



Building Family-Friendly Schools

“Schools must become places where families feel wanted and recognized for their strengths and potential.”

Family-friendly schools create a climate in which every characteristic of the school is open and helpful. These family-friendly schools make every effort to build partnerships with **all** families, not just those that are most involved. Use this checklist to determine how family-friendly your school is and how you can increase its friendliness in a way that is reflective of the cultures and languages it serves.

Practices for creating a family-friendly school environment:
<input type="checkbox"/> Create and publicly post a family-school-community partnership policy or mission statement that provides the philosophical framework for all family-school-community activities.
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish policies and practices that acknowledge and support traditional and nontraditional families, as well as those with differing schedules and commitments.
<input type="checkbox"/> Create an open-door policy and climate that is responsive to parents and their concerns. (If for safety reasons it is necessary to lock some doors, be sure that families understand this and know the procedure for calling and being met at the front door.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Set school calendars, when possible, to accommodate major community events, activities and ceremonies.
Create a front office atmosphere that makes people feel welcome:
<input type="checkbox"/> Greet families with a smile and warm welcome.
<input type="checkbox"/> Have parent friendly information translated into other languages as necessary.
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a comfortable, clean place to sit, meet and access resources.
<input type="checkbox"/> Hire bilingual staff to serve as interpreters as necessary.
<input type="checkbox"/> Recognize that families have different learning styles and require that you vary the way information is shared.
<input type="checkbox"/> Arrange for flexibility in routine tasks such as registration and orientation (on-line and telephone options, day and evening hours, etc.)
School staff who are successful in engaging family members share the following qualities:
<input type="checkbox"/> Recognize that parents play a crucial role in their child's learning.
<input type="checkbox"/> Always treat parents with respect.
<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate professionalism and confidence.
<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate concern for students in all interactions with parents.

Adapted from: Ballen, J. & Moles, O. (1994, September)