

Roadmap for Engaging Families!

August - May

Activities, Resources, Barriers (& a Plan)

Thank you so much for your interest in the Roadmap for Engaging Families! Research shows us that the more involved a family is in the education of their student, the more likely the child will consistently attend school and be successful in school.

Encouraging family involvement doesn't have to be complicated. Involvement can vary from parents checking their students' homework, parents volunteering in the classroom, or parents attending family enrichment activity nights. Success will depend on what you, as the child's instructor, can do to ensure that engagement opportunities are diverse, meaningful, and inviting.

This packet provides easy-to-use activities, resources on where to find additional information, and suggestions for overcoming barriers that sometimes sabotage family engagement efforts. The packet is intended to be used as a tool; if you have additional ideas and feedback, please share your thoughts with us!

Good luck, have fun, and remember that students evolve and grow when they can rely on strong partnerships where schools and families work together for success!



Resources utilized to complete the Roadmap:

SD DOE Toolkit <http://doe.sd.gov/title/toolkit/>

Henderson, A.T. & Mapp, K (2002) *A New Wave of Evidence, The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement*. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

Redding, S, Murphy, M., & Sheley, P. (2011) *Handbook on Family and Community Engagement*. Information Age Publishing.

Welcome Back to School!

August

Planning the Open House

Learning Targets

Get to know your students and families!
Engage families starting on Day 1!



<http://doe.sd.gov/title/toolkit/documents/17-Guide.pdf> (pp. 27-28)



<https://thecornerstoneforteachers.com/open-house/>

Activities

- Put out the Red Carpet. (Literally! Roll out red table cloth from the front door into your school).
- Place welcome Signs on the front door and throughout the school (multiple languages, if needed).
- Plan a scavenger hunt of your school; don't forget about your music, PE, and library teachers; kitchen staff; and custodians.
- Designate a spot for family pictures.

Reminder

Provide greeters to greet every family!
Place signs around the school for directions.

Breaking the Barriers

- Communication: Get the word out using multiple platforms (social media, student-made posters, letters).
- Timing: Make the open house convenient for the families. Over supper time? Have a light meal or snacks for the entire family. Listen to your families. Does work prevent them from attending?
- Paperwork: Is there another time to fill out paperwork? Use the open house for engagement rather than chores.



Attendance Awareness Month

September

Why is Attendance Important?

Learning Target

Ensure families and students understand the importance of attendance.



<http://doe.sd.gov/title/toolkit/documents/17-Guide.pdf> (p. 29)



<http://www.attendanceworks.org/resources/videos/>

Activities

- Display a poster at the school's entryway to share the goals of your school's attendance policy with students and families.
- Present a video of emphasizing the importance of attendance.
- Explain the effects of chronic absences on achievement.
- Encourage parents to help each other and share stories of ways that they motivate their students to attend school.

Reminder

Talk to the students about attendance; otherwise, they can't understand the importance of attendance!

Breaking the Barriers

- Before parents will discuss attendance, they need to know you care. Get to know your families. What are their joys and wishes? What are their barriers? How can you help?
- Parents might not know how to help get their children to school. Share simple habits they can establish with their children:
 1. Set regular evening routines, including bedtimes.
 2. Schedule medical and dental appointments after school
 3. Avoid planning vacations during the school year.
 4. Make sure students attend school unless truly sick.



Parent/Teacher Conferences

October

Building Relationships with a Short Amount of Time.

Learning Target

Engage families so they attend parent/teacher conferences.



<http://doe.sd.gov/title/toolkit/documents/17-Guide.pdf> (p. 28)

Activities

Have students design invitations for parent/teacher conferences.

"Sweet Success Showcase" - Share the successes of the students with cookies or donuts.

Establish student-led conferences.

Thoughts

Share questions with families before parent/teacher conferences.

Meet the families at a "neutral" location like a café or park.

Reminder

Keep it positive! Families need to hear **TWO** positives before you share an opportunity for their child's growth.

Breaking the Barriers

- Timing: Make conferences convenient for the families. Over supper time? Have a light meal or snacks for the entire family. Listen to your families. Do they miss conferences because of work?
- Language: ELL, have an interpreter available but do not use Google Translate.
- Language: Talk to your families without using school jargon.



Family Fun

November

Family Nights or Grade - Level Family Fun!

Learning Target

Engage families and link learning during family fun enrichment nights.



