

# **ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SKILLS WITH FAMILIES**

## **Training Course Module (3 hours)**



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## **Enhancing Communications with Families**

### **Introduction**

Families communication plays a significant role in building effective communications with students. As families have different values and are cultural diverse it is important for administrators to reach all family origins to ensure their needs and interests are heard and met. A disengaged parent may experiences little or no emotional connectedness and have few expectations for their child. When parents have a clear understanding of the schools expectations, it is then they begin to encourage their child with the same goals and expectations.

This course, enhancing communications with families, provides participants with information on the benefits of effective communication with parents, the benefits of cultural diversity integration of students, and inclusion of students with disabilities. Participants will learn about the benefits of parent involvement, effective forms of parent communication strategies, personality types of parents, ways to enhance communication with parents, methods of positive contact with parents, tips to involve parents and methods of building trust with parents. Participants will also complete four activities that enhance communications with parents by creating a parent newsletter, designing a parent communication board, composing a parent involvement plan, and developing a 10-question parent survey.

The goal of this training is to provide participants with the tools necessary to enhance communication skills with families. Parent involvement is a vital component of the school community in that parents play an important role in student achievement. Parents who are involved in school activities and events, children experience higher grades and assessment scores, have better attendance, have a more positive attitude and behavior, and have greater enrollment in postsecondary school.

## Enhancing Communications with Families

### Course Objectives

#### Course Objectives

*At the conclusion of this course students will be able to:*

- 1) Identify five (5) benefits of parent involvement
- 2) Identify 10 effective forms of parent communication strategies
- 3) Recognize three (3) personality types of parents
- 4) Describe 10 ways to enhance communication with parents
- 5) Demonstrate 10 methods of positive contact with parents
- 6) Recognize 10 tips to involve parents
- 7) Describe five (5) benefits of cultural diversity integration
- 8) Identify 10 benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities
- 9) Explain methods of building trust with parents

*Students will be able to complete four (4) activities by:*

- 1) Creating a Parent Newsletter
- 2) Designing Parent Communication Board
- 3) Composing Parent Involvement Plan
- 4) Developing a 10-Question Parent Survey

#### **Readings:** *Enhancing Communications with Families*

- Benefits of Parents Involvement
- Communication Strategies
- The Dynamics of Parents
- Parent Communication
- Positive Contact with Parents
- What Parents Can Do
- Tips to Involve Parents
- Cultural Diversity Integration
- Inclusion of Students with Disabilities
- Parent Involvement Plan
- Building Trust with Parents
- Parent Surveys
- Barriers to Parental Involvement

#### **Activities**

- #1 Create a Parent Newsletter
- #2 Create a Parent Communication Board
- #3 Create a Parent Involvement Plan
- #4 Create a 10 Question Parent Survey

**Assessment:** 20 question quiz

## Benefits of Parent Involvement

When schools and families work together, children have a higher chance for success, not just in school, but throughout life. The patterns for success begin in early childhood and include:

- Higher grades and assessment scores
- Better attendance
- Fewer placements in special education
- More positive attitudes and behavior
- Greater enrollment in postsecondary education

These benefits parallel with the kind of results reported for high-quality early childhood programs. The development of attitudes, values, and lifelong habits begins with a partnership between the early childhood educator and the families of your children. The benefits of parent involvement in their child's school include students tend to achieve higher grades and assessment scores, better student attendance, fewer placements in special education, more positive attitudes and behavior, and greater enrollment in postsecondary education.



## Communication Strategies

Personal contact, including conferences, home visits, telephone calls, and curriculum nights or open houses, are a most effective form of communication and most familiar. With the great diversity among families, it is not possible to rely on a single method of communication to reach all homes, therefore, it is essential that a variety of strategies, adapted to the needs of particular families and their schedules, be incorporated into an overall plan.

