

Processes and Strategies to Facilitate Effective Newcomer Parent Engagement

Effective newcomer parent engagement programs start with attention to the strengths and needs of parents who send their children to your school—and aim to empower parents with the knowledge and skills they need to support their children’s academic success. When schools empower parents, they can maximize learning not only at school, but also outside of school hours, where students spend the majority of their time (Paredes, 2010; Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

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Processes	Strategies
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine assumptions and cultural biases, recognize and employ newcomer families’ assets, bring parent voices into planning for their child and the school’s success, craft multi-modal informational resources on everything families need to know and do. • Bring newcomer families and staff together to co-construct meaningful communications and resources for families and to collaborate in the delivery of learning and support activities for families (Patrikakou et al., 2005). • Encourage and help parents develop leadership skills to participate in decision making throughout the school and the community. • Enlist newcomer parents to design and conduct parent learning opportunities on parenting across cultures, promoting child development, supporting learning, and planning for college and careers.
Capacity Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build newcomers’ and staff members’ capacity to effectively carry out multiple roles (advocate, supporter, encourager, decision maker, etc.) • Build staff capacity to challenge deficit mind-sets related to the traditional expectations for newcomers and encourage an asset orientation (Arias & MorilloCampbell, 2008). • Create parent and family welcome kits with information about the school. Include parent rights and responsibilities; school schedules; phone numbers; procedures; and any other information that will help parents feel welcome, informed, and integrated into the school. • Sponsor and encourage parents to attend family literacy events where parents or students can read books together.
Assets Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish opportunities for listening to parents, and strive to meet high expectations, aspirations, and hopes by drawing on newcomers’ cultures, language, knowledge, and skills. • Incorporate the cultural strengths of families and the community into the school curriculum and activities. • Ensure that newcomer families are represented in the school’s decision-making bodies (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008).

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Multi-Modal Communications and Language Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use multiple methods (newsletters translated in the languages represented in the school, telephone trees, school website, parent outreach workers) and structures to communicate. • Conduct newcomer focus groups and/or newcomer advisory committees to get input on decision-making structures, concerns, questions, and recommendations. • Ensure that language supports are available for all educational communications and activities. • Use suggestion boxes, surveys, targeted and short interviews, or polling with the appropriate language supports to encourage newcomer parents to voice their concerns and ideas to inform school planning
Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify strategies so that newcomer families can enrich the school community's culture by sharing their personal and cultural assets (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). • Continuously improve family engagement by examining multiple data sources to assess the impact of policies and practices on the newcomers. • Include newcomer families' values and perspectives to promote cross-cultural understanding, and strengthen their 21st century skills through volunteer experiences.

Core Components of Parent Engagement Programs (Three A's)

When designing family engagement programs for newcomers, schools may wish to take into account these three goals for family participation:

1. **Academic Success:** Strengthen newcomer families' capacity to support academic achievement by increasing their awareness of instructional programs and ways they can support their own child's learning.
2. **Advocacy and Decision-Making:** Strengthen families' understanding of how to advocate for their child and how to participate in decisions to improve learning for their children and for others in the school.
3. **Awareness and Use of Resources:** Strengthen families' awareness of resources available in the school and community and how to access these resources to support their family's well-being and their own personal growth.