Standard 1:
Welcoming All Families into the School Community

Families are *active* participants in the life of the school and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Ideas for Implementation

1. Create welcoming committees to provide new families to the school with important information and a support system. Place welcome to the "ABC" School Community signs in their yards, conduct home or porch visits, deliver welcome packets with information from the school and greater community, or design a parent to parent mentoring program that provides new families with an additional point of contact.

2. Enlist parent greeters to provide a smiling face before school, after school, as well as during other high-traffic times or school events when families and visitors are in the school. Set up a parent desk at the entrance of the school and staff it throughout the day with parent volunteers who greet those who enter and serve as an initial point of contact for school information.

3. Display a guestbook for visitor sign in and sign out and provide various badges indicating whether a person is a parent, volunteer or visitor for guests to wear while they are in the building. Label the badges Very Important Person (VIP) so that staff and students are aware of their presence when they are in the building.

4. Provide school interpreter on site or someone who can be called upon, in person or over the phone, if a parent or family member needs assistance. Recruit some of your bi-lingual parents to volunteer their time to assist with interpreting.

5. Ensure that all aspects of the school community reflect, respect, and value the diversity of all your families. Provide many opportunities for them to volunteer by offering them ways to utilize their unique talents, offer school activities that are free or low-cost, and hold meetings or events in school and community locations on various days and times.

6. Take the school to the families by holding meet and greets in community and neighborhood locations. Provide information or workshops on navigating the school system and allow parents to have informal conversations with school teachers and staff to build personal relationships.

7. Hold various family-friendly events such as bring a friend to school day where parents are charged with reaching out and bringing either a community member, family member, or another parent who usually does not attend school events. Make the event fun and informative to keep those newly engaged visitors part of your growing school community.

8. Take time to honor those parents who contribute to the school and their child's education by listening to them and thanking them in various ways on a regular basis. Hold a special breakfast or lunch in honor of them, have students draw pictures or write cards, highlight their names and service at special events, or simply have a different school faculty or staff member personally thank them each month.

9. Develop an open door policy that allows parents and families to connect with the school or drop-in at any time. Provide guidance to parents on what to do when entering a classroom to observe so students are not distracted. Have a special chair dedicated to a parent or visitor in each room so they are seen as a valuable part of their child's education process.

10. Hold professional development training for all teachers, administrators, and school staff on family engagement. Teach ways to support and communicate with families as well as how to engage them in the student achievement process. Include front office staff in training inclusive of parent sensitivity and cultural competence to ensure everyone who enters the school feels welcome.

Reference:

National Parent Teacher Association (PTA). (2009). *PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships: An Implementation Guide.* Retrieved from http://www.pta.org/2757.asp

Your Ideas for Implementation

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