- Parent newsletters
- Annual open houses
- Curriculum nights
- Home visits (where applicable)
- Phone calls
- Annual school calendars
- Inserts in local newspapers
- Annual grandparents or "special persons" days
- Board of Education spokesperson
- Website for the school
- Workshops for parents
- Communications that are focused on fathers as well as mothers



Newsletters provides parents with a variety of information. You may include current activities, upcoming events, tips for parents on nutrition, discipline, etc., monthly birthdays, favorite websites, or family or student feature. Highlight upcoming events, student's quotes, poems, or stories, include a kindness column or community services section. Remember to obtain permission from parent or guardian for student photos used in the newsletter.

### Activity #1 Create a Parent Newsletter

Using the sample template or template of your choice, and create a parent newsletter for your school or center.

## Activity #1 Sample Newsletter Template



# Newsletter Title

## Headline

Subhead or byline

Text

## Headline

Subhead or byline

Text

## Headline

Subhead or byline

Text

monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday

## The Dynamics of Parents

Working in a preschool center you have encountered the many personality types of parents. There are parents who rush in, drop off their child or children and run out the door. Other parents read everything on the bulletin board, may walk in classrooms and observe what teachers do for morning instruction. Yet, other parents, hang out at the school and wait for teachers to provide a task for them.

These parents are known as;

- 1) Hit and run parents
- 2) The Inspector
- 3) Go with the flow parents



### 1) ***Hit and Run***

The hit and run parent parks out the front door, runs in and catches the first person they see and often ask to have someone sign their child in. Hit and run parents do not worry about what caretakers' are teaching that day, they assume all safety measures and teacher ratios are in place, and never ask about teachers' credentials. This usually occurs because parents have had their children in the program for some time and simply trust staff, or they have to get to work in a hurry and trust the teachers will take care of their children and teach them whatever it is they need to know. *After all they are teachers, and they should know everything about what goes on at the school right?* There are also parents who dislike the schools or centers where they take their children, but that is all they can afford. Parents may feel *stuck* at your center.

### ***Working with Hit and Run Parents***

When working with parents who run in the front door to drop off their child, the teacher or an administrator must be prepared to capture their attention with a quick statement or phrase. For example, saying "Good morning, (address by name) I see you are in a hurry to get off to work so I'd like for you to give us a call during your lunch break or sent us an email." or "Good morning, I see you are in a hurry, so I would like to give you an opportunity to participate by helping out with special events or projects that occur in the evenings." or "Good morning, I know you are busy in the morning so I'd like to offer you an opportunity to work at home on helping by painting the set for our school program."



## The Dynamics of Parents

### ***2) The Inspector***

The inspector parent insists on a walk-through of the entire school while they inspect the school to make sure it is good enough for their child. These parents read lesson plans, ask about safety procedures, , and they sometimes want to observe different teachers giving instruction. Inspector parents also want to see teachers' credentials. Parents may call 3 times a day to see what their child is doing and explain to you how to cut the grapes in half so their child does not choke and tells you not to let their child play with *little Johnny* because his clothes does not match (you get the idea).

### ***How to address the Inspector Parent***

When a parent insists on doing a “walk-through” through your school, be willing to show them around. Start with showing them the school vision, parent board, and procedure manual. The lesson plans should be clearly posted, safety procedures, and curriculum outlines. Do a quick walk through a classroom if time permits. Encourage and welcome parents to come to a school event or open house to talk to the teachers. Provide parents with any resources you have regarding school functions, curriculum, content standards, and the school calendar and parent newsletter.



## Enhancing Communications with Families

### ***3) Go with the Flow***

Yet, other parents go with the flow and take their children to school every day, wait for the front door to open so they can sign their child in, then hang out and talk to other parents as they come in to drop off their children. Go with the flow parents usually linger in the class until the teachers asked for them to leave or instruction begins. These parents will read a book to the students and help the teachers with various tasks. As teachers it is equally important to reach all parents and it is your responsibility to share daily news, upcoming event information, and what you are doing to prepare their children for the next school level. The goal now is how to communicate with each and every one of these parents.

