



Parent and Family Center

Resource Guide

Parent and Family Centers are a critical and essential resource in schools to engage parents as partners in their children's education.

School and Family Partnerships



Parent and Family Center Resource Guide

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Provide a welcoming in-person environment and online experience for families and invite them to participate as equal partners in the education of their children.



Provide parents multiple and frequent opportunities to acquire necessary information, knowledge, and skills to support their children's education at home and at school.



Engage parents in the school's volunteer program so they can participate in supporting school-wide, classroom, and parent involvement activities. Offer opportunities to volunteer from home.



Respond to parent concerns and/or complaints to ensure the child's educational needs and the family's wellbeing needs are met.



Comply with all LAUSD, State and Federal requirements regarding parent involvement and engagement.

What is a Parent and Family Center?

Parent and family centers are critical and essential resources in schools to engage parents as partners in their children's education. An effective parent and family center serves as a parent classroom – a place where parents can learn about curriculum, community resources, communicating with teachers and school personnel, and ways to support their children's learning at home. Parents can also learn about the importance of the social and emotional well-being of their children as well as strategies and resources to support their development. The knowledge and skills that parents acquire at the parent and family center prepares them to be successful in their roles as their children's first and life-long teachers and advocates.

An important function of a parent and family center is to serve as an information hub to connect parents and families to community resources. When community organizations collaborate with schools and share their knowledge and expertise with parents, parents can use the information and share it with others. Using and sharing the information with other families prepares parents to assume leadership roles at home, school, and in the larger community.



Adapted from the NNPS Model of Overlapping Spheres of Influence, Epstein, J. L., et al. (2009)

Parent and Family Center Environment

Providing a welcoming environment is part of the five goals for parent engagement and a top priority at every school. You can see and sense a welcoming environment from the moment you first set eyes on a school campus, in the way you are greeted at the entrance and the main office by school staff, and in the sights and sounds you experience walking in hallways, visiting classrooms and talking to teachers. For many parents, the parent and family center is an important factor in their experience of a welcoming environment.

The Parent and Family Center also extends to the school's website and social media presence. For all families during school closures due to COVID-19 and for many families who work or are otherwise engaged elsewhere during the school day, maintaining an informative webpage will direct parents to school and community resources to inform them and meet their needs.

Create Friendly Parent and Family Centers!

The parent and family center should be a helpful place where parents can ask for guidance. The center's staff is essential in making this happen. Staff should be knowledgeable, patient, and willing to help. Greeting parents in a welcoming manner, answering questions, and sharing resources are expectations of all center staff. Being courteous and able to work with diverse groups of people is important to ensure that parents and others who use the parent and



family center feel valued and appreciated.

It is essential that parent and family center staff and volunteers who assist at the center are friendly, inclusive and attentive to all parents, family members, school staff, and community partners.

Besides a welcoming atmosphere, two other important components of a parent and family center's environment are the physical environment and the instructional environment.

Physical Environment



The physical environment is critical because the way a parent and family center looks can impact how welcomed parents feel when they attend workshops and participate in school activities. The center should be a clean, inviting, and comfortable space (See Attachment D – Environment Checklist).

Signage



Placing welcome signs not only makes the parent and family center easy to find but also creates a welcoming climate. Parents should be able to easily locate the center and feel comfortable once they step inside. Signs should be in the various languages spoken by the school community. A parent and family center must be clean and organized so that it can be an inviting place. The center is a parent classroom and its environment needs to be conducive to learning. Having well-organized furniture and materials helps make activities flow smoothly and create a comfortable environment for parents to learn and exchange information and concepts.



A Clean and Organized Space





Instructional Environment

The instructional environment should be positive and supportive. It should strengthen the school's instructional program, outline goals, and highlight accomplishments. The Parent and Family Center should provide a variety of learning opportunities that address the diverse needs and learning styles of participants and their children, and that take into account cultural diversity (See Attachment D – Environment Checklist).

