

Why is parent involvement important?

Session 1 Objectives & agenda

Objectives

- **Build trust and community.**
- **Enhance teachers' understanding** of what parent involvement is what its benefits are.
- **Elicit teachers' experiences** with parent involvement.
- **Elicit teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes** regarding parental involvement.

Agenda

1. **Welcome, orientation & initial activities**
2. **Warm-up activity**
3. **Perceptions of parent involvement**
4. **Parent involvement experiences**
5. **Why is parent involvement so important?**
6. **Homework**
7. **Wrap-up**
8. **Evaluation**

THIS SECTION
20 min
TOTAL TIME
20 min

1. Welcome, orientation & initial activities

- Introduce yourself and ask participants to introduce themselves.
- Make announcements. Take care of administrative tasks.
- Distribute and walk through the TIP binders. Tell teachers that they must bring their binders to each session.
- Ask teachers to complete **Teacher Invitations Log #1** Facilitator's Guide (FG) p. 11; Teacher Binder (TB) p. ...
- Ask teachers to complete **Parent Involvement Log #1** (FG p. 12; TB p. ...)

If the TIP program is part of a formal research effort:

- Complete the pre-program **TIP Teacher Beliefs Survey**. (FG pp. 13-16; TB p. ...). (Teachers will take this survey again after the final session—Session 6.)

THIS SECTION
20 min
TOTAL TIME
35 min

3. Part 1: Teacher efficacy for working with parents

What is teacher efficacy for working with parents?

Offer specific information about personal sense of efficacy, its sources and its role in supporting teachers' effectiveness in working with parents:

- **Teacher efficacy for working with parents** is an individual teacher's beliefs about his or her ability to work effectively and well with parents.
- **Most teacher preparation programs offer information and skills** essential to *efficacy for teaching*, but most do not offer notable information or skills focused on developing *teacher efficacy for working with parents*.
- **Psychologist Albert Bandura** points out that personal sense of efficacy for working well in *any given domain* comes from four sources: (FG p. 12; TB p. ...)
 1. **Personal experiences of success in the area** (e.g., "That was a good parent-teacher conference! I planned well, listened well, and we talked specifically about Jose's current learning progress and made plans for next steps.").
 2. **Vicarious experiences of success in the area** (e.g., "I sat in on my favorite colleague's conference with Sabrina's parents. He did a great job and I learned some things I'm going to use too.").
 3. **Verbal persuasion from others** (e.g., "My principal tells me I'm working well with parents, and she gave me a great idea for talking with Ramon's dad tomorrow.").
 4. **Emotional arousal about the issue or task** (e.g., "I know families' active support of students' learning can make such a positive difference. I really need to think well about how to help Kenya's mom know how important her positive expectations for Kenya's learning are.").

Facilitator summary: At the end of this presentation and discussion, summarize some of the implications of these four sources of personal efficacy for increasing our personal effectiveness in working well with parents.

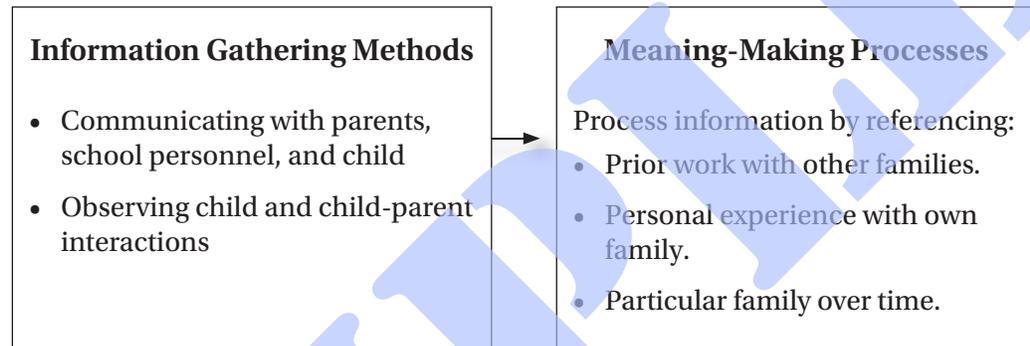
THIS SECTION
25 min
TOTAL TIME
85 min

5. How do teachers come to understand families?

Lead participants through the summary of research by Margaret Caspe. (FG pp. 25–28; TB pp....)

Emphasize this central idea: Teachers need to critically reflect on their own values and judgments so that their basis for understanding families is rooted not in inaccurate stereotypes, but in authentic relationships.

Caspe presents two key processes for understanding families:



- **Ask teachers to individually identify *all of the ways they*** gather information about parents.
- **Call on group** to share their responses.
- **Record their answers** on a flip chart.
- **Ask teachers if they believe** they have a strong foundation for meaning making based on the information they gather.

Conclude this part of the lesson with a review of the four core teacher beliefs necessary for partnership (see excerpt from *Beyond the Bake Sale*, retrieved from <http://www.parentinvolvementmatters.org>) (FG pp. 29–36; TB p...):

- **Ask teachers to anonymously rate—on a scale of 1 to 3—**how true these four statements are for them. (1 = not true at all; 2 = somewhat true; and 3 = true)
 1. All parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them.
 2. All parents have the capacity to support their children’s learning.
 3. Parents and school staff should be equal partners.

world, including the majority of immigrants to the U.S., in addition to American Indians and African Americans. Collectivism is associated with the values of interdependence (particularly within the family), group well-being, respect for elders, personal modesty, helping, and sharing. Cognitive and social/moral development are seen as intertwined. Although access to formal education and urban living move people toward a more individualistic viewpoint, many collectivistic values tend to persist across generations.

