

Strategies for Engaging the “Hard to Reach”

Sustainability:

1. Reach out to ALL families and community members without judgment, in the language and culture they understand.
2. Hold listening sessions. Ask parents what they want to learn, how they want to learn it, when they want to meet and for how long. Listen to their concerns.
3. Provide translators and make sure all materials are translated.
4. Find bi-lingual volunteers, parent liaisons, or staff assistants to bridge gap between families and the school.
5. Create a welcoming atmosphere in the front office; place signage in languages of all families throughout the school.
6. Offer ongoing interactive training sessions for parents on topics such as homework, school attendance, standards, report cards and discipline.
7. Develop family learning activities (including multi-lingual activities.) Send home for the purpose of involving the family.
8. Consider sponsoring single parent and/or native language parent groups.
9. Form a citizen advisory group that can advise the principal on how to improve services for students and families in poverty, single parents, and those who do not speak English.
10. Offer classes for parents on helping their child with their English homework and have them bring their children.
11. Involve language minorities, single parents and others who are hard to reach on advisory committees, councils and key communicator groups.
12. Hold family math, writing, reading and science nights; provide translators.
13. Provide parent leadership training for 15% of the parents in your school who are potential leaders. Teach them the power of data, how to read report cards, federal, state and local expectations, and how to help their child and other parents' children be successful.
14. Develop a group of parent leaders representing all populations to organize parent involvement programs responsive to needs and focused on improved student learning – co-lead workshops and meetings.
15. Make frequent contacts, speak to parents' strengths, and elicit response to ensure you have been understood.
16. Communicate positive reports to parents on student behavior and growth on a continuous basis.
17. Provide opportunities for families to share life stories with each other and their children. Create safe learning and sharing opportunities.
18. Study models of success; view all parents as a resource and not a problem.
19. Study and share what writers of diverse cultures have to say about themselves, their history, their art, literature, politics and the contributions

- made by the people of their culture. Connect parents and students to their cultural legacy.
20. Have parents choose their own leaders to set agendas for meetings.
 21. Work with Spanish media and other language media- radio and newspapers targeted to Latino and other language parents on ways to help their children do homework.
 22. Implement a bi-lingual hotline number where parents can get information on how to help their children at home.
 23. Place a bi-lingual center with resources and information in the school.

Incentives:

1. Provide transportation and childcare. Provide meals.
2. Pay participants to attend parent training sessions; this works especially well with parents in poverty.
3. Ask teachers to give extra credit to students who encourage their parents to attend the meetings.
4. Give gift certificates for food at the local grocery store.
5. Give prizes at every gathering. (Games for children, books, writing and art materials, dinner for the family at local pizza parlor etc...)
6. Provide on going process of parent involvement so parents gain confidence in participating as partners in their child's education.

Recruitment Strategies:

1. Write letters of invitation in recipients' language.
2. Make personal phone calls of invitation a few days after letter is sent.
 - Works best if the ELL staff, other parents, principals or teachers make calls in the family's language. Teachers and principals are the most successful motivators.
3. Make reminder phone call one to two days before the event.
4. Make home visits.
 - Parent liaisons who have been trained in recruitment strategies and who can speak the language of the parents have great success when making personal home visits.
5. Meet parents where they are.
 - At their apartment complex, in their home, at their recreation center or in their church.
6. Hold regular meetings of language groups with principal, community/ school coordinator to make decisions on issues pertaining to the language group and their families.

Developed through research and experience by Kathy Leslie, Leslie Consulting.
The following resources were used:
Beyond Heroes and Holidays Editors: Enid Lee; Deborah Menhart; Margo Okazawa-Rey
Lessons from High-Performing Hispanic Schools Editors: Pedro Reyes; Jay D. Scribner; Alicia Paredes Scribner
Cultural Proficiency Editors: Randall B. Lindsey Kikanza Nuri Robins; Raymond D. Terrell
Involving Latino Families in Schools, Concha Delgado Gaitan
"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?", Beverly Daniel Tatum, PH.D.
Interview with Lidia Krivoy, Welcome Center, Beaverton School District.