

The Learning Bar

Parent & Caregiver Survey Success Strategies

Feel Welcome

Successful schools are characterized by welcoming and inclusive school climates that strive to provide opportunities for responsive and respectful interactions between parents and school staff. Research consistently demonstrates how parental engagement in a child's school life is a critical factor impacting the child's educational outcomes (Castro et al., 2015). Schools serve as an important hub of activity for families who may, in turn, lend contributions to the school community; by offering welcoming practices and creating inclusive environments for all stakeholders, schools can enhance community connections and elicit active participation from parents and caregivers (Siegel et al, 2019).



Why is it important?

- Parental involvement and feedback in support of student learning (e.g., PTA meetings) can help influence school programs and lead to expanded parental networks (Erkenbrack, 2026).
- A welcoming school climate is especially important in engaging parents from marginalized groups, as they may have historically felt unwelcome in other contexts (Park & Holloway, 2018).
- Parental engagement in school-related activities is more likely when principals are perceived to be receptive and welcoming (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014).

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In Practice



What can schools do to make parents feel welcome?

School staff should strive to develop a warm, helpful rapport with all parents and caregivers by prioritizing visibility, availability and genuine personal connections.

First Impressions and a Welcoming Climate

- Ensure that support staff are equipped with working knowledge about school policies, procedures, and events to sufficiently field questions and guide parents around school facilities.
- Inform teachers that they are expected to invest in relationships with parents and caregivers by being responsive to their needs and providing detailed information concerning student learning and socioemotional development.
- Make overtures to form genuine bonds between school leadership and parents by being present and accessible onsite at schools (e.g., greeting students and families outside the school, open house events etc.).

Integration into the School Community

- Organize regularly held activities and events dedicated to facilitating communication with and between parents and caregivers.
- Create opportunities for conversation in school-related matters and, where possible and appropriate, parental involvement in the classroom.
- Use parent gatherings as a means to build school spirit; thereby, enhancing feelings of belonging at and integration within the school community.

Considerations for Diversity and Inclusivity

- Work to overcome language and access barriers in order to effectively communicate with parents and caregivers (e.g., interpreters, etc.).
- Create a welcoming climate that nurtures the adjustment of new families who may have recently transitioned to the community (e.g., immigrant, military families, etc.), or who may otherwise be from vulnerable or marginalized populations.
- Ensure that students with special needs have the necessary resources and supports to position them for success.

Though school communities benefit from planning in each of these areas, it is the ongoing maintenance of these strategies over time that allows parents and caregivers to feel authentically welcome and supported (Siegel et al., 2019).

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