Training Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Families and Schools
- Characteristics of Family Friendly Schools
- Strategies that Support Family Friendly Schools
- Action Planning
- Closing
Family Friendly Schools Training

Goal: To provide effective strategies to increase levels of family engagement.

Objectives:
1. Identify characteristics of Family Friendly Schools.
2. Identify strategies that support family involvement and engagement.
3. Develop a family friendly action plan.
Dynamics of Families and Schools

- Schools and families may need to reevaluate the ways they define and practice parent involvement.
- Families are not all the same thus they do not all respond to the same strategies.
- Families will seek information and work with schools in different ways.
- Past experiences play key roles in families’ comfort levels with schools.
- Many families, even though they do not come into the school, still want their children to be successful.
Dynamics of Families and Schools

- What families do to help their children learn makes a difference in their children’s achievement levels.
- What schools do to invite and encourage families to participate in their children’s education makes a difference to the family’s actual participation.
- Reaching and involving all families is important if the United States is to educate all children to high standards.
Family Friendly Research

Research shows that when schools and families work together to support learning, children:

- achieve at higher levels in school,
- are less likely to leave school or drop out,
- like school more, and
- are more likely to go on to post secondary education.
Family Friendly Research

- More effective family involvement is an important strategy for addressing the achievement gap.
- There is a strong correlation to teacher outreach to families and consistent achievement gains in reading and math.
- Schools with strong family partnership programs made greater gains on standardized tests.
Federal Requirements for Family Involvement

The No Child Left Behind Act:
- Moves Family Involvement to the forefront and monitors states heavily for compliance.
- Imposes sanctions for noncompliance.
- Requires Districts and Schools to develop, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of Title I Parental Involvement Policies.
- Requires Districts and Schools to have parental input on all aspects of the policies.
- Requires at least 1% of Districts’ Title I funds be set aside for Family Involvement.
Florida’s Family and School Partnership for Student Achievement Act

All Districts must:

- Adopt School-Board Rules that strengthen family involvement.
- Develop and disseminate a parent guide to all parents.
- Develop and disseminate a “report card” or checklist of actions families can take to support their children’s education.
Families and Schools

Schools’ practices to involve families and the actual involvement and engagement of families are more important than the characteristics of families (poverty level, education level, etc).

Helping families to feel welcome is the first step to creating family friendly schools.
So How Friendly is YOUR School?

- Look at your school

- What makes it Family Friendly

- What about it is Not family friendly
Characteristics of Family Friendly Schools

1. The school environment is friendly and welcoming.

2. Communications are clear and frequent.

3. Families are truly part of the educational team.

4. Families are part of the decision-making process.

5. Partnerships are developed with all families.

6. Families are encouraged to volunteer and are utilized in meaningful ways.
Family Friendly Schools Strategies

- Early school contacts
  - Let families know that all are welcome and expected to work with the school.

- Personal contact
  - Face-to-face contacts

- Ongoing communication
  - Offer the opportunity to interact, not just at negative times.

- Special practices and programs
  - Include school-specific and demographic-specific approaches to reach all families.
Dr. Joyce Epstein’s Six Standards of Family Involvement

1. Communicating
2. Parenting
3. Student Learning
4. Volunteering
5. School Decision-Making and Advocacy
6. Collaborating with the Community
Communicating…

It is regular, two way, and meaningful.

Sample Practices:

- Conference with each family at least twice a year
- Regular and useful notes and memos, phone calls, compact review
- Annual and semi annual surveys to gage levels of communication
Parenting…

Parenting skills are promoted and supported.

Sample Practices

- Messages on family and child development
- Family support programs
- Home visiting programs
- Parent education, other course training
Student Learning…

Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.

Sample Practices

- Information on required skills
- Information on homework policies
- Techniques to assist students with skills
- Calendars with activities for parents and students
- Family participation in helping students set learning goals each year
Volunteering…

Parents are welcome in school and their support is sought

Sample Practices

- Survey to identify interests and talents
- Have a parent volunteer work space
- Have “class” parent, telephone tree, or other structure to provide information to parents
- Create opportunities for parents to volunteer at home
School Decision Making and Advocacy...

Having parents as partners

Sample Practices

- Encourage participation on School Advisory Council, PTA, and other school and district committees
- Network to link all families with parent representatives
- Create opportunities for families to have input into decisions concerning classroom operations
Collaborating With the Community…

Partnering with the community to enhance learning and the community

Sample practices

- Information for families on community health, cultural, and social support services
- Look for community activities that link to learning activities in the classroom
- Classroom partnerships
- Service to the community by students, families, and schools
FACT

According to the National PTA, there are 50 million children enrolled in public schools throughout the United States, yet only one in four parents is actively involved in their children’s education.

WHY?
Reasons Parents May Not Be Actively Involved

- do not feel comfortable in the school setting
- do not feel welcome at school meetings
- do not believe they know enough to be helpful
- do not have transportation, child care
- do not speak English
- have different definitions of “involvement” than what schools do
Reasons Parents May Not Be Actively Involved

- ...work several jobs and cannot get time off
- ...think they are involved enough at home
- ...feel responsible if their children have problems at school
- ...feel intimidated or not appreciated by teachers
- ...just do not know how to be involved
Engaging all Families by Steven Constantino

- True family engagement not only helps students, but also impacts the education culture of families.
- Within the realm of positive school culture lies the treasure of academic achievement.
- Your vision for your class must include engaging families.
- Positive classroom culture must be created and maintained, and not be overlooked with our “standard driven” culture.
- Relationships with families will bring about learning benefits for each and every student.
The biggest barrier to family involvement is educator’s beliefs. Therefore, educators must believe in and value the importance of family involvement.

