

Family Engagement Overview

Beliefs and principles about families help foster partnerships:

- All families **have dreams and strengths, and their assets**, not deficits, are emphasized.
- **Parents can learn ways to help their children** if they are provided with the opportunity and necessary support.
- **Parents have important information and perspectives** about their children that are needed by teachers.
- **Schools and families influence** each other.
- **A no-fault, problem solving model is necessary** – blame is not attributed to the family or school because there is not a single cause for any presenting concerns.

** Read Do Parents Value Education? Teachers' Perceptions of Minority Parents? (DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho 2005)



Increasing family involvement at the early grades predict literacy achievement and, most importantly, is a stronger indicator for literacy development than family income, maternal level of education, and ethnicity.

(Dearing et al. 2006)

Reasons parents may resist involvement:

- Fear divulging family conflicts
- Panic over child's possible failure
- Guilt over lack of parenting skills
- Parents' lack of comfort and feelings of inferiority, and vested interest in the school along with tension in relationships between parents and teachers
- Reluctant to interfere in teacher's work or lack of teacher time
- Belief that they would not know how to participate in school or understand the system
- Educator's misperceptions of parents' abilities
- Illegal alien issues
- Past negative experiences as a student in school
- Cultural differences and/or language differences
- Limited family resources, such as transportation and child care
- Lack of understanding of role in the education process, the "system" or parents' communication styles
- Time constraints

Uncovering traditional assumptions

Traditional Assumptions	Springboard Assumptions
Diversity is a challenge.	Diversity is a strength.
Parents who are not visible at the school are not contributing to their children's education.	Parents help their children at home to be ready for school each day and are contributing to their education.
School knows best, is solely responsible for decision-making, and passes knowledge on to families.	Everyone has knowledge and has children's best interest at heart. Collaborative decision-making.
Parents don't have the skills to be resources and many lack the capacity or willingness to be involved.	All parents are resources to their children's schools. Schools must recognize and cultivate the knowledge and strength of each family.



[Research] on effective parental involvement shows that numerous barriers to involvement exist for both schools and families. Some barriers are created by limited resources, while others originate from the beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of families and school staff. (Liontos 1992)

Impact of family engagement activities on student learning

Building Relationships & Improving Performance

Good		Better		
Celebrations	Parent help on administrative tasks	Parent training events	Goal-setting talks	Weekly data-sharing folders
Fundraisers	Parent resource rooms	Back to school night	Regular, personalized communication	Academic partnering Home visits
Potlucks	Family support services	Parent-teacher conferences	Positive phone calls home	Ongoing communications
Performances & showcases	Generic school newsletters	Interactive homework	Parent help on learning projects	Modeling of learning support strategies



Springboard family engagement activities and approach

