



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Family and Community Engagement

Facilitator's Guide

Objectives	Estimated Time
Welcome and Introductions	10 minutes
<i>The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle</i>	40 minutes
Barriers to Parent and Community Engagement	45 minutes
Is Your School Friendly?	30 minutes
Family Engagement Policies	30 minutes
Family/Community Engagement Next Steps	25 minutes

Materials Needed

- booklet for each participant
- resource booklet for each participant
- chart paper
- markers
- easel (optional)
- highlighters (optional)
- Post-It notes (optional)
- name tags
- computer for PowerPoint presentation
- *The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle* document – at least one per group

Welcome and Introductions

Welcome each participant. If working with participants from multiple councils, ensure that schools are sitting together. Review the materials that are provided including the Parent and Community Engagement booklet and the Resource booklet. Have each participant introduce themselves and the role that they have on the school council (i.e., administrator, teacher or parent). Thank each participant for their service, especially parents. Encourage each to participate fully and to ask questions.

Together, read the paragraph on page 2 of the participant's booklet. Reinforce the notion that schools may still not reach full potential without active family and community involvement. It is

imperative that families and the community get involved in all schools, but especially struggling schools. Discuss the difference between *involvement* and *engagement*. A compare/contrast chart can be done as a group.

The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle

Read the first paragraph that describes Kentucky's parent or family. Remind participants that when we say *parent* we are referring to all of these persons. If necessary (facilitator choice), write key words on chart paper as well as locating the definition in the statute provided in the facilitator guide.

Introduce *The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle*. Have participants look through the sample provided.

Have volunteers read the paragraphs. At the end of each paragraph, rephrase or elaborate. Discuss the difference between *one-way* communications (e.g., newsletters, One-Call) and *two-way* communications (e.g., parent-teacher conferences, home visits).

Look at the directions for the second objective. Have participants work at tables/groups highlighting or underlining the actions. Report out, writing the actions on chart paper. Discuss that these are actions (not passive). Discuss as a group how the school council can be involved with these descriptors. Examples are provided.

Proficient	School Council Role
School staff <u>implements</u> systematic efforts to inform parents about academic goals, class work, grades and homework for their children in their home language.	<i>School council policy (e.g., parent involvement policy, instructional practices policy) can include a systematic process for informing parents about curriculum, instruction, homework expectations and academic progress.</i>
School staff <u>offers</u> varied ways that parents can <u>share information</u> with teachers about their children's learning needs.	<i>Assignment of instructional and non-instructional staff time policy can require teachers to conduct parent-teacher conferences based on a yearly schedule (unless part of a bargaining contract).</i>
School staff <u>partners</u> with community leaders and organizations to <u>build</u> parent understanding of academic expectations, school strategies and student achievement results.	<i>School council policy (e.g., parent involvement policy, instructional practices policy) can include a systematic process for informing parents about curriculum, instruction, homework expectations and academic progress.</i>
School staff <u>offers</u> parents opportunities to <u>discuss</u> school-wide achievement issues, including assessment data, at least once a semester.	<i>Assignment of instructional and non-instructional staff time policy can require teachers to conduct parent-teacher conferences based on a yearly schedule (unless part of a bargaining contract).</i>
School staff <u>implements</u> systematic efforts to maximize parent-teacher conference participation.	<i>School council can collaborate with the school's parent-teacher organization to promote and assist with conferences (e.g., provide child care, discuss with constituents, provide transportation).</i>
At least 50 percent of parents <u>respond</u> to annual school and/or district stakeholder surveys.	<i>School council can collaborate with the school's parent-teacher organization to promote and assist with distribution and collection of school surveys</i>

Proficient	School Council Role
Stakeholder survey data is consistently <u>used</u> to plan school improvement efforts and to <u>evaluate</u> their effectiveness.	<i>Annually, school council members can survey families and the community during the school improvement planning process or include questions in previous surveys that would provide the needed data and input.</i>

Facilitators can summarize at the end. Several of the ideas fit into more than one section. Discuss with participants why/how this is.

