



Igniting a Revolution in School Culture



There are some questions we should always ask ourselves when determining the need for a cultural shift at our schools in the area of family involvement. Answer the following questions as some “food for thought.”

Ask yourself:



- *Are all families treated with respect by everyone at our school?*
- *Are all families seen as a potential source of valuable expertise?*
- *Do all staff take personal responsibility to engage families?*
- *Do all staff believe that student performance can be improved with family engagement?*
- *Is active family engagement met with enthusiasm by the entire staff?*

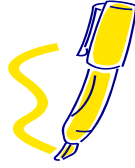
Now Reflect:



If you have answered “no” to any of these questions it is time for a culture shift that would leave everyone in your school community shouting “yes” to these questions.

It is important thing to remember the field of education is a people-oriented business that holds engaging people as one of its core values. So whether we like it or not, as educators we are expected to have “customer service” skills when dealing with our families. Educators should be offered and encouraged to develop skills beyond the classroom that will facilitate how to deal with families.

Take some time to read through the following suggestions feel free to highlight the ones that can be applied at your school and make them part of your Action Plan.



Some suggestions:

- Include professional and support employees in staff development, stressing the benefits of family engagement.
- Provide staff with a forum for sharing and learning new strategies that support family engagement.
- Train support staff to provide outstanding customer service to students and families
- Survey your teachers and support staff to find out how/if they engage their families (i.e. PIRC Educator Survey)
- Use surveys to pinpoint the barriers to family engagement in your school: fear, isolation, assumptions, values, attitudes, etc.
- Have a plan to train new staff member who missed the initial seminars and consider assigning mentors to help with the family engagement concepts employed at your school
- Along with handing school visitors a badge, consider provided them with a bookmark that include school contact information or any type of information that is important for parent and families to know. These bookmarks can be changed periodically
- Make sure all signage around the school sets a positive and welcoming message. For example, if your school's gates have to be locked for safety reasons inform you families throughout the school year of these procedures. Consider the following sign: "Welcome! We care About the Safety of Our Students and We Care About You! Please Sign In! Thank You! We Appreciate You!"
- Staff field trips into the community
- Consider having families fill out a response card when signing into school with questions like the following to be rated on a one-to-five scale (five being the most positive)
 - Did you find what you were looking for?
 - Were you treated respectfully?
 - Did our staff help you?
 - Did you get information you sought or solve the problem you hoped to solve?
 - Please feel free to write comments on the back of this card

****Acquiring this type of feedback makes parents feel as if their opinion is solicited and valued. Obtaining parent responses will develop a sense of accountability within the school that will promote staff to be on their best behavior and to be attentive to the needs of families. Stress the importance of customer service and share the ratings with the school.*

PARENT INVOLVEMENT *Pencil it in!*

Adapted from – Constantino Ed.D., Steven M., 101 Ways to Create Real Family Engagement