

## **Parent Involvement Outreach Strategies**

Parent categories are from Ruby Payne's work; strategies are from participant suggestions in "Tools and Resources for Parent Involvement", OSPI Conference, 1/21/03

### **1. Two working parents who will be there when you ask**

- Encourage them to bring a friend
- Thank them; tell them how important their involvement is
- Link them up with other parents to share responsibilities
- Consolidate information when parents visit so that they are prepared to be involved when they come
- Ask them what their passion is in life and utilize that passion and skills in the classroom
- Don't overwork them to prevent burnout
- Schedule night conferences
- Communicate by e-mail and phone
- Set the school calendar in advance and make available
- Define parent involvement clearly from both perspectives
- Find out their schedules and how to reach when needed
- Use voice mail
- Use other communication if necessary
- Build on their strengths
- Ask them to volunteer to help with childcare for single parents so that they can get involved, thereby creating community among different parent sectors
- Home visits if necessary

### **2. Non-Working Parents**

- Make a special invitation for participation
- Have potlucks in the first weeks of school
- Create program – muffins for moms, doughnuts for dads
- Be sensitive to basic needs
- Students address 3x5 card with decoration; teacher sends home with positive comment on it
- Provide transportation if needed
- Schedule their activities during the school day
- Create at-home activities for their participation
- Ask them to schedule a regular time for their participation
- Make home visits
- Use several modes of communication
- Create a reason for them to come to school
- Link by computer
- Use Homework Hotline

### **3. Single parent working two jobs**

- Underlying philosophy: In this situation it is best to figure out how to help the single parent, rather than asking the parent for help...individualize our strategies
- Communicate!
- Find out best access times for the parent and teacher
- Be flexible in meeting times
- Provide daycare during meeting times
- Go to his/her work or home (phone, e-mail)
- Show interest in his/her child
- Involve child at school so parent wants to come to school
- Principal calls parent
- Find out who the childcare provider is
- Get permission to contact parent at either job or perhaps both
- Have signed communications from parents back to teacher
- Have teacher communicate after work hours if possible
- Help provide resources for additional support for parent – Big Brother, Big Sister, Library Services
- Be a good listener to parent

### **4. Single parent working one high pressure job**

- Remember they all care about their kids
- Provide entertainment first (poetry, dance, etc.) then information; conclude with a snack
- Provide a dinner before /after then information
- Provide childcare at information meeting/dinners
- Make home visits
- Use newsletters and phone calls
- Use assignment books that give room for communication between parent and teacher
- Have a welcoming staff
- Work with their schedules -- Stay late to meet with parent; Call on weekends
- Encourage support from other families; hook up families with each other
- Provide participation that they can do at home
- Tap into their strengths

### **5. Unavailable Parent**

- Call at work with noon return call
- Visit during lunch breaks
- Ask the student how to contact
- Find out if the child has a guardian or suggest
- Contact a neighbor or a relative, school counselor/social worker

*(Unavailable Parent continued)*

- Find a liaison communicator
- Use many communication techniques, including signed parent responses
- Encourage feedback
- Call grandparent
- Communicate with sibling
- Teacher/teacher communication for strategizing
- Use e-mail
- Call and say principal wants to talk
- Short notes on cute paper
- Include kids so parents will come
- Have kid activity and pull parents aside
- Use home visits

**6. Available parent, but won't participate**

- Use personal contact, calls, letters, geared to their interest or expertise
- Give positive statements about kids
- Deliver literacy of SIP information to the house in person
- Question them to find reasons why they don't participate
- Send home a simple project for parent and child to complete
- Have students write an invitation for parent to participate
- Provide free childcare
- Have a "parent learning" night (fractions, writing, reading)
- Journal between parent and teacher (e-mail/notebooks)

**7. Available to participate, but doesn't know what to do, doesn't know the hidden rules, and isn't asked to be part of the group**

- Invite them!
- Low key at first in terms of ask, build up to more
- Have them buddy with another experienced parent
- Have a parent handbook
- Create a welcoming atmosphere with a "point person" to "mentor" them when they come to school
- Have an open door policy
- Find out how they want to be involved and give them options and plug them in
- Have training sessions; include "unsaid" protocols for behavior in a non-condescending way
- Give brief list of needs
- Provide schedules and opportunities
- Acknowledge when they try to help immediately to give "reward"

*(Available but don't know how... parent category continued)*

- Encourage them to ask questions if they do not understand the situation
- Have a communication contact person
- Use a questionnaire to find a list of things they might be comfortable doing == e.g., will you work with different size groups? Will you grade papers?

#### **8. Kids who are their own parents**

- Find out more about their situation
- Give positive feedback to them through phone calls and notes
- Home visits
- Provide resources and support for the child
- Allow the child to be a child when at school
- Support groups for the kids
- Be sure they have an advocate (counselor, another parent) or adult role model for student interaction
- Be sure their basic needs are being met first
- Praise them for their responsibility
- Respect the child for the challenges he/she faces

#### **9. Parent of English language learners**

- Welcome signs in different languages at school entrance
- Match interest and skills with volunteer opportunities
- Advertise variety of ways to support the school and student learning.
- Volunteer doesn't mean daily, yearly, or parent conferences only
- Utilize staff and students with bilingual skills.
- Translate handouts into their language; make sure translation is not poor quality; that it is equitable
- Use audio for non-readers
- Insure that someone at the front desk is bilingual
- Have cultural celebrations, appreciation, and demonstrations to build trust
- Have flexibility in hours and visits
- Introduce ESL parents to each other; build support with kids and parents
- Spanish, Russian, etc class involvement in speaking and tutoring
- Provide English classes for the parents at night

**RELLRs**

**Reach Out** -- Invite parents to participate in child's learning; communicate on the parent's schedule

**Encourage** – Empathize with parents; thank them for everything, including getting children to school on time, etc

**Link** – E-mail, phone, write, and journal –within parents' time frame

**Learn** – About the family – needs, strengths, work or non-work

**Respect** -- Know that all parents care about their kids and any parent, regardless of income, work situation, etc, and treat them accordingly

Other ideas: school clothing banks, after school tutoring