Extension: This is only one of the six objectives. An activity that can be done with the school council is to look at one of these objectives monthly at council meetings and discuss.

Barriers to Family and Community Engagement

Before we can begin planning steps to engage parents, families and the community in the school, we need to explore the reasons that parents, families and/or the community do not participate in the educational programs in a school.

Discuss with the participants that they are now going to be brainstorming roadblocks that they perceive as keeping parents and the community from being involved in a school. Divide the chart into sections giving each group one or two sections. Compare notes and write on chart paper. Post throughout the room. As one of these detours is further addressed, note or add to the chart.

	 Roadblock	 Detour
Time	Parents often cite time as the greatest barrier to volunteering, attending meetings and joining decision-making committees at their child's school. These activities often are scheduled at times that interfere with work or other obligations.	Be flexible in scheduling meetings and events. Try a mix of morning, evening and weekends to allow every parent the opportunity to attend. Consider potluck dinners and brown bag lunches to meet the needs of working parents. Hold meetings at community centers, apartment buildings, church halls, parks, libraries and the workplace to make it easier for parents to attend. Sponsor monthly community family events and use part of the time to hold a meeting to give information to parents and discuss important issues.
Not Valued	Some parents are not sure they have anything of value to contribute. Parents may feel intimidated by principals, teachers and other leaders, including school council representatives. These parents may have had an	Extend a personal welcome to parents who appear to be withdrawn or uncomfortable. Establish regular communication to build relationships with parents based on mutual respect and trust.

	<p>unpleasant school experience or may have limited education or low literacy levels.</p> <p>Parents whose experience with the law has been negative also may be reluctant or embarrassed to participate in some school or programs that now require fingerprints for regular volunteers.</p> <p>Educators and administrators can reinforce these feelings if they consider uninvolved parents lacking in certain qualities or deficient in some ways.</p>	<p>This kind of relationship can help shed light on what is going on at home that may impact a parent being able to participant in school activities, such as dealing with a family illness, aging parent or financial stress</p> <p>Learn about their interests and abilities; actively seek opportunities at home or at school for parents to use their experience and talents to benefit the school in some way, and then value each and every contribution</p> <p>For parent with low literacy levels, schools can make phone calls or home visits or provide video messages.</p> <p>Schools can work with local libraries to form literacy groups and provide adult literacy and English as a second language.</p>
Unwelcomed Feeling	<p>Parents may feel they are unwelcome in the school.</p> <p>Staff interactions and attitudes and the physical appearance of some schools may convey an unwelcoming environment.</p>	<p>Provide training to help all staff develop an awareness of the importance of parent involvement and acquire the knowledge and skills to successfully interact with parents.</p> <p>Communicate to parents that they are welcome to visit during the school day and that measures such as visitor's passes are there for security reasons.</p> <p>Post welcome signs in all languages spoken at the school at each entrance.</p> <p>Create a special place in the school that is set-aside especially for parents.</p> <p>Don't wait for parents to offer to help; seek them out.</p> <p>Have teachers create a list of qualities and contributions that are needed from parents.</p>
Not Understanding School System	<p>Some parents believe they have talents but don't know whether they are needed or how to contribute them to the school.</p> <p>Many parents are unfamiliar with the system and therefore do not know what their rights are or how they can become involved.</p>	<p>Create a parent handbook covering rules, procedures, policies and where to find answers to questions.</p> <p>Include names and numbers of contact people who can answer questions in specific areas. Include pictures and names of school administrators, staff, PTA/PTO officers, SBDM members and other contact people.</p>