### ***How to address Go with the Flow Parents***

Continue to encourage “Go with the Flow Parents” to assist their child’s teacher by reading a story to children, assisting with outdoor supervision, assist with lesson planning activities, and working on bulletin boards. Parents who have time to spend in the classroom also may assist with serving lunch, cleaning up, setting up for an event and becoming part of, with teacher assistance, organizing a parent committees.



## Parent Communication

Communicating with parents can be a challenging task at times. Getting parents to attend open house, school events, or parent conferences may be the only 3 times you see parents in the entire school year. Here are 10 ways to enhance communicate with parents in your center:

### **1) Parent Bulletin Board**

Having a parent bulletin board is a great communication tool if it is maintained well and updated frequently. Useful information to post on your parent bulletin board should include: a calendar of important events along with detailed information about these events, the weekly menu, parent newsletters and information on parent resources. Draw attention to the bulletin board by changing the theme monthly and be sure that your bulletin board is near the entrance of the building.

### **2) Notes on the Child**

Return address labels are a unique way to communicate short messages to parents. For example, if a child needs diapers ASAP simply write: *"I need diapers"* on a return address label and stick it on the child. Labels can also be used as a brief reminder for center events such as picture day, parties and other important days.

### **3) Posting Signs on the Parent Entrance**

When parents enter your building one of the first things that they see is the door. This is a great place to post key information such as: upcoming events, party information, field trip information, scheduled closings, policy reminders and more.

### **4) Family Mailboxes**

Setting up family mailboxes is an organized way of sending notes home to parents. Depending on the size of your center, the mailboxes can be placed in each classroom or in a location near the parent entrance. Label each mailbox with the child's name or the family's last name. Post a sign on the outside of the entrance of your building reminding parents to check mailboxes each day. Also, encourage teachers and children to remind parents to check mailboxes.

## Parent Communication

### **5) Verbal Reminders**

Pick-up time or morning arrival is a perfect time to remind parents of classroom events, center events or supplies needed. Parents usually will appreciate the reminder, because they may not have time to read the notes that were sent home until days later. Verbal reminders send the message to parents that you are comfortable talking with them -- a key way to open up the lines of communication.

### **6) Use the Child as a Communication Tool**

Children are known for having a good memory! Have you ever made a promise to a child? If so, chances are they frequently reminded you of the promise you made. When there is an important event in your center or if the children need to return something to school, simply ask the teacher to discuss it with the children at group time. The children will be sure to remind their parents over and over again!

### **7) Telephone Calls**

If you need to get a message to a parent and find that sending a note does not work, give the parent a call. Be sure to keep the phone call brief (3-5minutes). Keeping the phone conversation short sends the message that you respect the parents' time. There are many different ways of contacting parents: home phone, cell phone or at work. Be sure to ask the parent what time of day is a good time to call them and which number is the best number to reach them.

### **8) Easels on the Outside of the Classrooms**

Placing an easel on the outside of the classrooms provides another way of communicating with parents for the teachers. The parents will read the note before entering the classroom, and it may even create some discussion between the teacher and the parent about the note. Writing or typing notes takes time. If teachers do not have time to write notes, he or she can simply write messages on the easel outside of their classroom. The easel can either be in the form of a dry erase board or a chalkboard.

## Parent Communication

### 9) Mail Flyers or Postcards to Their Home

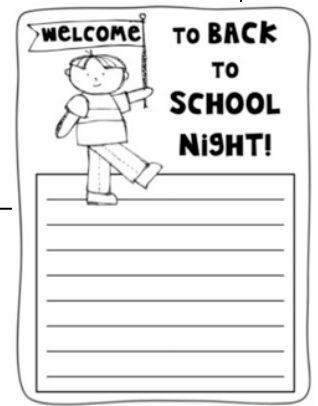
What is the first thing that you do when you get home? For many, this is the time they read the mail. Sending a post card to a parent's home sends the message that your center event and their participation are important. In most homes, the refrigerator is full of important notes, and your postcard or flyer just may go on the refrigerator as one of these reminders.