Children's Instructional Area

The children's area is designed for non-school aged children to play with age-appropriate toys and books while parents participate in workshops and activities in the parent and family center. This space may include an area rug and age-appropriate furniture such as chairs, bookshelves, general shelving, and toy box.

When choosing the location for the children's area, it is important to choose an area visible and accessible to the parents so that they can adequately care for their children.









Technology Area

An essential component of a high quality parent center is a technology area where parents can use computers and other equipment to access student information, learn new skills, and read about parenting, supporting learning at home, college preparation, and other topics of interest. Training can be provided to parents on obtaining an email account and using the <u>LAUSD website</u> and other websites to obtain information to support their children's learning and development.









The availability of computers in the parent and family center allows parents to learn and to access the District's <u>Parent</u> <u>Portal</u> where parents and guardians can monitor student's attendance and final grades, update emergency telephone numbers, track student progress toward completion of graduation requirements, connect with the classroom teacher, track progress of English Learners, and more.

Library Area





The library should contain books, magazines, DVDs, audio books, and other items that parents can use at the center or, if possible, check out to use at home. The materials may cover many topics including parenting, supporting learning at home, communicating with teachers, and behavior strategies. It is helpful to have a comfortable seating area to provide a welcoming place for the parents to read or view the resource materials.

A variety of these resources can also be found online. Currently, the District has several titles available under license that include monthly newsletters, brochures with parent tips, parent guides, and more in printable, audio, and video formats. Printing a sample of a few of these resources and making them available in the library area can let parents know what is available in the online Parent Involvement Library, which they can also access from home (<u>See</u> <u>Attachment N – Guide to Access the</u> <u>Parent Involvement Library</u>).

College Readiness Area

Parents can play a significant role in helping their children make informed decisions about their future. From an early age, parents should encourage their children to explore college and career options. A college area in the parent and family center is an excellent way to motivate parents to start or continue the conversations related to attending college.

The college area should be informative and inviting. It should contain a wide variety of resources that include <u>A-G requirements</u>, college applications, testing requirements, financial aid, scholarships, and career exploration resources.







Inclusive and Diverse Environment

In addition to the Children's Instructional Area, the Technology Area, the Library Area, and the College Readiness Area, other components are needed to create an inclusive and diverse environment. An important component that should be reflected it the parent and family center is the school community's diversity and culture. This may take on many forms including displaying cultural art pieces, calendaring events and holidays important to the community, or creating instructional areas specific to the needs of the school community. Parent and family centers that serve a diverse community might have areas and instructional resources and materials to support parents of Students with Disabilities (SWD), English Learners (EL), Standard English Learners (SEL), and/or Gifted and Talented (GATE) students. Schools should decide whether to make these separate areas or to incorporate the resources and materials into existing areas.





Coordinating the Parent and Family Center

Organization

The success of a parent and family center is based on effective planning, communication, and implementation. Experienced parent and family center staff have identified the following key organizational tips.

Sign-in Table at Entrance to Center

Having a sign-in table near the entrance helps to keep track of who uses the center and the purposes of the visits. A general sign-in form makes it easier for the school to assess the number of parents and family members who attend workshops and activities or visit the center to obtain resources. To support school safety, the sign-in form should have a space for parents and others to indicate their arrival and departure times (See Attachment A - Parent Sign-in Template).



Calendar/Resource Board

An effective way to promote parent workshops, school activities, and events is to have a bulletin board in a highly visible place – near the center's entrance if possible. An attractive and colorful bulletin board will catch people's attention. Posted information should be current and in the languages used by families.