Family in Need	<p>Parents without adequate resources often feel overwhelmed.</p> <p>Families suffering from economic stress must address their own needs for food, clothing and shelter before they can become more involved in their children's education.</p>	<p>Provide information to help parents access and secure the health and social services they need for themselves and their families.</p> <p>Schools can work out agreements with social and health agencies to provide services at the school through school-based clinics.</p> <p>Schools can develop and distribute to parents a directory contacting information on available services and resources in the community and how to access them.</p> <p>After families' personal needs are met, schools can then help parents become involved in the education of their children.</p>
Childcare	<p>Childcare may not be offered at meetings or school functions.</p> <p>At times, parents may be discouraged from bringing their children to events.</p>	<p>Find an available room for childcare at the meeting site.</p> <p>Ask PTA members, community members, school service clubs or other parents to volunteer to provide childcare on a rotating basis.</p> <p>Hire high school or college students in child development classes or child care professionals in the community to provide childcare and, if appropriate, charge parents a nominal fee.</p> <p>Adhere to state-mandated child/adult ratios to provide safe, quality care.</p>
Language	<p>Parents who don't speak English may not understand newsletters, fliers or speakers at meetings.</p>	<p>Provide printed materials that are sent home and passed out at meetings in all languages spoken by the families in the school.</p> <p>The school and surrounding community may need to identify and help secure interpreters and translators for workshops and meetings.</p>
Parents with Special Needs	<p>Parents with disabilities may find it difficult or feel uncomfortable attending and contributing at meetings.</p>	<p>Make sure that your school is accessible for everyone and hold meetings or events in a space that is accommodating to parents with disabilities.</p>
Transportation	<p>Lack of transportation or access to parking at the school keeps parents</p>	<p>Work with the school to make a block of spaces in the parking lot "for visitors</p>

	from visiting or attending school activities.	only.” Form carpools to provide transportation to parents without cars. Hold events in community locations that are easy to get to and are near public transportation.
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Is Your School Friendly?

Review with participants that first impressions are lasting impressions. Talk about a time that you had a bad first impression and how that affected you (e.g., going into a new store and not being greeted or assisted, a job interview where you were not greeted or waited way past the appointment date). These can be non-education-specific and keep it general, but reinforce the negative overtones that were set. If participants want to share an experience, you can do that. You will need to keep it to a minimum as not to offend another school or school official.

Introduce the checklist from the Center on Parent Leadership. Have a clean copy for each participant to take back to their school. This can also be sent by e-mail to each participant at the end of the session.

Have individuals answer the questions; then have discussions at the tables. After each table/group has discussed their thoughts, report out charting “ah-ha” moments. Do not put a school in the spotlight.

Have each individual complete the reflection.

This may be a good time for a break.

Family Engagement Policies

Review with participants that a requirement of all Title I schools is the development, adoption and implementation of a parent involvement policy. Even if your school is not a Title I school, having a parent involvement policy is still best practice. Discuss the differences/similarities in parent involvement, family involvement and community involvement.

Read through the paragraphs. This can be done as a whole group or at tables, facilitator choice.

Look at Alphabet Elementary Parent Involvement policy. In groups, answer the questions. Discuss out. Below and continuing on the next page are sample responses (not inclusive):

Strengths: Give flexibility to school year-by-year

Loopholes: No one has been assigned to be responsible for seeing implementation

Limitations: Not very specific/details; Just compliant (for Title I)

Ways to improve: How will they make the volunteer process efficient? Who will be monitoring this process? Who is monitoring the website? How will parents be involved in the planning of the parent involvement program?

Next Steps

Walk through the chart. Note the educator side is filled in. Have participants at their table fill in the parent/community side. Have this be a final reflection. If working with one school council, then, facilitator choice, you can have the group share out.

Ideas can include:

Train parent/community leaders in policy making:

- Train parents for school councils and advisory boards.
- Facilitate meaningful two-way involvement.
- Have parents/community members help monitor and evaluate effectiveness of parental involvement policies.

Recruit and train parent/community leaders:

- Identify and recruit strong community candidates that represent the base.
- Train parents/community members in advocacy skills.
- Train parents/community members in understanding data.
- Train parents/community members to train others.

Communicate rights, responsibilities, and opportunities to all parents/community members:

- Communicate timely NCLB information.
- Inform all parents about opportunities for involvement at home and in school.
- Inform parents about rights and roles in school improvement in appropriate languages and formats.
- Provide materials and training to prepare parent to help their children increase academic achievement.

Thank them for their participation and their service to school councils. Provide them with your contact information if they have further questions. Ensure that all participants complete their evaluations, and give each an EILA certificate.