### 10) Email

In this electronic age, sending an email is another effective way of communicating with parents. Some parents have their emails sent to their cell phones, or they may even check their email at work. This is also a great way to save paper! Information that can be sent by email includes: newsletters, my day reports, reminders or even tuition reminders. During the enrollment process, ask each family for their email address so that you have another way of communicating with them.

### Creating a Parent Communication Board

There is no right or wrong way to create a parent bulletin board. Place the Parent Board in a highly visible location, change the board periodically or as needed, direct the new parents' attention to the board, include helpful, pertinent information, convey warmth, and a sense of partnership with parents. Make sure your Parent Board looks neat, organized, professional, and visually appealing.



## Activity #2 Parent Communication Board

### Activity #2 Create a Parent Communication Board

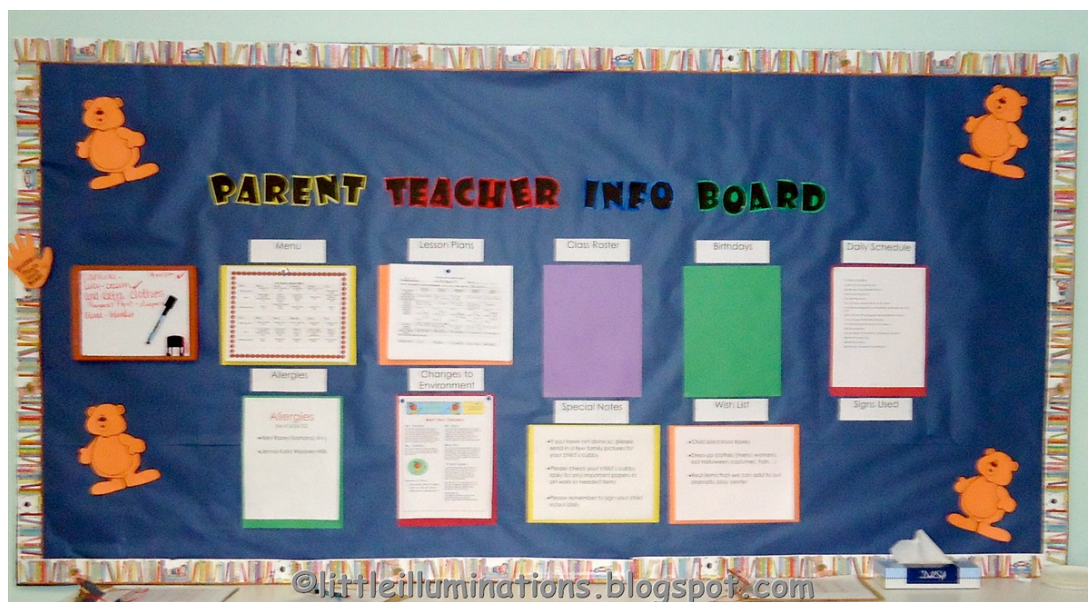
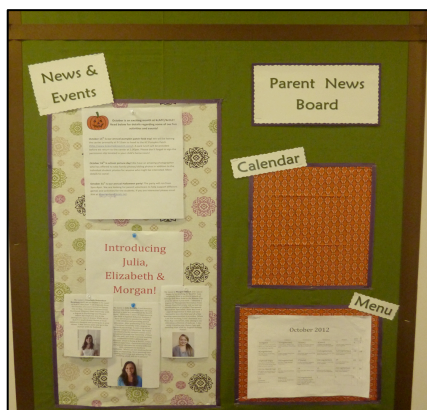
Sketch a parent board including a minimum of 5-7 elements provided in the list below.

#### Parent Board Ideas

- Teacher Biographies
- Menu
- Lesson Plan(s)
- Copy of Content Standards
- Emergency Procedures
- Upcoming Events
- Lunch Menu
- Parenting Info / Articles
- Daily Schedule
- Policy Reminders
- Special Activities
- "What We Did Today"
- Copy of the Newsletter



## Examples of Parent Bulletin Boards



## Positive Contact with Parents

### 1) Smile When You See Parents

Greet them. Most parents only occasionally interact with teachers so make sure that at least 90 percent of your encounters with them are positive, warm, and friendly.