It is important to note that this framework is a starting point for understanding cultural patterns, not a substitute for learning directly from people about their own worldviews.

Cross-Cultural Parent–Teacher Conferences: A Hotbed of Communication Issues

A conference can be considered cross-cultural even when teacher and parent are from the same ethnic background, because the teacher has likely internalized the values and beliefs associated with the mainstream culture through her own education process. Hence, miscommunication can occur between a Latino teacher and a Latino parent, based on both communication style and beliefs about child development and schooling. A parent may have the goal of rearing a respectful, modest child who is helpful at home and at school, while the teacher may envision an independent learner who is confident in expressing and supporting his or her opinions and achieves to high levels.

Consider the following vignette based on an actual videotaped parent–teacher conference about a fifth-grade girl named Carolina from an immigrant Latino family.³ Carolina’s teacher, mother, father, and younger brother are at the conference.

Teacher: *Carolina is doing great. She’s doing beautifully in English and in reading. And in writing and in speaking.*

Father: *(Looks down at lap.)*

Teacher: *It’s wonderful!*

Father: *(Turning to point to younger son) The same... this guy he...*

Teacher: *(Interrupting, with shrill tone.) Gooooo!*

Father: *...can write—*

Teacher: *(Cutting him off) He can write in English?*

Father: *Well, his name...(trailing off).*

In this short exchange, several communication problems can be identified:

1. The father’s lack of initial response suggests his discomfort with the effusive praise the teacher offers, which is not consonant with a value of modesty. He may prefer to hear how his daughter needs to improve rather than about her accomplishments (an inference validated later in the conference, when both father and mother become enthusiastic about helping the daughter improve her handwriting).
2. When the teacher continues with the praise of Carolina, the father attempts to draw his young son into the discussion. Whereas the teacher seems to find this inappropriate, he is likely acting on the value of family as a cohesive group. From his point of view, each child should be recognized as a contributing member of the family unit, and not so much as an individual. Singling out one child violates that value.
3. Neither the teacher nor the parent seems aware of the source of the conflict or how to repair the conversation.

What's Working in Parent Involvement?

THIS SECTION
10 min
TOTAL TIME
25 min

3. What's working now?

Ask participants to turn to the **Session 5 Worksheet Part 1** in their binders. (FG p. 13; TB p. ...) Have participants complete the worksheet individually, answering the following three questions:

1. *What's* working at our school with regard to parent involvement?
2. *How* do I know it's working?
3. If I think (or know) that it's working, what's my best explanation for *why* it's working?

To help the group get started, refer participants to the list of most rewarding and challenging parent involvement experiences they generated in Session 1. These results should be in their binders for Session 2. (In the interest of time, distribute copies that have been prepared in advance.)

THIS SECTION
15 min
TOTAL TIME
40 min

What are we doing in parental involvement that's working now?

Follow up with a **small group** activity and discussion:

1. Ask participants to form groups of three.
2. Give each group member two minutes to share individual responses.
3. Allow the other two members of the group two minutes to ask questions, comment or discuss.
4. Repeat this process until all group members have shared their individual thoughts.

GROUP DISCUSSION

THIS SECTION
10 min
TOTAL TIME
50 min

Follow up with a **whole group** discussion:

1. Divide a flip chart into two columns.
2. Call on one of the groups to share **one** success and write that success in the left column of the flip chart. Ask if other groups have discussed similar success. If so, keep a tally mark of how many individuals identified this as a success.
3. Call on a second group and repeat the process above until all groups have shared.
4. Ask, "Is there anything missing from this list of successes that we should make note of?" Add any remaining ideas to the list.

How to Make Magic: Creating Solutions for Obstacles to Parental and Family Involvement in Our School*

Points to ponder before creating solutions

- “Magic” solutions to barriers and obstacles that interfere with effective family-school communication and effective parental involvement are (much like good magic shows themselves) usually created through hard work, consultation with others (in the school, among parents, and often others in the community as well), practice, and more hard work.
- In creating “magic” solutions to issues, obstacles and barriers to effective parental involvement, it’s important to think about your past successes—not just to feel good or dwell on the “good old days,” but to analyze *what has worked, why it has worked, and how these lessons might be useful in solving present problems.*

Steps in creating “magic solutions”

1. What’s the problem/obstacle/barrier? State it clearly and define it!
2. How is this problem related to our goals for improved parental involvement? If the goals are unclear, take time right now to think about, discuss and decide upon the goals here. Consider too: Is this obstacle worth our time and energy?
3. What kind of problem-solving strategies can we use to address this barrier successfully?
 - a. Problem-focused (i.e., get in there and work on the problem itself) and/or Emotion-focused (i.e., change our reactions to the problem)
 - b. What *can* we do? What do we *want* to do?
 - c. Which among the possible approaches we identify is best, given the problem, our goals and our resources. Might there be other resources available, as well?
4. What are alternative specific strategies for solving the problem? Good ones need to get us closer to our goals, and *good group brainstorming is key here!* After brainstorming potential strategies, focus on identifying:
 - a. Priorities for the problem-solving strategies we should use.
 - b. Whether strategies focus on a long-term or short-term solution to the problem.