



Making Parents/Families Feel Welcome & Valued

Fifty-Nifty Ideas for Increasing Parent Involvement/Engagement in Schools and Out-of-School Time Programs- Building Relationships with Parents and Families.

- ❖ **Make your space "Parent Friendly"**
Whether you are in a school, church, community center, or other type of space make signs welcoming parents into the space.
- ❖ **Welcome Parents**
Greet parents in the front of the room or building when they arrive. Have greeters, meters, tour guides on hand. A familiar and friendly face can make parents feel more comfortable. Always call parents by name and make a point of smiling
- ❖ **Ask them how they are**
How they feel. Good Day? Bad Day? Compliment them.
- ❖ **Make a regular effort to tell each parent something interesting/positive that their child did or said**
- ❖ **Have a space that belongs to parents**
Create a "Parent Comfort Corner", a lounge, a corkboard, a table, a shoetree. Anything!
- ❖ **Be specific in what you ask of parents**
Give dates, times, what you need, supplies, a potluck dish, etc.
- ❖ **Plan activities at various times of the day**
Allow families to prioritize-to decide what activities are most important to them.

❖ **Make childcare available**

If you want parents and families to feel welcome in your space and to stay for meetings/conferences you need to include younger siblings in your plans.

❖ **Personalize invitations and requests**

Don't use jargon use family friendly language.

❖ **Have an interpreter on hand**

If your staff doesn't speak the languages of all your families, use interpreter services for communicating verbally and in the written word.

❖ **Praise them**

Identify individual strengths and praise parents, build on their strengths.

❖ **Address their issues**

Address all issues that parents bring up. No issue should be considered not important.

❖ **Research your population**

Know as much as possible about your target parent group Know your current and prospective parents backgrounds such as cultural, ethnic, education level, racial, sexual orientation, employment status socioeconomic, etc. backgrounds. Know the issues specific to the population you are trying to reach.

❖ **Respect differences**

Keep an open mind. Be aware of your "cultural lenses". Make an effort to understand cultural differences and to be non-judgmental.

❖ **Offer informal social events or activities that are fun!**

E.g. Mom's Night/Day Out, Family Craft Night/Day, Family Recreation Day/Night, Parents/Couples Night Out, Dad's Day, Potluck dinners, etc...

❖ **Offer home visits**

Visit parents in their home. Provide the information about parent opportunities directly to the parents. Personally invite them. Let them get to know you.

❖ **Phone parents**

Call before the meeting to remind them and call them after to thank them or tell them that they were missed.

- ❖ **Nurture Parents**
Focus on the parents. Give them time to talk about themselves instead of their children. Meet the needs of the parents and not just the child.
- ❖ **Communicate constantly!**
Fliers, Newsletters, phone calls, welcome packets, coffee hours. Share good news!
- ❖ **Cultivate Volunteers**
Invite the community in.
- ❖ **Publicly recognize volunteers**
Have a program newsletter that thanks all the parents and families that have been involved or helped out the program in any way the month before.
- ❖ **Have a parent write an article for the newsletter**
Have an "Ask Another Parent" section, or an editorial section that parents can contribute and voice their ideas/opinions.
- ❖ **Provide refreshments and transportation (and childcare!)**
When you have meetings/events, etc.
- ❖ **Ask families what they want and need and really listen to their answers**
- ❖ **Offer programs for both parents and staff together**
Exercise classes, art workshops, first aide course, etc.
- ❖ **Ask parents regularly for input about their child's needs**
- ❖ **Introduce parents to each other**
- ❖ **Provide special treats**
- ❖ **Provide Parenting magazines**
- ❖ **Have a parent suggestion box**
- ❖ **Conduct formal and informal surveys on a regular basis**
- ❖ **Host parent forums or discussion groups**
- ❖ **Host an annual open house**
- ❖ **Periodic parent orientations**
- ❖ **Take pictures/videos of the children engaging in activities that parents can watch at the program or take home**
- ❖ **Invite parents to participate in program activities and/or field trips**
- ❖ **Invite parents to help you locate resources to support program activities**

- ❖ **Invite parents to make recordings of them reading, singing or talking.**
Make the tapes available for children on a daily basis
- ❖ **Invite families to share family traditions**
Cook family recipes, send in photos, help plan a special event related to their cultural background
- ❖ **Encourage children to keep a daily journal**
Children can keep photos, drawings, stories, that they can share with their parents at the end of the day.
- ❖ **Work with the children to plan and host a "Parent Appreciation Day/Night/Week"**
Children can make special badges, prizes, cook a special meal, make gifts, perform songs, etc.
- ❖ **Keep parents informed of any major policy change that will affect them**
- ❖ **Help parents identify and interact with staff informally**
Photo board, rotating staff "greeter", informal social events, serve together on committees, sharing meetings, staff/parent talent night, etc.
- ❖ **Ask parents to advocate for issues that affect the program and their child**
Education, child-care, health care, tax breaks, etc.
- ❖ **Ask parent volunteers to call other parents to invite or remind of upcoming events**
- ❖ **Send birthday cards to children and parents at home**
- ❖ **Parent Honor role**
Celebrate and recognize those parents that contribute their time, effort, their ability to be handy, write a grant, sew a pillow, talk to a legislator, etc.
- ❖ **Family Literacy Night**
Or science night, or health care day, or math night or make it & take it night, family fishing expedition, art walk, etc.
- ❖ **Make on-going feedback forms available**
- ❖ **Offer Parent Leadership Courses**
Create a program improvement council where parents set the agenda.