### 2) Learn Parents Names

Always address parents by their preferred name.



### 3) Declare Your Intention

Tell them that you want to partner with them, that you appreciate their support, and look forward to working together.

### 4) Communicate Often and in Various Forms

Provide information about what's going on in your class, what students are learning, what they've accomplished, what you're excited about, what they're excited about, and the learning and growth you're seeing.

### 5) Take a Positive Phone Call Home

Call all homes within the first couple of weeks and then at regular intervals throughout the year. Identify those students who perhaps need a positive call home.

### 6) Lead with Positive News

Give positive praise first when calling parents or meeting with them to discuss a concern. Every child has something good about him/her. Then share your concern. End with a positive note.

### 7) Find a Translator

If you can't speak parents language, seek a translator for at least one parent conference and/or phone call. Parents are encouraged to bring in a family member to assist in translating for conferences.



## Positive Contact with Parents

### **8) Ask Questions about the Child**

"What kinds of things does he enjoy doing outside of school? Who are the special people in her life -- family or family friends? What do you think are her best characteristics? What was he like as a little boy?" Demonstrate an interest in knowing your student. Take time to listen to your parents.

### **9) Invite Parents to Share**

Distribute a survey at the beginning of the year (if parents don't read/write in English, students can interview them and relay their answers). Find out what parents know about and what skills they have. Let parents share with you their cultural traditions, interests, passions, skills, knowledge.

### **10) Let Parents Know How They Can Help**

Many want to help but especially as kids get older, parents aren't asked for help as often and don't know what to do. There's always some way they can help in the classroom.

### **12) Explain Your Instructional Decisions**

Plan ongoing parent workshops to notify parents about curriculum or curriculum changes. Keep parents informed about any major changes or additions within the educational system.

### **13) Develop a Learning Community**

Invite parents to give their input, give them information that will help them form an opinion, and listen to their conclusions.

## Positive Contact with Parents

### **14) Thank Parents**

Both individually and publicly for their support, perhaps in your weekly newsletter. Recognize what they do to help your class and how it's impacting students.

### **15) Share Every Success**

Let parents know what their child is doing well, what academic skills, social skills or knowledge he's mastered.

### **What Parents Can Do**

Parents are their children's best advocates. Parents' willingness to contact teachers on a regular basis about their children's progress is the first step to becoming involved in their children's education. Armed with good information about a child's performance, parents can proceed in both direct and indirect ways to influence the child's progress. Parents can become directly involved in children's education by:

- Limiting time spent with friends and watching television
- Providing support to educators,
- Providing ideas for improvements in the education system
- Taking advantage of opportunities to become involved with school administration and policy development

It is important to keep parents informed about their child's progress during the entire school year.

## Tips to Involve Parents

**Keeping Parents interested and Involved.** Here are some ideas for supporting ongoing parental interest and involvement that many early childhood educators have found to be successful:

**Make the most of drop-off and pick-up activities.** Greet parents with enthusiasm and when possible, acknowledge their arrival in some special way. When parents are in a hurry make eye contact with them, give them a tap on the shoulder, or a smile and a simple wave to acknowledge their presence.

**Share a detail or two.** When speaking with parents, be sure to add some specific information about their child's progress. "She's doing fine" is not nearly as satisfying to a parent as "You wouldn't believe how much fun she had drawing shapes on the sand the other day!"

**Host a variety of special events.** Try to plan activities such as informal breakfasts, picnics, class trips, and fairs featuring educational books throughout the school year. Events from parents may encourage them to be more involved in developing and planning. Be sure to consider whether parents have preferences about when during the day or evening these activities should take place.

**Communicate frequently.** Whether in person (parent-teacher conferences,), through printed materials (flyers, newsletters, school bulletin boards) or online (school Web sites, group or individual e-mails), try to make frequent contact with parents.

