

Going beyond Fundraisers and Parent-Teacher Conference

SCHOOL GUIDE

Are you creating a welcoming environment?

[Review the Four Versions of Partnership rubric](#) (from *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnership*) to assess your school's engagement.

Instructions on how to use the rubric:

Look at the bulleted descriptions under each heading and circle the ones that best describe your school. Check the boxes that have the most statements under them circled.

- If three or more of your checked boxes fall in the Fortress School section and none under Open-Door or Partnership, your school is trying to keep parents away rather than work with them. In standards-based terms, it is below basic.
- If three or more of your checked boxes fall under Come-if-We-Call and none under Partnership, your school may want parents to be involved only on its terms. In standard-based terms, it is at the basic level.
- If at least four of your checked boxes fall under Open-Door or Partnership and none are under Fortress School, your school welcomes families and supports them to be involved in a number of ways. In standard-based terms, it is proficient.
- If at least three of your checked boxes are under Partnership and the rest are under Open-Door, your school is willing and able to work with all families. In standard-based terms, it is advanced.

Once you have completed the rubric and have a baseline for your school focus on the areas that need improvements and organize your efforts and initiatives around those areas.

Building Relationships

- Provide opportunities for parents to voice their concerns (PTA, parent groups)
- Get to know parents' preference in how they receive communication
- Avoid making cultural assumptions and stereotypes (provide cultural training)- refer to PIA to post request for speakers/presentations around family engagement

Recruiting parent volunteers:

First step → Ask!!

Second → Get with teachers, administrators, and other school personnel to get a detailed list on various ways parent can volunteer in the school

Third → Have a sign up/interest sheet where parents can put their contact information, dates and times of availability, and their primary choices in the type of volunteer duties they would like.

Linking to Learning

TIPS FOR LINKING TO LEARNING	
Do more	Do less
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Displaying student work, along with scoring guides to rate levels of performance• Contacting families regularly about student progress, through Friday folders, notes, and phone calls• Holding math, literacy, and health nights, and family-questions-about school events• Offering student-led family conferences, where students discuss their work and assess its quality• Holding workshops for families on planning for college and information about college admission standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Featuring teacher-made bulletin boards with themes such as “Autumn Colors”• Calling home only when students misbehave or are in trouble• Offering parenting classes• Focusing on student behavior and shortcomings at parent-teacher conferences• Hanging posters about drug abuse and teen pregnancy

Source: Henderson, A.T. et. al. 2007. Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships.

Addressing Differences

“We need to examine our assumptions about families. Do we expect all parents to respond the same way that middle-class parents do? When they don’t come to events at school, we may think, “They don’t care” or “they don’t value education.” Instead, we need to focus on ways to draw parents into the school and make them feel valued and welcome.”

Core Beliefs that help move Family Engagement forward

In most districts and schools throughout the country, educators will readily agree that families must be involved in their children’s education and that home-school partnerships are vitally important. With such overwhelming agreement, why can’t we find real partnerships in every school? The reality is that educators and parents have many beliefs, attitudes, and fears about each other that hinder their coming together to promote children’s education.

From our conversations with district leaders, principals, teachers, and other school staff, Dr. Karen Mapp and others have identified four core beliefs that serve as the foundation for the work of engaging families.

Core Belief 1

All parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them.

Core Belief 2

All parents have the capacity to support their children’s learning.

Core Belief 3

Parents and school staff should be equal partners in children’s learning.

Core Belief 4

The responsibility for building partnerships between schools and home rests primarily with school staff, especially school leaders.

-Excerpt from Beyond the Bake Sale- The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships (2006) (pp26-39)

Supporting Advocacy

The relationships between schools and families, at times, have been primarily non-existent or defensive. Many schools feel like they do not have significant parent involvement, and many parents feel like the school does not communicate or value them or their students.

Here are some ideas on ways to encourage and promote parents to be an advocate:

- ✓ Let the parents know THEY are the expert! Help them to understand that their input is valuable and needed (regardless of their educational background or income level) in order to maximize their student's academic success in the classroom and behavior in and out the classroom.
- ✓ Help the parents build a relationship with someone at the school, whether it is a teacher, principal, counselor, or combination of the three. This relationship helps build a partnership with someone that can help the parent navigate the education system. The more parents learn about the education system and process, the more empowered they feel. The more empowered a parent feels, the more willing they are to work alongside the school.
- ✓ There are no "stupid questions." Create a space that allows parent to feel comfortable with asking questions

Sharing Power

Things You Can Do with Your School

1. Focus on the value of learning. Take time each day to ask your child about school. What did you learn at school today? Ask how your child gets along with other students and what they like and dislike about school. Share with your child what you learned today.
2. Focus on creating a positive learning environment at home. Establish a routine of providing a quiet, well-lit place for homework. Utilize your local library. Limit the amount of TV and video games during school days. Collect books, newspapers, and magazines to encourage reading.
3. Set up a school bulletin board at home. Display the school calendar and other flyers from the school. Highlight important dates such as open house, parent meetings, parent-teacher conferences, etc. Encourage and help your child get involved in other school activities, after school programs, etc.
4. Encourage good communication with the school. Positive and consistent communication is the foundation in supporting your child's education.
 - ✓ Ask your child's teacher to provide suggestions on home activities that support skills that your child is learning in school.
 - ✓ If any academic or behavior problems arise with your child at school, work with your child, teacher(s), schools counselor, principal, etc. to develop a plan of improvement for your child.

- ✓ Make sure everyone is aware of the plan and have a plan of follow up. Have regular communication on how you can support your child's school and how the school can support your child in the learning process.

Parent Liaisons Impact on Building Relationship with Families and the Community

- ✓ Parent Liaison- Title I Parent Liaison Job Description
Parent Liaisons can be essential with helping build relationships between the school and families
- ✓ Parent Liaisons can assist with:
 - Support for teacher outreach
 - Liaisons provide assistance by acting as cultural interpreters and by modeling outreach strategies for teachers.
 - Develop monthly family contact logs for teachers with families' contact information
 - Be a mediator between parents and teachers when problems arise
 - Gather and organize resources for families for parent resource area
 - Organize tours of the community for school staff to help staff get to know the community, their needs, concerns, and culture
 - Attend community events and meetings to help build relationships within the community and gain resources for schools and families
 - Create and organize community partnerships to provide services and resources for the school
 - Direct services to families at risk- parent liaisons can be a neutral person to connect with families at risk to provide community resources and services to address the family's needs

If your school does not have a parent liaison, but would like to staff a parent liaison, please contact the Community Relations office for assistance with this process.

- ✓ Help create a Family Engagement Team
 - Who should FE team consist of: teachers, parents, other parent liaisons at feeder schools, community partners
 - Purpose of the FE team:
 - Organize and plan school-community wide initiatives
 - Share best practices in connecting with families, the community, and other educators
 - Help school staff stay aware of what's going on in the community and help the community stay aware of what's going on in the school

For help in creating a team, contact the Community Relations Office:

Katawna Stephens, Family Engagement Specialist
405-587-0449, kjstephens@okcps.org

- ✓ Data for program improvement
 - Utilizing surveys, interviews, and focus groups with parents and community members to assess the needs of the families and use data to drive family engagement efforts

For help with facilitating focus groups/interviews or conducting parent surveys, contact the Community Relations Office:

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