



Engaging Families in Your Community School: What Works

Agenda

- ▶ Why Engage Families?
- ▶ Why Aren't Families Engaged?
- ▶ Strategies
- ▶ Available Resources
- ▶ Questions



WHY ENGAGE FAMILIES?

Family Engagement Matters

Research has shown that:

- ▶ Family involvement > income/status as a predictor of student academic achievement
- ▶ Involved families = continued education
- ▶ Teachers expect more -> higher scores/grades
- ▶ Youth attitudes towards work/career reflect family attitudes towards education/career

Parent vs. Family Engagement

- ▶ Traditional focus on parents
 - PTAs
 - Volunteers in classrooms/on field trips
- ▶ Primary caregivers with influence on children
 - Grandparents
 - Older siblings
 - Foster parents
 - Court-appointed guardians
 - Tribal elders
 - Baby sitters/ nannies



WHY AREN'T FAMILIES ENGAGED?

Traditional Family Engagement

- ▶ PTAs
- ▶ Parent Night/Spaghetti Dinner
- ▶ Classroom Volunteers
- ▶ Field Trip Volunteers
- ▶ Talent Show
- ▶ Principal/Counselor Meetings

Barriers to Engagement



Barriers to Engagement

- ▶ Negative Experiences
- ▶ Language and Cultural Differences
- ▶ Issues of Race and Class
- ▶ Lack of Training
- ▶ Lack of Planning
 - Timing
 - Transportation
 - Childcare
 - Food*



STRATEGIES

**Family engagement isn't
just about offering services—
it's about offering a
relationship**



Have a Plan

Plan Your Work

Program	Target	Goals	Measures	Timing	Provider/ Curriculum
Zumba Class	Working parents interested in fitness/nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engage parents in fitness -Teach nutrition -Build relationships with teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of parents participating -Number of teachers participating -Parents report positive relationships with teachers 	Thursdays, 6pm-7pm	YMCA

Communicate in Multiple Forms

Communication

- ▶ Parent brochures
- ▶ Newsletters
- ▶ Letters
- ▶ Manuals
- ▶ Calendars
- ▶ Signs / posters
- ▶ Texts
- ▶ Website
- ▶ Social media
- ▶ In person
- ▶ Meetings
- ▶ Calls

Bring Parents In

Welcoming Space

- ▶ Easy-to-read school maps
- ▶ Flags representing diversity
- ▶ Considerations for security guards
- ▶ Welcoming office staff
- ▶ Family centers

Family Center

- ▶ Space that is 'theirs' in a school
- ▶ Families know where to go
- ▶ Information about community resources
- ▶ Computers
- ▶ Suggestion Box

Classes

- ▶ What are the needs?
 - TASC (GED)
 - English
 - Fitness / Nutrition
 - Parenting
 - Parent Summer Camp
- ▶ Engage your teachers / staff
 - Builds positive relationships

Fitness

▶ “Family Get Fit” –

- Families “get fit” together through a set of fitness and nutrition activities facilitated by the local YWCA.
- Families who are involved with this program have four opportunities to meet with a YWCA staff person as their motivational coach to help them through the program.
- All families involved will also listen to fitness and nutrition experts.
- Families have the chance to earn a free membership to the YWCA and to participate in four family fun events during the course of the program.

Make Personal Connections

Address Staff Attitudes

- ▶ The Human Barometer
 - Agree
 - Disagree
 - Unsure

Engage Community-Based Organizations

- ▶ Community partners often have other connections to families
- ▶ They hire staff from the community
- ▶ They may provide early care
- ▶ They may provide other social services
- ▶ Afterschool providers are there when parents are available for pick-up
- ▶ Staff can serve as family liaisons

Small Group Sessions

- ▶ Can include families, teachers, and community partners
- ▶ Address incorrect assumptions about each other
- ▶ Build positive relationships
- ▶ Lead to more informed contributions

Engaged Principal

- ▶ Attends school events
- ▶ Attends community events
- ▶ Chance to build relationships with families
- ▶ Shows they care

Liaisons

▶ Family Liaison

- School or community partner staff
- From community
- Builds relationships
- Plans events

▶ Parent Liaison

- Parent/family member from school
- Has connections/relationships with other families
- Encourages participation and helps build relationships

Home Visits

- ▶ Can be school staff or community partner
- ▶ Arranged by parent liaison/community member
- ▶ Letter or call first
- ▶ Staff visit in pairs
- ▶ Principals should structure release time for teachers

Provide Meaningful Opportunities

Planning Team/ Self-Assessment

- ▶ School Improvement Plans
- ▶ Self-Assessments
- ▶ Community Engagement Teams
- ▶ Opportunities for more leadership roles:
 - Revolving committees
 - Co-chaired committees

Class/Program Contributions

- ▶ Sharing stories/cultural customs for Social Studies
- ▶ Work expertise or hobbies for related subjects
 - More than “career day” –> have parents run activities
- ▶ Translators

