

Strategies for Working with Migrant or Minority Families

Migrant or minority families may feel uncomfortable going to their children's school or talking to staff for a variety of reasons, including language barriers, fear, or previous negative school experiences. Fortunately, there are school campus practices to encourage familial involvement. The following are suggestions that have been made with regards to migrant or other minority students, however they are also beneficial for overall families in the school.

- ❖ One basic strategy for working with families is to use appropriate terminology that recognizes potentially different family structures. Schools may want to encourage family involvement to include those children who are being raised by grandparents, aunts/uncles, etc.
- ❖ Have someone at the school, personnel or a volunteer, who is willing to facilitate interactions between non-English speaking families and schools. It is important for families to have someone they can consistently contact with questions, comments, or suggestions.
- ❖ Encourage families to interact with their children and teachers at school. Remind parents they are welcome to have lunch with their children as often as they'd like. Invite them to volunteer in the class, join a school organization, or demonstrate unique talents or cultural practices for the class.
- ❖ Provide a positive school climate which depicts pictures or posters that are culturally sensitive.
- ❖ If the school has a Parent Liaison, have that individual randomly contact families to see how things are going. Receiving a call, demonstrates an interest on the school's behalf and reinforces to parents that something doesn't "have to be wrong" in order to get a call from the school.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for phone contacts that can accommodate other languages.
- ❖ Provide new students and families with a map of the school, highlighting key areas such as the library, the child's classroom, lunchroom, etc. The map should be in the family's native language.
- ❖ Provide activities for parents, children, and educators to do together during and/or after school hours. Working together on activities gives both teachers and parents the opportunity to learn about different cultures, experiences children have at home, and hopefully open lines of communication for future academic endeavors. It also gives parents an opportunity to see how teachers interact with students in order to promote learning in a fun way.

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- ❖ Encourage the school social worker, psychologist, or other personnel who speak the native language to provide information to parents about community services such as finding reduced health care, adequate housing, public agencies, social support networks, etc.
- ❖ Schools can be flexible in terms of giving credits for students who must migrate seasonally to work with their families.
- ❖ Encourage school staff and students to learn about other cultures and provide families an opportunity to share their customs and experiences.