

Parent Engagement: Challenges & Opportunities

“A small group of parents does everything at my school.”

- Take pictures of volunteers and display them.
- “Do One Thing” - post a list of things people can help with and acknowledge who does what
- Allow all parents to try all things – train or just delegate and relinquish
- Be specific when asking for help.
- Being a leader is not doing everything – you are a matchmaker, identify people who may be a good fit for different tasks/posts – bring new people into the fold.
- Have a volunteer party
- Who is a bridge? Identify people who can link different groups of parents
- Meet together at beginning of the year.

“Meetings are not convenient.”

- Alternate time (morning/afternoon or evening) every other month.
- Report out what happened - room parent coordinator sends re-cap of meetings.
- Poll ALL members (not just the people who show up at 3 pm) on good meeting time.

“My principal has a narrow/limited definition of parent engagement.”

- Check for conflicting messages from site leaders vs. parent leadership.
- Call Welcome Center staff (Tracy Mikuriya) for support
- Find out Principal’s focus – how can we (parents) help you reach your goals?
- Coffee with Principal – monthly

“There are language barriers at my school.”

- Have translation
- PEN has headsets – equipment is preferred method of translation, but at very least have a translator present.
- Specific outreach to different groups
- Some people just waiting to be asked (may be cultural/personality obstacle over language)
- Men at meetings may not feel part of things – have their own meeting – fathers doing more outreach.

“I don’t have time to be an involved parent.”

- Broaden definition of “involved” to encourage parents – not just coming to meetings.
- Be specific with request
- Ask what can be done at home
- Kids drive/influence their parents – get children involved, offer small incentives
- Work days advertised in advance

“No one told me.”

- Get the message out early and often – repetition is key
- Newsletter
- Monthly calendar
- PTA Casual Coffee at drop off
- Room Parents call day, calendar on website, post in hallway
- Informal network of communicators