**High expectations count.** Help make parents aware of the school's high standards for achievement, learning goals, curriculum and strategies for helping every child succeed. Invite parents to become involved in decision-making and planning ways to help the school community meet these goals.

**Celebrate achievements through work sampling.** Create portfolios, scrap books, and/or other collections of children's experiences in the classroom for parents to look at whenever they visit the classroom.

**Encourage parent networking.** A good way to start building parent networks is by creating a parent contact list. Be sure to include teachers, aides and other relevant school personnel.

## Tips to Involve Parents

**Identify and make useful resources available to parents.** Be prepared to lead parents to readily available resources, or through a lending library in the school, through local agencies or via helpful resources on the Web.

**Invite parents into the classroom.** Extend frequent invitations for parents to visit their child's school and spend time in the classroom. Whether parents are invited to be silent observers or to help with activities, these visits can be most helpful and enjoyable. Always thank parents for their visit.

**Make the most of drop-off and pick-up activities.** Greet with enthusiasm and when possible, acknowledge their arrival in some special way.

**Share a detail or two.** When speaking with parents, be sure to add some specific information about their child's progress. "She's doing fine" is not nearly as satisfying to a parent as "You wouldn't believe how much fun she had creating shapes out of clay the other day!"

**Host a variety of special events.** Try to plan activities such as informal breakfasts, picnics, class trips and fairs featuring educational books and toys throughout the school year. Events from parents may encourage them to be more involved in developing and planning. Be sure to consider whether parents have preferences about when during the day or evening these activities should take place.

### Phone Guidelines

For new teachers it can be difficult to make the first call to a parent or guardian. Preparing for the call will make it easier. Before making a call, write down the reasons for the call. One reason can be simply to introduce yourself to the parent or guardian. Here are several guidelines you can use as you prepare:

- Introduce yourself
- Tell the parents what their child is learning about
- Invite the parents to an open house and/or other school functions
- Comment on their child's progress
- Inform parents of their child's achievements
- Inform parents of their child's strengths



## Cultural Diversity Integration

Diversity refers to the given categories into which individuals fit at birth such as race, ethnicity, class, nationality and gender, or it may refer to the voluntary categories that individuals adopt over time. With more cultural diverse parents speaking languages other than English or may speak several English dialects it is crucial to reach all families. Many families joining our schools today may have had different, few, or no experiences with formal education. Consequently, they bring new expectations and challenges to schools. Parents who are immigrants may be undergoing cultural dissonance, a tension or clash between two different environments and acculturation, adapting to a different cultural or group.

### Benefits of Cultural Diverse Integration

- Play an important role in the learning processes of their children
- Help teachers gain access to various resources
- Teachers awareness of their own cultural awareness
- Inclusive cultural diverse materials visible in the classroom environment
- Rich and diverse inclusion influences policy and practice

All families have power and their experience and knowledge can play an important role in the learning processes of their children and in helping teachers to access community resources. There is a need for genuine dialogues between teachers and the families of the children they teach, based on teachers' awareness of their own identities and cultures. Cultural diverse materials must also be inclusive and visible in the classroom environment. Research reveals that rich and diverse ways in which families support children's learning within their communities continues to grow and influences policy and practice.



## Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

One of the most important principles of inclusion of students with disabilities is to understand that no two learners are alike. Inclusive schools include opportunities for students to learn and be assessed in a variety of ways. Therefore teachers in inclusive schools must consider a wide range of learning modalities (visual, kinesthetic, and auditory) and differentiated instruction when designing instruction.

### Benefits of Inclusion for Students With Disabilities

- Friendships
- Increased social initiations, relationships and networks
- Peer role models for academic, social and behavior skills
- Increased achievement of IEP goals
- Greater access to general curriculum
- Enhanced skill acquisition and generalization
- Increased inclusion in future environments
- Greater opportunities for interactions
- Higher expectations
- Increased school staff collaboration
- Increased parent participation
- Families are more integrated into community



The establishment of inclusive schools benefits everyone by fostering an environment where students and their families are valued for who they are. Students with disabilities can only be successful when they are truly part of the school community. Friendships are developed, increased social relationships, increased achievement of IEP goals (Individual Evaluation Plan), greater access to resources, and increased inclusion in future environments. Families of students who attend inclusive schools experience greater opportunities for interactions, experience higher expectations, increased school staff and parent collaboration and participation, as well as integration into the community.