Parent Center Staff Work Station

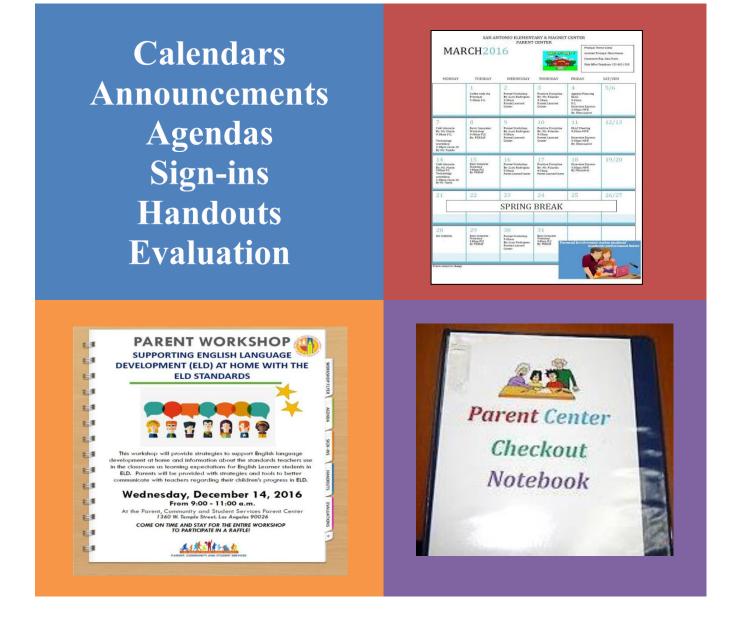
A parent and family center should have a work station for the parent center staff to plan and prepare materials such as presentations, calendars, flyers, and other tools. The work station needs to be equipped with a computer, printer, storage, office supplies, and ideally, a telephone.

Area for Refreshments

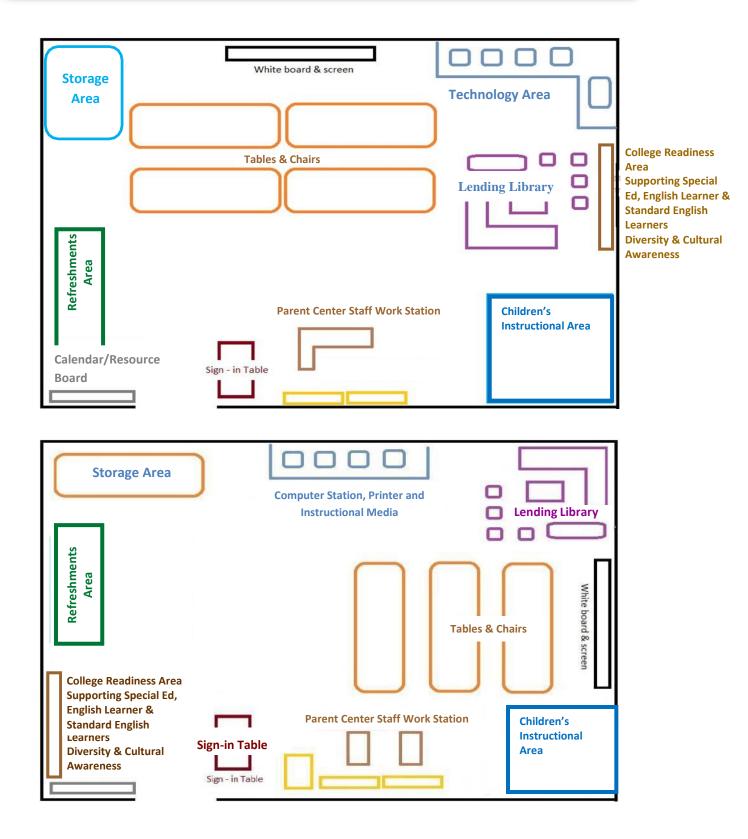
Providing drinks and snacks at parent workshops and activities contributes to a welcoming environment. It is helpful to have an area to prepare and serve beverages and refreshments. Donations may be obtained in order to provide the snacks.

Parent and Family Center Management Notebooks

Maintaining a parent education notebook that includes calendars, announcements, agendas, sign-ins, handouts and evaluations is an excellent way to showcase the instructional program of any parent and family center. In addition, it serves as a record of the parent workshops and activities that are provided throughout the year. If your school has a lending library, keep a separate notebook to register the items being checked out, the name of the parent checking out the resource, and the date the item is due back in the parent and family center.