<http://www.ptotoday.com/pto-today-articles/article/8346-quick-and-cheap-events-for-your-pto-or-pta>

Activities

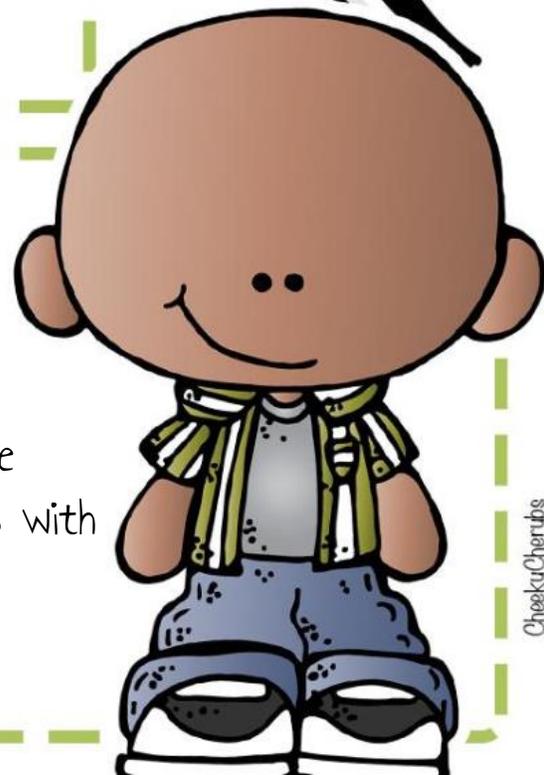
- Turkey BINGO
- Carnival
- Literacy Night
- Cultural Nights
- STEAM² Night
- Showcase Students

Reminder

Learning is all around us! For example, link **BINGO** to learning: Count the rows of bingo numbers to win an extra prize or share a strategy between games.

Breaking the Barriers

- Make it fun! Learning is all around us! Let families share in learning.
- Have a family event during the day for an entire grade level (beyond Donuts with Dad or Muffins with Mom).
- Consider integrating STEAM in the Classroom or Cultural Sharing Days.



Holiday Programs

December

Everyone Comes – Now's the Time to Share Information!

Learning Target

Offer intentional parent and family engagement at student-centered events.



<http://doe.sd.gov/title/toolkit/documents/17-Guide.pdf> (p. 33)

Reminder

Greet families as they come in for events. Smile and show them the event's exact location.

Activities

Set up a powerpoint about attendance or school goals to share on the background of the stage.

Talk with families and greet people.

Thoughts

Families attend for their child! If you offer a truly student-centered event, the families will attend.

Breaking the Barriers

- Build relationships with families! Relationships are essential for engaging families in their children's learning lives.
- Get to know more about the entire family. Holiday programs present a fun opportunity to learn about your students' families.



Positive Relationships

January

Back to School – Keep Building Relationships!

Learning Target

Continue to build positive relationships with families.



<http://doe.sd.gov/title/toolkit/documents/17-Guide.pdf> (p. 34)

Activities

- Consistency and frequency: Parents want frequent, ongoing feedback about how their children are performing with homework.
- Follow-through: Parents and teachers each want to see that the other will actually do what they say they will do.
- Clarity and usefulness of communication: Parents and teachers should have the information they need to help students, in a form and language that makes sense to them.

Reminder

When a phone call from school conveys good news, the atmosphere between home and school improves. When you have good news to share, why wait? Make the call and start a positive relationship with a parent.

Breaking the Barriers

Surprise a Parent: Parents are not accustomed to hearing unsolicited positive comments from teachers about their children, especially in a phone call from the school. Imagine how positive you would feel, as a parent, if you were contacted by a teacher or the school principal and told that your son or daughter was doing well in school, or that your child had overcome a learning or behavior problem? When you make calls to share positive information with parents, be prepared for them to sound surprised, pleasantly surprised.



100 Days of School

February

100 Days Smarter – Celebrating School!

Learning Target

Celebrate 100 Days of School as an accomplishment! Discuss the learning that has been done and the learning yet to come!



<https://www.ptotoday.com/pto-today-articles/article/1383-11-ways-to-mark-the-100th-day-of-school>

Reminder

If you took family portraits at the beginning of the year, celebrate by taking 100 days later portraits. Students will have changed in 100 days!

Activities

Celebrate by writing a short story of "If I were 100 years old"!

Fill small bags with 100 items.

In the gym: 100 yard dash, 100 sit-ups, 100 tosses

Thoughts

This is an opportunity to have fun, celebrate, and tie in more learning with the students!

Another opportunity: practice various ways to count to 100.

Breaking the Barriers

- What if a family can't participate? Have items ready to send home from school: 100 coffee stirrers (put into bundles of 10) or cut 100 pieces of paper.
- Conduct a photo shoot with 100 year old props.