## Parent Involvement Plan

Develop a parent committee in the beginning of the school year. Keep record of agendas and attendees. Encourage and invite all parents to take part of this process to alleviate any misunderstandings that only certain parents have the “say so”. At the beginning of the school year the administrative team distributes informational packets containing a copy of the school’s parental involvement plan, survey of parent interests, recommended roles for parents suggestions of ways parents can become involved in their child’s education, and parental involvement activities planned for the current school year.

The Parent Involvement Plan will address 1) desired results between leaders, teachers, and parents, 2) documentation of agenda and attendance of stakeholders, 3) activities proposed to address, 4) resources used or needed for future meetings and a 5) timeline including a calendar of events for the year. These are recommended headings to address on a Parent Involvement Plan, however you may additional heading that address your school needs.

### **1) What are your desired results?**

Desired results are defined as conditions of well-being for children and families and each desired result defines an overall outcome. Desired results may include the following components; participation, satisfaction, learning, and performance, however, not limited to developmental profile, children and families, parent survey results, and program self-evaluation.

### **2) Identify the stakeholders**

Every project has stakeholders. People of interests or concern dealing with and fostering good communication with key stakeholders is essential. Primary stakeholders are people or groups that are directed involved and affected in an agency, organization, or institution. Stakeholder representation brings forth an array of ideas to the table, they include varied perspectives from all sectors and elements of the community, it increases the credibility of your organization and increases any chances for success of your efforts. Stakeholder involvement begins with the leader, specialist, or facilitator who form a committee. The primary task of the committee is to identify issues and trends in the project development process. Issues and trends help the committee determine how students’ needs are met, understanding how students learn, students’ current experience, and availability of resources. Committee members also identify scheduling issues, methods of assessments, and professional development. Although committee members play a crucial role in the project management process, the selection of members is equally important.

## Parent Involvement Plan

### **3) Identify activities**

List various communication strategies used in your school to provide additional information to parents and to increase parental involvement in supporting classroom instruction. Some examples are annual open house, distribution of the monthly calendar, the weekly school newsletter, homework tips, and student study tips. Additional activities may include mentoring moms, volunteer training, book fair helpers, awards presentation night, Red Ribbon Night, Choir concerts, Fall carnival or field day. The administrative team will encourage parents in these various types of roles and activities to increase their involvement and support.

### **4) What resources are needed now and in the future?**

Collaborate with the team to determine the types of resources needed currently and for future use. When planning for resources, consider the budget allotted for parents and plan for the following year. Resources may include learning materials, brochures, teacher of the year supplies, parent training events, end of the school activities, food for breakfasts', luncheons or family dinner nights.

### **5) How long will this take to accomplish your goals?**

In the parent involvement plan include the time frame it will take to accomplish goals.



## Parent Involvement Plan

### **Parent Involvement Plan may also include:**

- Parent Involvement Activity
- Measurable evidence
- Resources
- Strategies
- Funding Source
- Target Audience
- Follow-up activity
- Evaluation
- Professional development
- Parent involvement workshops
- Community partnerships

### **Activity #3 Create a Parent Involvement Plan**

Create a parent involvement plan using sample template on the following slide or devise your own template using heading pertaining to your school, center, or parent needs.

### Activity #3 Parent Involvement Plan

What are your Desired Results?	Who are your stakeholders? Evidence of Involvement	What type of activities will you use?	What resources are needed?	Timeline How long will it take to accomplish your goals?

## **Building Trust with Parents**

When building trust with parents, talk with parents casually and keep ongoing communication lines open. Use registration time to build a foundation with parents. Create detailed student information sheets to share during conferences. Send out parents surveys to gather parent interests. Make open house a special event and present a simple chart to share student expectations, rules and regulations. Communicate good news regularly and establish an “Open Door Policy.” Once trust is build with parents, parents are more likely to return to your center and enroll younger siblings, volunteer, and play an important role in their child’s life.

