

Ideas for Strengthening Early Child and Elementary Parent/School Partners

("Parent" refers to the student's primary caretaker.)

1. Designate a "parent welcome team." When parents visit the classroom, a student and educator welcome them personally. If parents are there to help, educators make specific requests.
2. Hold "Saturday School" -- an opportunity for parents to visit the classroom on a weekend.
3. Make weekly personal phone calls and pay visits. Each day educators are given time to make on phone call. Once a week educators ask parents if they would prefer a home visit or a school meeting, then follow through. School supports educators with reimbursement for visits.
4. Use videotapes if meetings are difficult. Educators tape comments and encouragement about children and send tape home with them.
5. Use "Back to School" night as a parent networking forum, exchanging phone numbers, addresses and names of their children.
6. Use a "Telephone Tree" method of parents calling parents to increase attendance at meeting and events.



7. Preschool, kindergarten, and first grade classes hold bimonthly one-half hour coffees in which a different topic relating to school success is presented for 10 minutes, followed by twenty minutes of general discussion. This takes place immediately after pick-up time, with childcare extended at no charge to parents.
8. Encourage parents to stay fifteen minutes after dropping children off or to come fifteen minutes early to observe the classroom. Occasionally encourage parents of bus rider to pick up students personally or send a school bus during class hours to pick up parents from different neighborhoods.
9. Hold school or PTA meeting a several different times such as 6:30 a.m., 3:30 p.m., or 6:30 p.m., to accommodate parents' differing schedules.
10. Hold meetings at locations convenient for parents in addition to the school (recreation centers, apartment complexes, and libraries).



11. Provide child care or welcome children at meetings.
12. Send PTA minutes to all parents, even non-members. Ask each parent member who attends meetings to call one parent who is unable to attend, to ask opinions of parent/school matters.
13. Have parent meetings coincide with Reading Is Fun (RIF) book giveaways, holiday plays, or athletic events. Make personal telephone invitations to increase attendance. Issue family award certificates for children's attendance.
14. Implement recommendations made by the school accountability councils.
15. Invite parents to serve on planning groups besides fund-raising. Ask parents to invite one other person.
16. Send home a monthly newsletter with an activity calendar, parenting tips, child/adolescent development information, letter section, and community resources or after school care opportunities.
17. Send all parents a discipline policy or school handbook along with a personal note briefly explaining how the educator deals with classroom behavior (i.e., time-out, positive reinforcement).



18. Identify or hire school/parent liaisons to organize parent support groups, parent networking groups, and a monthly newsletter.
19. Hold a potluck party or breakfast mid-year to honor parent/community volunteers.
20. Organize parent ambassadors. Parents of children in grades 2, 4, 6, and 8 contact parents with children in grades 1, 3, 5, and 7 to share information on curriculum, common issues, clubs, athletics, activities, and parent workshops, etc. (Prior training provided at a parent ambassador brunch or potluck.)
21. Give students an "assignment," asking them to take a walk with their parents or similar relaxing, fun activities to promote clear thinking and strong family bonds.
22. Ensure that school staff answer telephones in a positive way and return messages within 24 hours. Increase accessibility of the principal.
23. Send home a weekly personal note to parents, attached to child's homework, with a place for a response from parents.
24. Request parent's initials or signature on student's homework.
25. Add your suggestions to this collection. Call Cindy Wakefield at (303) 866-6750 or Joyce Washington at (303) 866-6708, Prevention Initiatives Unit, Colorado Department of Education.