Samples of Parent and Family Center Layouts



Benefits of Parent Education Workshops and Activities

The main benefit of parent education workshops and activities is the positive impact they can have on student academic achievement. Parent education workshops and activities provide essential information and strategies to families to assist them in supporting their children's learning at home, monitoring their progress, and communicating with teachers and school staff. The workshops and activities may cover topics such as child development, parenting, supporting student learning, nutrition and health, understanding diverse needs, and social and emotional well-being. A high quality parent and family center functions as a "parent classroom" – a place where parents and family members can go to participate in useful and engaging parent education workshops and activities.

To promote interest in the workshops and activities offered in the parent and family center, it is important to share the benefits of participation with parents and family members. Outreach and recruitment materials and messages may describe the workshops as:

- <u>Informative and useful</u> parents are updated on the latest school, LAUSD, state and federal programs related to their child's learning.
- <u>Fun and free of charge</u> parents learn new information through engaging activities and strategies.
- <u>Given in a welcoming environment</u>that makes parents feel welcomed, comfortable, and valued.
- <u>Interactive</u> parents meet other parents and get to know school personnel as well as share experiences and ideas.



Planning Parent Education Workshops and Activities

The responsibilities of planning workshops and activities should be shared by a team composed of parent and family center staff, parents, coordinators, administrators, teachers, and other school staff, and students (in secondary schools). The number of team members will depend on the type and size of parent workshop or activity or event being planned. The diverse experience and expertise of the team members will ensure that the workshops and activities are of high quality and well implemented (<u>See Attachment B - Four-Step Team Organizer</u>).

To maximize the benefits of parent education for parents and family members, workshops and activities should be based on their needs and interests. For example, offering workshops and activities on different days and times allows families to participate based on their schedules. Involving families in sharing topics of interest to them will better meet their needs and improve participation. Types of information that schools may use to identify the needs and interests of families are:



- School Report Card
- School Experience Survey
- Student assessment results
- Parent/caregivers surveys and/or discussions (<u>See Attachment C Parent</u> Workshops and Activities Survey Sample)
- Teachers/staff member surveys and/or discussions
- Agendas, sign-ins, and participant evaluations from previous years

The information that a school gathers to determine the needs and interests of parents and family members will be used to plan the workshops and activities including:

- Topics
- Days, times, duration of workshops and activities
- Number and location of workshops and activities
- Resources needed
- Presenters
- Materials

Tools for Planning Parent Education Workshops and Activities are included in the Attachments

The successful implementation of a family engagement program is based on the careful planning of the workshops and activities by the team members. At the beginning of the year, team members should meet to plan the workshops and activities based on the needs and interests of parents. The meeting should establish clear workshop and/or activity goals, outreach and recruitment procedures, implementation, and evaluation (See <u>Attachment E – Parent Workshop Evaluation</u>). A plan to distribute responsibilities and tasks among the team members (See Attachment F - Parent and Family Engagement Workshop/Activity Planning Tool) needs to be developed.

The development of the Parent and Family Engagement Monthly Calendar is an important task that should be maintained throughout the year. Sending the monthly calendar home at the beginning of each month will ensure that parents have school event dates ahead of time and can plan to attend (See Attachment G - Parent and Family Engagement Monthly Calendar Elementary Sample, See Attachment H - Parent and Family Engagement Monthly Calendar Secondary Sample). In addition, you may use the attached template to create your own (See Attachment I - Parent and Family Engagement Monthly Calendar Template).

Throughout the year, the team should engage in periodically reviewing the school's parent education program in order to continue making improvements and to strive for the most positive impact on parent involvement and student achievement (<u>See</u> <u>Attachment J - Parent Education Program Checklist</u>).