Family Friendly Walk Throughs

March

Is Our School Family Friendly Ready?

Learning Target



<http://doe.sd.gov/title/toolkit/documents/17-Guide.pdf> (p. 6)

Create a more welcoming environment for families and develop learning partnerships with families by conducting a Family Friendly Walk Through (FFWT - a tool designated by the SD Department of Education to provide schools the opportunity to build relationships with families).

Activities

- Have staff and parents fill out the FFWT Survey (provided by the SD Department of Education).
- Develop the FFWT Team: The team should include parents/family members, school staff, a school board member, community, or a business representative. Parents should make up the majority of the team.
- Set the date, invite the FFWT team, and plan on three hours for the FFWT.

Reminder

Invite a variety of families, not just the ones on PTA; you want a variety of voices and viewpoints..

Breaking the Barriers

How do we get the families to be part of the walk-through?

- Have teachers identify 3-5 families from their class and give the names to the principal who invites the parents by saying, "We are so excited to have a FFWT and your teacher selected you as a parent who is involved in your kids life and we would love to hear your voice!"
- Follow-up with the letter defining and explaining the FFWT concept.
- Call as a reminder the day before the event.



Transitions!

April

Kindergarten, Middle School, High School, College/Career

Learning Target

Help students develop an understanding of expectations as they transition to next year's new learning environments.



<http://doe.sd.gov/title/toolkit/documents/17-Guide.pdf> (p. 29)



<https://www.naeyc.org>

Activities

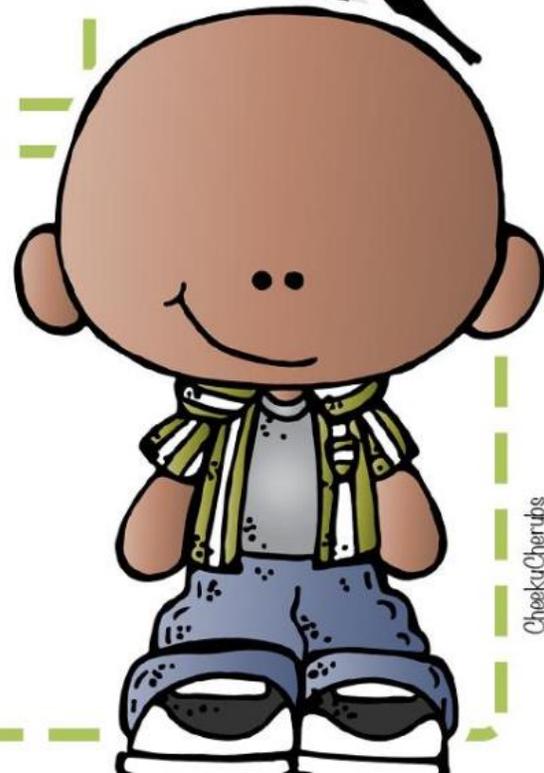
- Invite the families into the school before the open house or first day of school.
- Have a pretend day of what school will look like for the first time.
- Share what the academics are going to look like when transitioning into next grade-level.
- Reach out to your new students with a welcome call or letter in July/August.

Reminder

Every transition is a big deal. Help prepare the students by making sure your room is welcoming and they know what is expected!

Breaking the Barriers

Student learning success is more likely to occur when parents and children know the school - its staff, the school facility, the curriculum and expectations, as well as other families. Children are excited the first day because they already know what to expect and have people they know, school personnel as well as peers, waiting for them. Teachers are able to start teaching earlier and report fewer behavior problems (and tears!) the first few weeks of school.



Thinking About Summer

May

What Can We Do to Decrease the Summer Slide?

Learning Targets

Accelerate student achievement by offering expanded calendars to close the achievement gap and promote 21st Century skill development.

- Offer before school, afterschool, and summer learning.
- Extend learning time (school day and school year).



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52KuhCpiOUE>

Activities

- End of the school year Summer Reading Challenge Sheet to be turned in to the school in the fall for a prize.
- Partner with local library for a reading challenge.
- Encourage your students to go to the local library over the summer.
- Give students a math/literacy scavenger hunt that they can email you throughout the summer.

Reminder

Even though the school year is complete, learning doesn't need to end! Offer fun learning activities for your students to do over the summer.

Breaking the Barriers

- Help students find scholarships to go to a summer camp or workshop. Help them fill out the application, if needed, and plan with the parents on how their kiddo will get there.
- Offer a variety of activities to stay connected - email, text, social media. Provide the means for students to share their summer learning.