Advocacy

- ▶ Train parents
 - Phone calls
 - Letters
 - Petitions
 - Press conferences
 - Gain support
 - Train other parents

Make Participation Easy



Planning Considerations

- ▶ Timing
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Childcare
- ▶ Food

Incorporating Food

- ▶ Grants administered by the State Education Department cannot cover the cost of food as incentives
- ▶ Meals can be provided as part of programming activities around nutrition

Assess What Works

- ▶ Informal feedback
- ▶ Surveys
- ▶ Focus groups
- ▶ Community conversations
- ▶ Parent liaison feedback
- ▶ Continue programs that really work & target areas that need improvement

What resonates?





AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Harvard Family Research Project

- ▶ Family Involvement Website
 - <http://hfrp.org/family-involvement>
- ▶ Publications
- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Professional development opportunities

Coalition for Community Schools

▶ Community & Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works

- <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CommunityAndFamilyEngagement.pdf>

The After-School Corporation

▶ Increasing Family and Parent Engagement in After-School

- http://www.expandedschools.org/sites/default/files/increasing_parent_family_engagement_in_after_school.pdf

▶ Handbook

▶ Examples in programs

▶ Sample forms

The Quality Self-Assessment Tool

- ▶ Parent, Family, and Community Engagement
- ▶ NYSAN
- ▶ <http://www.nysan.org/quality-self-assessment-tool/elements-program-quality/parent-family-community-partnerships/>

ELEMENT 1 ENVIRONMENT/CLIMATE

A quality program provides a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for all participants.

A quality program:

1. *Provides a stimulating, welcoming, and supportive environment for young people.
2. *Uses program space that is safe and clean.
3. Has program space that is appropriately equipped and suitable for activities being conducted.
4. *Develops, implements, and shares approved safety plans and procedures with staff and families.
5. *Provides adequate security for program.
6. *Develops and manages effective arrival and dismissal procedures and plans for safe travel home.
7. *Provides healthy and nutritious snacks and/or supper.

Performance Level				Plan To Improve		
1	2	3	4	Right Now	This Year	Next Year

Additional Resources

- ▶ Afterschool Supporting Family Involvement in Schools
 - Afterschool Alliance
 - http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_briefs/issue_parent_involvement_32.pdf
- ▶ Afterschool and Summer Programs as Catalysts for Engaging Families
 - Expanding Minds and Opportunities
 - <http://www.expandinglearning.org/expandingminds/section-v-afterschool-and-summer-programs-catalysts-engaging-families>



QUESTIONS?

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Stay Connected!

- ▶ Sign up for our listservs at <http://www.nysan.org/join-listserv/>
- ▶ Follow @NYSAN 
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www.AfterschoolPathfinder.org

- ▶ Free Resource
- ▶ NYS Training Postings
- ▶ NYS Job Postings

The screenshot shows the homepage of AfterschoolPathfinder.org. At the top is a green navigation bar with links for HOME, ABOUT, TRAININGS, JOBS, SUCCESS STORIES, FOR EMPLOYERS, FOR TRAINERS, and RESOURCES, along with a Login button. Below the navigation is a header area with the Pathfinder logo and the tagline "the career site for afterschool and youth work". A secondary navigation bar includes "Latest Jobs", "Latest Trainings", and "Latest Reviews". A notification bar states "There are 11 new trainings this week." and features a "POST A NEW TRAINING" button. The main content area lists three training opportunities, each with a "FREE" badge and a date:

- Improving Outcomes with the Sanctuary Model of Trauma-Informed Care** (Sep 4) by Good Shepherd Services – Human Services Workshops.
- Every Student Present Toolkit & Social Media Campaign** (Sep 9) by Council on Children and Families.
- Coffee Break Webinar: New Literacy Content on Y4Y** (Sep 9) by You for Youth.

A link "Want to see more? Search Trainings" is provided. Below the list is a yellow banner for the "Afterschool Matters Practitioner Fellowship Deadline Has Been Extended!". The text explains that the application deadline for the NYC Practitioner Fellowship is now September 15th. It also describes the fellowship's goals and the support provided by the Department of Youth and Community and the NYC Writing Project at Lehman College. At the bottom of the main content area, there is a section for "Afterschool Pathfinder Webinars" with a link to recorded webinars for free.

On the right side of the page, there is a search bar with a "GO" button and radio buttons for "Jobs", "Trainings", and "Employers". Below the search bar are three promotional boxes:

- Get Job Alerts:** Sign up for the latest job postings.
- Join the NYSAN Listserv:** Sign up for the NYSAN information listserv to receive the latest info about afterschool.
- Pathfinder Webinars:** Free webinars for posting a Job or Training to Pathfinder.
- Create Your Resume:** With just a few clicks you can produce a professional resume. Let us help you put your best foot forward!