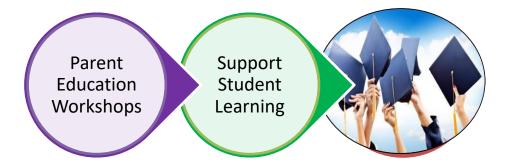
Parent Education Workshops and Activities to Support Student Learning

Providing information, ideas, and tools for parents and family members to support student learning is one of the most important functions of the parent and family center. Online and in-person workshops and activities to support student learning may be organized into the following types:

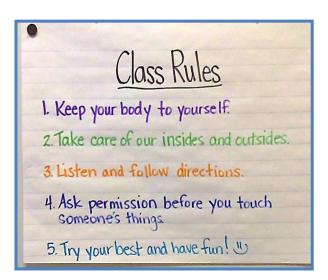
- Workshops to support academic achievement
- Workshops to support positive behavior
- Workshops to support wellness

Parent education workshop materials to support student learning are accessible on the Tools for Schools website: https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/ <u>9653</u>

Workshops and activities to support academic achievement may include: school readiness, supporting learning at home, high frequency words, reading comprehension strategies, graduation requirements, Common Core State Standards, English Learner Master Plan, reclassification of English learners, and any other District academic initiatives.



<u>Workshops and activities to support positive</u> <u>behavior</u> may address: positive behavior strategies, communicating with children's teachers/counselors, <u>bullying</u> <u>prevention</u>, Restorative Justice, effective communication with the school, discipline, <u>Internet safety</u> and parent/child communication.



<u>Workshops and activities to support wellness</u> may include: healthy eating habits, the importance of physical activity, increasing children's self-esteem, nutrition, stress management and mindfulness.



Other Workshops for Parents and Family Members

Parent and Family Centers may offer workshops designed to support parents and family members as adult learners and volunteers. The workshops may also include training on technology use and personal development.

<u>Workshops for volunteers</u>, including prospective and active volunteers, may be provided by school personnel to present information on:

- Process for becoming a school volunteer
- Types of volunteer opportunities at schools
- Options for volunteering for working parents
- Providing support in the classroom









Technology workshops may be offered online, at the school's parent and family center, computer lab or at a nearby library or other partner agencies. Technology trainings that may be offered are: basic computer skills, educational websites for children and adults, obtaining an email account, email communication between home and school, and use of the <u>LAUSD website</u> or other websites to obtain information to support their children's learning and development. This includes learning about registering and using the district's <u>Parent Portal</u>, which enables parents to <u>connect with the classroom teacher</u>, track student progress toward completion of graduation requirements, track progress of English Learners, monitor student's attendance and final grades, update emergency telephone numbers, among other functionalities.





<u>Workshops and activities for adult personal development</u> may be of interest to parents to support family well-being and success. Topics may include: stress management, adult education, financial education, and family goal setting.

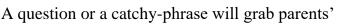
Outreach, Recruitment and Retention

The success of well-attended in-person and online parent workshops and activities depends on the careful planning of outreach, recruitment, and retention strategies. Research indicates that parent involvement increases and parents' attitudes toward school programs improve when schools focus on informing and involving parents. Investing the time to ensure parents receive frequent and effective communication is essential to a successful parent and family engagement program.

Outreach Strategies

Outreach strategies serve to promote interest and inform parents and community members about parent workshops and school activities offered at the school. Outreach materials should be enticing and attractive to immediately get parents' attention to what they will learn to support their children's achievement and development. In addition, they should emphasize the correlation between parent engagement and student achievement. The more outreach strategies used to inform parents, the higher the probability of reaching out to all parents and families including working parents, parents of diverse cultures and languages, and community members. Effective outreach strategies to increase parent interest and attendance are:

1. <u>Create Flyers in Multiple Languages</u>





attention and promote interest. Translating the flyer into the parents' home language will ensure parents understand the message. Sending the flyer home and posting it around the school and community in a timely manner will allow parents to save the date and plan to attend (<u>See Attachment K - Parent and Family</u> <u>Workshop School Flyer Template</u>).

2. Advertise Event and Activities

Using the school newsletter, office bulletin board, emails, Blackboard Connect texts, school website, and marquee will ensure that workshops and activities are well-advertised and serve reminders. Making announcements at school council and committee meetings such as the English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) and School Site Council (SSC) will inform parent leaders so that they can share the information with other parents.

