

Research-based Best Practices – Family Engagement

1. **Build Relationships** - activities that help your school staff ‘get to know’ families and establish meaningful relationships. **Examples could include:** home visits, social events, work with a parent-teacher organization. *Ask yourself – does the event provide the opportunity for staff and parents to talk with each, recognize families by name, discuss their child?*
2. **Understand Standards, Assessments & Monitor their Child’s Progress** – these activities truly help parents to understand the educational system and where their child is academically. Examples could include: grade-level standards nights, standards posters or booklets, informational nights on CRT’s/HSPE, Edline classes, Nevada Parent Network information or classes, articles in the newsletter or fact sheets on ‘What is a Standard? ‘What is the HSPE?’ *Ask yourself – Do your parents truly have the opportunity to understand and ask questions about these things?*
3. **Help Families Work with Teachers & Staff** – these activities help parents understand the best ways to communicate and work with teachers and staff. Examples could include: pre-classes for parent teacher conferences, tip sheets for parents on questions to ask at parent teacher conferences, orientation, process and matching talents for school volunteers, teacher tips for parents at Back to School Night – ‘How best to communicate with your child’s teachers,’ Edline or computer classes (establishing an email account) for parents, How to serve on a School Improvement Team, staff pictures posted in the front of the school. *Ask yourself – How do your parents know the best ways to communicate with teachers and staff? Do your parents know the right questions to ask to help improve their child’s achievement?*
4. **Provide Training, Materials & Technology**– these activities help parents to understand how to support and enrich learning at home or provide information on setting high expectations, careers or the road to college. Examples could include: Math, science and literacy family learning nights, high school graduation requirements, financial aid information, parent leadership classes, Edline, How to use email and the internet, helpful websites for parent resources, Smarthinking. *Ask yourself – Do your parents know how to support learning at home, how to set high expectations and navigate the road to college? How does the school support parents to do these things?*
5. **Support School Staff**– these activities **help staff** to outreach and work with all families, especially diverse families that are not of the same background as the staff or parents that are perceived as being “difficult.” Examples could include: Professional Development on Family Engagement and Diversity, Study Circles, Monthly family engagement tips at staff meetings, Support with Home Visits, How to improve communication *Ask yourself – Does your staff know how to outreach and work with all parents? Does your staff know how to build relationships and partner with those parents that are ‘hard to reach’ or ‘difficult to work with.’*
6. **Address Differences**– these activities help families, students and staff to understand each other’s backgrounds and partner regardless of differences. Examples could include: Multicultural Nights, Professional Development on Family Engagement and Diversity, Study

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Circles, Support with Home Visits, Community Guest Speakers at staff meetings or professional development days, programs such as “Rachel’s Challenge,” Ruby Payne, Teaching Tolerance.org materials and activities, PD on Working with families in Poverty, of different religions, cultures, race or ethnicity, various languages. *Ask yourself – Does your school community (parents, staff, students) know how to work with each other and ‘coexist’ despite our differences? Is your school community segregated by differences or integrated by commonalities?*

7. **Support Advocacy & Share Power**– these activities help families to feel safe when advocating for their children and include families in school decisions. Examples could include: Clearly defined processes for advocacy, suggestion boxes that are utilized to improve parent partnerships, including parents on your SIP, school site councils, parent organizations that provide input on meaningful topics such as student achievement, providing parents information on how to advocate, defining the school’s expectations of families, providing opportunities for two-way communication, Brown Bag lunches with the principal, surveys that are utilized for improvement. *Ask yourself – Are there ongoing opportunities for families to provide meaningful input? Are suggestions families provide considered and implemented? If a parent does not know how to advocate for their child, how does the school support this parent? Are parents who advocate positively viewed as ‘problem parents.’?*
8. **Help Families Transition**– these activities help families to transition at critical grade levels – kindergarten, middle school, high school and college/career. Examples could include: outreach to pre-k families, Kindergarten boot camp, **Family** field trips to middle, high school or college, informational nights about college and careers, round table discussions with future administrators (hs/ms principals meeting es school families), how are ms and hs different and why they are important for the next grade levels. *Ask yourself – How do families know how to transition to a different school and build relationships at that school, especially if the school is much larger than their current school? How do families know what opportunities exist for them to be involved in a new school? How do families know about the importance of middle school as a building block for high school, and high school as a foundation for college or career?*