The lack of involvement from some families is not apathy, but a loss of hope.

The re-culturing of classrooms and schools to be inclusive of families is imperative for academic achievement.
The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle

Kentucky Commissioner of Education’s Parent Advisory Council established Six Key Objectives for Family Involvement in Education:

- Relationship-Building
- Communication
- Decision-Making
- Advocacy
- Learning Opportunities
- Community Partnerships

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The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle

Each objective has designated parent roles:
* Supporter * Advocate * Teacher * Decision-Maker

Each objective has indicators and rubrics for Family Involvement proficiency levels:
- Distinguished
- Proficient
- Apprentice
- Novice
The Missing Piece: Engaging parents to complete the proficiency puzzle

**Objective 1: Relationship-building**

School staff builds productive, personal relationships with parents* of all their students.

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<th>Distinguished</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Apprentice</th>
<th>Novice</th>
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<td>Teachers and staff have developed collaborative partnering relationships with all parents and students to improve each and learning.</td>
<td>Parents report that school staff understands and demonstrates how strong relationships with parents contribute to effective teaching and learning.</td>
<td>Parents report their relationship with school staff is about discussing student academic performance and/or behavior.</td>
<td>Parents report that teacher/parent relationships are limited to discipline issues and/or reports of poor academic performance.</td>
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<td>Administrators and school staff welcome and actively seek parents of all new and ESL students to encourage early relationship building.</td>
<td>School staff implements systematic steps to welcome the parents of new and ESL students (e.g., home visits, personal calls or letters, open houses, and other methods).</td>
<td>Relationships with parents of new and ESL students are informal, occasional, or accidental, and information is provided if requested.</td>
<td>School staff has limited involvement with parents of new and ESL students.</td>
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<td>District and school staff provides training to involve all stakeholders in the process of improving the interaction between school, home, and community.</td>
<td>Parents and other stakeholders report they are actively welcomed when they visit the school.</td>
<td>Some parents report they are welcome to visit school.</td>
<td>Parents report that school staff makes little effort to welcome parents or community members when they visit the school.</td>
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<td>Parents and community stakeholders have authentic participation and help plan and implement school and district improvement activities.</td>
<td>School staff implements systematic steps to encourage parents to attend school activities and participate in decisions about their children’s learning.</td>
<td>Parents are invited to attend school activities related to their own child and are encouraged to attend parent teacher conferences.</td>
<td>Parents receive information on school activities and are invited to conference if child is not doing well.</td>
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<td>District and school staffs encourage continuous and meaningful communication with all parents about their student’s academic goals and progress.</td>
<td>School staff involves parents in personal communication about their students’ progress at least once a month.</td>
<td>Administrators and school staff are available to parents by appointment only to discuss their student’s progress.</td>
<td>Most communication from administrators regards safety and discipline issues.</td>
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<td>District and school staffs identify family interests, needs and barriers and provide services to ensure academic success.</td>
<td>School staff completes needs assessment with all parents to determine resources necessary for their child’s academic success.</td>
<td>Teachers informally collect some student-needs data and some parents are contacted to discuss those needs.</td>
<td>School staff has no plan for gathering information about students’ learning needs.</td>
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<td>Student/family feedback data on school welcoming and engagement efforts is retained in a usable confidential format and can be retrieved for district or school assistance to families.</td>
<td>All parents are asked for feedback on school’s efforts to welcome and engage parents, and the feedback is used to improve school’s efforts.</td>
<td>Staff occasionally asks for feedback on school’s efforts to welcome and engage parents, in an informal or casual way with no regular data collection.</td>
<td>Student/family feedback is not included in any assessment of the school’s efforts to welcome and engage parents.</td>
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Ten Family Involvement Principles

1. Remember, Family Involvement is more than coming to school. Some families are involved without ever setting foot at the school.

2. Consider and address why families may not be involved.

3. Be very specific about what you ask families to do.

4. Help families to understand that they have vital and active roles in their children’s education.

5. Work with families on a professional basis.
Ten Family Involvement Principles

6. Work to build and foster relationships with families.

7. Materials sent home should be short, simple, and easy to understand.

8. Conduct communications and events in manners that you as a parent would like to see.

9. Never write families off as apathetic or uninterested – there is always a reason.

10. Be sure to genuinely reach out to families.
Development of Your Family Friendly Action Plan

Think about family involvement at your school.

Does it practice effective family involvement?
What are its strengths?
What are its areas of need?
What is its level of family involvement?
What has worked in the past?
What are the barriers for family involvement?
How does the staff regard family involvement?
Family Friendly Schools Action Plan

Goal:

Activity:

Action Plan (Summary Paragraph):

Person(s) Responsible:

Time Line:

(When, What Will Be Done, Contact Person, Resources Needed, and Source(s))
Family Friendly Reminder

As you prepare to implement your action plan, remember:

- The ultimate concern for families, community members, and educators is the same... children and their education.
- Educators must advocate for partnerships with families and communities.
- Research tells us that effective, high performing schools have high levels of family involvement.
- It is our responsibility to create a climate that encourages family and community involvement in education.
Contact Us –
We’re Here to Help!

The Florida Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) of FND

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