Involving teachers in sharing information with parents about trainings that may benefit them and or their children can greatly influence a parents' decision to attend the workshops.



3. Posting Banners, Posters and Photographs

Posting colorful and eye-catching banners or posters on social media, on the school website, in the main office or in high traffic areas is an effective way to inform parents of upcoming workshops and activities. Displaying photographs of parents participating and having fun at parent workshops is also an effective way to increase parents' interest and curiosity in attending workshops and activities. Recognizing friends and people they know may encourage parents who may otherwise be shy or reluctant to attend.



Blackboard connect."

4. Send Blackboard Connect-5 Notification System Message

Using the <u>LAUSD upgraded notification system</u> gives schools the ability to reach parents and community members efficiently keep them informed and involved. The new <u>Connect 5 system</u> makes it faster and easier to send messages. Custom, pre-set scenario templates facilitate sending messages in just a few clicks. Messages can also be sent via Facebook, Twitter and RSS newsfeeds (<u>See Attachment L -</u> <u>Blackboard Connect Message Template</u>).



5. Partnering with Community Organizations

Contacting nearby community organizations and agencies to help promote the workshops/activities will ensure all community members are informed and both the school and the community organizations and agencies will benefit from the formed relationship. Creating partnerships with community organizations and agencies ensure that the school and the community work together to support parents in their goal of raising their children as healthy and productive members of society.

Recruitment Strategies

Recruitment strategies are vital to a successful and well-attended parent program. The goal of these strategies is to actively recruit parents through personal contact in order to motivate and encourage parents to participate in workshops and school activities. Personally inviting parents allows school personnel, parent and family parent center staff and/or parent volunteers the ability to interact with parents and explain the benefits of the workshops and parent involvement. Such benefits include higher student achievement and positive effects on student attitudes and social behavior. Recruiting as many parents as possible is the goal of these strategies because for every 100 parents that are recruited about 25 parents will attend. When parents are recruited they are making a commitment to attend. This commitment is formalized through the registration process. There are different ways schools can register parents for workshops and activities. For example, by including a registration tear-off to the flyer parents can submit it to the school. Parents can also register through phone calls, a Google Form, or in person by filling out a registration form or having a school staff take down their contact information. Whichever method is used it is important that all parent are welcomed to the workshops and activities whether they registered or not. Recruiting parents is the key to increasing parent attendance at workshops and activities. Contact information collected in person or through a form may be used for follow-up and reminder phone calls.

1. Make Personal Phone Calls

Inviting parents through personal phone calls is a great way to make connections. When making phone calls, parent and family center staff, parent volunteers, teachers, and other school staff may share a personal anecdote or positive experience as a way to connect to parents. Stressing the benefits of attending the workshops and answering parent



questions encourages parents to participate. A friendly and attentive attitude when inviting parents will go a long way. A telephone script makes it easier to remember key points (See Attachment M - Telephone Script Template).

2. Involve Teachers

Asking teachers to promote workshops/activities is an excellent way to recruit parents. Teachers can have students create personal invitations and they can also provide incentives to students whose parents attend the workshop/activity.

3. Organize "Recruitment Days"



The goal of "Recruitment Days" is to create excitement and interest among parents about upcoming workshops and activities and thereby recruiting as many parents as possible to attend. The formation of a recruitment team is crucial to the success of this strategy because the more "Recruitment Days" are planned the greater number of parents are registered and the most return on your time investment. Excellent times to register parents are in the morning when they are dropping off their children and/or after school when they are picking them up from school. The steps below serve as a guide to assist schools in organizing effective "Recruitment Days."



- Planning and scheduling the "Recruitment Days" one to two weeks prior to the event will ensure that parents have enough time to plan ahead and will not be so early that parents forget.
- Recruiting two or three staff members and/or parent volunteers, who are friendly, outgoing and committed to plan and assist during the "Recruitment Days" will ensure that a greater number of parents are registered and that the attendance goal is achieved.