### **Listen to Parents**

There may be times that a parent has a question or concern about something. Refrain from being defensive. Being defensive makes it seem as though you have something to hide. Instead of being defensive listen to everything parents have to say before you react. Most of the time a parent’s questions or concerns come down to miscommunication or misconceptions. Assure parents you will clear up any issues, remain calm and in a professional manner. Listening to parents provides parents the opportunity to vent about an issue that may be easily resolved.

### **Document Every Communication**

The importance of documenting parent communication can ease any future concerns regarding specific issues. It doesn’t have to be anything in depth. Documentation needs to include the date, parent/student name, and a brief summary. Although you may never need it, it will be well worth the time if you ever need it. Documenting is so valuable. For example, a parent may not be happy about your perception on a child’s progress through the course of the year. A parent could claim that you never talked to them about it, but if you have it documented that you did communicate several times throughout the year, the parent has no basis for their claim. It is important to document every parents concerns, whether you know them well or not.

## Parent Survey

When parents and teachers work together, everyone benefits. Meaningful school-family partnerships mean that children are learning to the best of their ability, they feel safe and supported, and their parents feel well informed and involved in making decisions that affect their child's school experience. An effective collaboration requires efforts from both teachers and parents to create a trusting, equitable relationship. Building a parent's trust is often a gradual process. First of all parents need reassurance that you have their child's best interest at heart. Constant communication is the key to building trust with families. To build trust with families reach out to parents, follow through with you you say, and understand parent needs. To better understand parent needs send out a simple survey consisting of the following questions:

### Examples of Survey Questions

- Do teachers challenge my child to do better? Explain.
- Do teachers treat my child with respect? How so?
- Is classroom discipline at the school is consistent?
- Does your child's teacher or principal collaborate and provide feedback that are valued at your child's school? Explain.
- How is homework productive and support learning in the classroom?
- How are you informed about your child's progress or areas of concern before report card are sent home?
- Are you satisfied with the textbooks and curriculum used at your child's school?
- As a parent, are you provided with opportunities for involvement at your child's school?
- What are interests and hobbies?
- Is the school a safe place for your child? Explain.

### Activity #4 Develop a Parent Survey

## ACTIVITY 4: Develop a Parent Survey

### Develop a Parent Survey

Develop a 10-question parent survey using sample questions provided. Include 3-5 questions addressing your parents needs.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Other:

## Barriers to Parental Involvement

Many parents encounter obstacles to participating in their children's education. These barriers are brought into your center every day. Barriers to parent involvement include:

- Differing ideas among parents and teachers on what constitutes involvement
- Insufficient training for teachers on how to reach out to both mothers and fathers
- Lack of parental education and parenting skills
- Time pressures
- Job pressures
- Language barriers
- Cultural differences
- Families past negative experiences
- Child Care constraints

Studies show that parents tend to be less involved in the educational process as their children get older. A study of the U.S. Department of Education found that nationwide, as children grow older, contacts between families and schools decline in number and in the positive nature of such contacts. This decline in involvement is the result, in part, of a variety of challenges that families face that make their participation difficult. Although these barriers make it difficult for parents to get involved with their child's education, the tips and strategies previously provided will help you to reach parents.

## Recommendations

Based on the information provided, recommendations to enhance communication with parents include understanding of

- The benefits of parent involvement
- Effective forms of parent communication strategies
- Recognizing the three personality types of parents
- Demonstrating effective methods of positive contact with parents
- Identifying the benefits of cultural diversity integration
- Identifying the benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities
- Building trust with parents

*Participants will be able to complete four (4) activities*

- 1) Creating a Parent Newsletter
- 2) Designing Parent Communication Board
- 3) Composing Parent Involvement Plan
- 4) Developing a 10-Question Parent Survey

*A 20 question assessment will follow this training module.*

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