parents with a list of at-home activities they can do with their students to help with reading or math.

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RESOURCES:
- National Parent Teacher Association’s Standards for Family-School Partnerships
- National Association for Family, School, and Community, Engagement Toolkits
- Learning Heroes’ Educator Resources

SOURCE: Education Week reporting

Images: Getty