We're recruiting!

- Identifying a team leader who will train the team members on how to approach and speak to parents is very important. Being friendly as well as briefly describing the class or activity and stressing the benefits of participation are key points to remember when talking to parents.
- Selecting areas where the registration tables will be set-up will ensure that the tables will be ready on "Recruitment Days." These areas should be where the majority of parents pick up or drop off their children (If a school has multiple areas).



• Preparing a box with the materials that will be used on "Recruitment Days" such as banners, flyers, registration forms, name badges, office supplies, and any other items such as incentives for parents who register.



• Meet or calling team members a few days before the first Recruitment Day will ensure the recruitment leader reviews the arrival time and any other important details.

Retention Strategies

In order to maximize the continued participation of parents all the effort invested in outreach and recruitment, special attention must be placed on retention strategies. Retention strategies focus on keeping parents coming back! Ensuring parents feel welcomed and valued should be a top priority of parent and family center staff. The physical Research indicates that when parents become involved in their children's learning the school staff benefits.

environment of the parent and family center and the attitude of the parent family center staff contributes to parents feeling respected and appreciated and results in attendance. When parents feel respected and appreciated there is greater parent involvement and in turn parents are more willing to support the school. This is due to the positive relationship and the trust that is formed. Effective strategies to ensure parent continue to participate in their child's education are:

1. Make Families Feel Welcome

Greeting parents in a friendly way when they first arrive at the workshop or activity will make them feel welcomed and give them a sense of belonging. Providing name tags will increase the ability of school staff to remember parent names. This will also allow parents to greet one another and get to know each other by name. This simple practice will ensure new parents feel included.



2. Maintain a Welcoming Environment

Playing appropriate background music when parents first arrive is a way to promote a fun and inviting atmosphere. Maintaining a positive and professional attitude creates a safe environment and demonstrates respect. Developing "Group Agreements" or behavior expectations will ensure that all parents are aware of how to behave in a respectful manner.



3. Provide Interactive Workshops

The level of parent engagement and interaction during the workshop is just as important as the topic and content of the workshop. Engaging parents by including strategies that encourage parents to talk, process information and ask questions will result in greater parent participation and involvement. Online or virtual events can be interactive, too!

4. Plan for Interpretation

Using school staff who are bilingual to interpret is very important. As an alternative, schools may contact the Translations Unit, <u>http://www.translationsunit.com</u>, to request an interpreter. The sooner the request is made, the greater the probability interpretation services will be available.





5. Keep to the Scheduled Time

Starting and ending on time demonstrates to parents that you respect and value their time. Begin the workshops with a "Grounding Activity" or "Ice breaker." This will give late parents a few more minutes to arrive and will actively engage those parents who did arrive on time.



6. Provide Information to Parents and Families

At the end of the workshops parent often ask questions about resources available to them and their children. Using a current list of community resources to assist parents will create a personal connection and create a lasting impression.

7. Offer Snacks

Providing snacks at in-person parent workshops and activities is part of creating a welcoming environment. Drinks and snacks may be obtained through donations or purchased if the budget allows.



Attachments: Samples, Templates and Checklist

Attachment A	Parent Sign-in Form Template
Attachment B	Four-Step Planning Team Organizer
Attachment C	Parent Workshops and Activities Survey Sample
Attachment D	Parent and Family Center Environment Checklist
Attachment E	Parent Workshop Evaluation Sample
Attachment F	Parent and Family Engagement Workshop/Activity Planning Tool
Attachment G	Parent and Family Engagement Monthly Calendar Elementary Sample
Attachment H	Parent and Family Engagement Monthly Calendar Secondary Sample
Attachment I	Parent and Family Engagement Monthly Calendar Template
Attachment J	Parent Education Program Checklist
Attachment K	Parent and Family Workshop Flyer Template
Attachment L	Blackboard Connect Message Template
Attachment M	Telephone Script Template
Attachment N	Guide to Access the Parent Involvement Library

Download Attachments at https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/10404