

Non-Event Strategies

Creating an empowering school culture and making meaningful connections with families are paramount to helping all students achieve success at school. While school-wide or targeted events offer good ways to welcome families into the school and nurture the home-school relationship, they are not the only way. To maximize their efforts, schools should use a combination of events and non-event strategies to connect with families. Non-event strategies for connecting with families begin with the work staff does internally regarding the attitudes and culture that exist within the school and extends to how staff interacts with families on an individual basis. Below are a variety of ideas for non-event strategies schools may choose to implement to strengthen the home-school partnership.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING		
Internal: What Staff Can Do Together	External: What Is Shared With Families	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have discussions about attitudes we have about building relationships with our families using the Steve Constantino living room sketch (request a copy from your MTSS Family Engagement Facilitator). • Continue conversations related to cultural proficiency as a factor in Family Engagement practices. • Identify best-practices of ways your colleagues build relationships with families at your school. Share these strategies at staff meetings or in the principal’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 about internal and external customer service; positive communication strategies, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate using the school’s website and keeping information up-to-date. • Have a bulletin board in the main hallway with welcoming messages in many languages. • Use interpreters during Parent Teacher Conferences. • Promote Red Chair visits. • Act friendly toward guests in the hallway. • Translate all school signs in District-supported languages (English, Spanish and Vietnamese). • Create teacher business cards. • Write thank you notes. • Create and distribute newsletters. • Offer welcome packets to new students and their families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify new families and send a note home welcoming them. • Write and send positive postcards. • Use community partners as school greeters. • Make personal telephone calls to families. • Create student goals with pictures and family posters. • Hand out newsletters at the curb. • Connect parents with each other. • Honor families on the school website. • Prepare questions that parents can ask teachers. • Create a welcoming atmosphere by greeting parents when dropping or picking up their children.

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ACADEMIC		
Internal: What Staff Can Do Together	External: What Is Shared With Families	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk across grade levels to prioritize what concepts students need as they transition from one grade to another. Compile and share that information with parents. • Discuss Karen Mapp’s Four Core Beliefs with staff members. • 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. • Identify as grade-level teams learning materials/resources to share with families. • As a total staff, work to perfect the understanding and practice of Family Engagement components of MTSS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide families with examples of how they can work on academic skills with their children during everyday activities such as chores or while shopping. • In school newsletters, feature ideas of things families can do at home to reinforce learning. • Set academic goals with families. • Give secondary and high school parents prompts that they can ask their children about their higher-education or workforce goals. • Help parents create a homework plan to use with their children. (Example: create a dedicated space at home to complete homework; turn off the TV; perform an academic-related activity even if students have no homework, etc.). Adjust as appropriate for all grade levels. • Provide families with a list of websites that reinforce math skills. • Hang signs or posters throughout the school that explain math vocabulary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use school websites to show math strategies or math success. • Use ParentLink automated phone call system to share successes with families. • Create an “Ask Me” question of the week to get families, students and staff talking more in-depth about education. • Create a list of board games or electronic games that reinforce academic skills for families to play together. Refer to “Play and Learn Family Activities” at www.fisher-price.com, www.hubbub.com or other education-related websites. • Create and share bookmarks with math or reading information on them. • Create a backpack with a stuffed animal that has fun academic activities that families can do together. Have all students and their families spend time with the animal friend. Request that families journal, take pictures or draw about the learning they did with the animal. • Use music programs to present “commercials” for academic information. • Advertise academic information or testing dates during sporting events.

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BEHAVIOR		
Internal: What Staff Can Do Together	External: What Is Shared With Families	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create tools and resources with school-wide or grade-level behavior expectations to share with families. • Have discussions about which students require extra support and create a plan that includes their families to address the behavior. • Identify how parents can help address chronic tardiness, absenteeism, non-completed homework, etc. • Work with the Volunteer Site Contact to place volunteers in “hot-spot” areas such as in hallways during passing periods, in the lunchroom and on the playground to help provide oversight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate families about school-wide behavior expectations and encourage/train them to try using a similar system at home. • Explain any school-wide or grade-level behavior expectations to parents through flyers, bulletin boards, newsletters, etc. • Let students act out what S-M-A-R-T stands for (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely goals) using flip video cameras to put on the school website. • Involve families when creating academic and social behavior expectations for students. • During a music or academic night, have kids put on a skit to explain how to have students set goals at home through the S-M-A-R-T process (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with parents community resources that can assist with any behaviors of concern (i.e. defiance, bullying, gossiping, etc.) • Explain the concept of non-punitive behavior strategies with families through flyers, newsletters, bulletin boards, etc. • Share with families resources that they can use to help create and implement norms at home. • Create sample behavior expectations for at-home routines explaining to parents how these examples could be incorporated into home-life. Example: homework routines, bedtime routines, etc.
OTHER (examples of topics to consider)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Council • Language support (Translations/Interpreters) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partners • Volunteer recruitment and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Led Conference Implementation • Cultural Proficiency

“As educators, we can see families in one of two ways. We can see them as assets, or we can see them as liabilities. There is no third option.”