

Non-Event Strategies for Connecting with Families

Schools that have successful relationships with families work beyond events to create a culture where home-school partnerships thrive. Non-event strategies for connecting with families begin with the staff examining the culture within the school and how staff interacts with families. The following information offers ideas of what staff members can do together – and with families – without having to plan events. The ideas are separated into areas that align with the Family Engagement Action Plan. This can be customized to your school's needs.

ACADEMIC:

Internal: What staff can do together

- Talk across grade levels to prioritize what concepts students need as they move from one grade to another. Share that information with parents.
- Discuss Dr. Karen Mapp's Four Core Beliefs with staff.
- Discuss what staff can do to partner with families to improve academic achievement.
- Discuss with staff during professional development attitudes and assumptions about families and their role in their children's education.

External: What staff can do with families

- Offer families examples of everyday learning opportunities such as writing grocery lists; counting money; planting flowers, etc.
- Insert newsletter tidbits of things families can do at home that reinforce learning such as reading together.
- Help families set academic goals with their children at conferences or other meeting times.
- Give family members of secondary and high school students questions that they can ask their children about their higher-education or workforce goals.
- Provide families with a list of websites that reinforce math skills.
- Hang signs or posters throughout the school that explain math vocabulary.
- Use SchoolFusion to show math strategies or math success.
- Create an "Ask Me" question of the week to encourage families, students and staff talking more in-depth about education.
- Use ParentLink automated phone call system to share successes with families.
- Create bookmarks with math or reading information on them.
- Create a backpack or bag with fun academic activities that families can do together. The bag would rotate so that all students and their families spent time with it. Have families journal, take pictures or draw about the learning activities they did together.
- Use intermission or transition time at music programs or sporting events to briefly discuss academic, family engagement or other school information.
- Have families create a journal with topics you decide.
- Ask families to submit their favorite books and a brief description about why they liked the book. Display the submissions on a classroom bulletin board. Have students write about their own likes about the book.
- Have families pick a favorite age-appropriate song. Encourage families to have students read the lyrics to them and talk about why they like the song; or what they think inspired the songwriter to write the song, etc.
- Pick a room of your home and have students make a chart and graph what shape of objects they see. This exercise can be altered by grade-level.
- Encourage family members to "battle" with calculators by solving various mathematic problems.
- Encourage families to work with students on their predicting abilities by completing a March Madness bracket together. Consider offering questions that allow participants to summarize their wins and losses.

Resources are available on the Wichita Public Schools Family Engagement Portal or online at www.familyengagement.weebly.com



BEHAVIOR:

Internal: What staff can do together

- Post expectations for classrooms and hallways on bulletin boards throughout the school.
- Dedicate 10 minutes of a staff meeting to review the Communicating Behavior Expectations PowerPoint.
- Grade-level teams collaborate to determine how to share behavior expectations with families.
- Work with the Volunteer Coordinator to place volunteers in common areas such as hallways during passing period, cafeteria and playground.

External: What staff can do with families

- Communicate school-wide behavior expectations and/or Guidelines for Success with families through newsletters, Site Council, Bulletin boards, SchoolFusion, etc.
- Post expectations for classrooms and hallways throughout the school
- Recruit several families to participate with the Behavior Team.
- Involve families in the creation of your school's Guidelines for Success.
- During a music or academic night, have students put on a skit to explain CHAMPS or your school's Guidelines for Success.
- Have students act out or explain what CHAMPS or ACHIEVE stand for (flip video) to put on the school website.
- Share behavioral data with families and/or Site Council to solicit feedback on ways the school may improve areas (Tardy, office referrals etc.)
- Communicate often with families about school and classroom behavior expectations.
- Utilize school and classroom newsletters to communicate behavior expectations.
- Communicate school and classroom behavior expectations during parent-teacher conferences.
- Make phone calls home regarding positive or improved behavior of a student.
- Send positive postcards to communicate with families about student behavior progress.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING:

Internal: What staff can do together

- Discuss attitudes we have about building relationships with families.
- Continue conversations related to cultural proficiency.
- Identify and communicate successes your colleagues are having in building relationships with families. Share these strategies at staff meetings or in the staff's week-at-a-glance.
- Post quotes throughout staff areas (mailboxes, restrooms, lounge, conference room, etc.) about the benefits of building healthy relationships with families
- Have conversations/professional development on customer service, positive communication, welcoming, honoring and connecting with families, etc.

External: What staff can do with families

- Communicate using SchoolFusion and keeping information up-to-date.
- Create bulletin boards in main hallways with welcoming messages in many languages.
- Utilizing interpreters during Parent-Teacher Conferences.
- Promote Red Chair visits.
- Being friendly with guests in the hallway.
- Translate all school signs in English, Spanish and/or Vietnamese.
- Create and distribute business cards for teachers and staff.
- Writing thank you notes to families who volunteer, donate additional classroom materials, etc.
- Create and distribute newsletters consistently.
- Create welcome packets for new students and their families.
- Identify new families and send a note home welcoming them.
- Write positive postcards about students to share with their families.
- Make telephone calls to families to compliment their student or personally connect with them about events at the school you especially hope they attend.
- Hand out newsletters at the curb.
- Promote Site Council and PTO as ways for parents to connect with each other.
- Honor families on school website.
- Give families questions they can ask teachers about school routines, conferences, etc.
- Consistently greeting families who transport their student to school.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Internal: What staff can do together

- Coordinate with building leadership an opportunity to present information about Family Engagement during PLC.
- Feature Family Engagement initiatives/strategies during staff meetings to enhance school-wide awareness.
- Incorporate Family Engagement into grade-level professional development. Share Family Engagement quick tips or quotes in staff communication – such as Week at a Glances, e-mail, etc.
- Dedicate a space for Family Engagement materials/resources in the staff lounge.
- Have a Family Engagement book study.
- Share the Family Engagement Action Plan with staff members and get input/feedback to generate buy-in.
- Invite other colleagues to attend monthly Family Engagement Site Contact meetings as guests to further build capacity.

External: What staff can do with families

- Share Family Engagement initiatives/activities and/or the Family Engagement Action Plan at PTO and Site Council meetings.
- Hold or incorporate into an existing evening activity a presentation on family engagement to educate families about how the school plans to enhance home-school partnerships through the year. Introduce the Family Engagement Site Contact and team to families.
- Invite parent leaders to attend Family Engagement Team meetings to participate and offer feedback.
- Hold Parent Focus groups to share the Family Engagement Action Plan and gather feedback.
- Share the Parent Leadership information with families that is located on the Wichita Public Schools Family Engagement Portal.
- Incorporate into Enrollment, Open House and Parent-Teacher Conferences trainings for families regarding how to use Parent Assistant and SchoolFusion
- Invite parents leaders to attend Site Council training using resources located on the Wichita Public Schools Family Engagement Portal.

Professional Development Modules and other resources are available in the following areas on the Wichita Public Schools Family Engagement Portal or www.familyengagement.weebly.com

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| • Assessments | • Family Engagement Teams | • Parent-Teacher Conferences | • Transitions |
| • Communication | • Father Figures | • Porch Visits | • Volunteer Support |
| • Community Partners | • Linking to Learning | • Positive Behavior | |
| • Customer Service | • MTSS Resources | • Professional Development & Research | |
| • Family Engagement Planning Process | | | |