Building Engaging Afterschool Programs with Families

Illinois Quality Afterschool Webinar

April 19, 2017
Presenters

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Meaningful family engagement should be *systemic, integrated, and sustained*. To achieve this, family engagement must be:

* A core component of educational goals
* Embedded into existing structures and processes to meet these goals
* Operated with adequate resources to ensure that effective strategies can be implemented with fidelity and sustained (Weiss et al., 2010)
Engage Families in Program Design and Improvement

* Share information about issues affecting children and families.
* Provide a parent voice to programming.
* Assist in recruiting families and students.
* Help ensure the needs of ALL students are addressed.
Why Engage Families?

A large body of research has demonstrated that:

* Community-based parent support programs, operated in a family-centered manner, increase parents’ self-efficacy and competence (Dunst, et.al, 2006; and Dunst, et.al, 2008)

* Community-based parent support programs can positively impact the social and emotional development of young children (Dunst and Trivette, 2005; and Layzer, et.al, 2001)

Why Engage Families?

Programs that partner with families are able to:

* Leverage their resources to address student learning and healthy development
* Have families that are more connected to both afterschool programs and schools
* Partner with community organizations and coordinate efforts across multiple settings
* Develop programming that is contextualized to the needs of students, families, and the community
Why Engage Families?

Programs that partner with families are able to:

- Inform and strengthen instructional practice and programming
- Contextualize instruction
- Identify multiple pathways to support learning
- Create activities that engage families and focus on a student-centered approach
Families are experts on their own experiences. Without regularly listening and responding to families, policies and programs can be ineffective and even alienating to those they aim to help.
Building Capacity to Support Family Engagement

* Research has found that parents’ personal self-efficacy has a significant impact on whether or not they will engage in activities that support their children’s learning and healthy development (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Grolnick et al., 1997; Sheldon, 2002; Bandura et al., 1996; and Shumow & Lomax, 2002).

* Personal self-efficacy = a parent’s belief that he/she has the necessary knowledge and skill sets and the belief that they can help promote positive outcomes for his/her child.

Building Capacity to Support Family Engagement

Afterschool programs and districts and school personnel can help build self-efficacy by:

* Promoting family assets, including their cultural and linguistic backgrounds

* Helping parents understand and interpret rules, laws, and policies related to their rights and responsibilities in their child(ren)'s education

* Showing family members how they can support learning at home

* Helping parents understand data and how it is used to inform instruction
### Conditions for Family Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>21st CCLCs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Believe they have a role</td>
<td>• Invite engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Have confidence in ability</td>
<td>• Welcome, honor, and connect families to learning</td>
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<td>• Develop skills and knowledge</td>
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Sharing Power with Families

Why do we want to share power with families?

* Programs that provide opportunities for shared leadership with families are better able to meet the needs of the school and community.¹

* Parent leaders may help organizations become aware of a range of issues, and provide valuable insights about their family and community experiences.

How Does Your Program…

* Communicate concerns to parents in a timely manner?
* Include parents in the problem-solving process?
* Survey parents on student needs and school climate?
* Support parents’ understanding of policies, academic standards, and community issues?
Components

- Family Engagement Framework Overview
- Research Review
- Family Engagement Standards
- Integrating Family Engagement Matrix
- Legislative Requirements/References

ISBE Family Engagement Principle 4: Include Families in Decision Making

Standards for Principle 4:

* Empowers parents to be involved

* Solicits input from families

* Includes parents in the district/school continuous improvement process

* Jointly develops and reviews programming for families to support learning and healthy development

* Engages parents to participate in problem-solving discussions related to their child

Meeting the Needs of Families

- Survey families to identify needs and concerns.

- Work with families to design effective ways to communicate with parents.

- Use family recommendations to create a plan each year for communicating about afterschool programming and their children’s progress.
Meeting the Needs of Families

- Ensure families know their opinions or contributions matter.
- Highlight solutions or improvements made based on survey data and family feedback.
- Be transparent by posting survey results.
Gathering Family Input

* Be inclusive of all types of family structures.
* Hold smaller meetings or create small discussion groups within larger settings.
* Create opportunities for families to dialogue with each other.
* Use communication journals.

Ideas for Involving Families in Decision Making:

- Establish a governance council that includes parents (elected by parents) and has a voice in major program decisions.

- Include parent and community members on staff selection committees.

- Survey parents annually — have parents co-design the survey and analyze results.

- Hold focus groups to elicit ideas and surface concerns.
Focus on Co-Creation With Families

Families can help design and even implement components of an evaluation process, helping to decide the focus of the evaluation, defining or validating questions, administering surveys and other tools, and making meaning from results.
Focus on Families’ Assets

- Listen to the concerns and needs of families.
- Ask families what they think about the program, how they can contribute to the program, and how they can be served in return.
- Gather family feedback on current programming and implement their ideas for new programming.
- Provide opportunities for families to have a role in shaping program goals and activities.
- Collect information through surveys, focus group discussions, one-on-one meetings, and even suggestion boxes.
In general, why does your program engage families?
What is Family Engagement?
A Strategy Not a Goal for Educational Excellence and Equity
Shared Responsibility
Deliberate Process
Empowers Adults
Mindful of Diversity
Responsive

(Henderson & Mapp 2002)
Family Engagement Is a Core Part of High-Quality Afterschool Programs

Afterschool programs are often times the first point of entry for family and community engagement.
Standards for Engagement:

18. The program has a systemic approach and structure for family and community engagement.

19. The program builds a welcoming environment that is responsive to youth and family needs.

20. Staff engage in ongoing and meaningful two-way communication with families to support youth learning and healthy development.

21. A quality program develops, nurtures, and maintains strong relationships with community organizations to fully support youth.

--ACT NOW Illinois Quality Afterschool Standards
Where does strong engagement currently occur within your program?
Columbia College Chicago, Center for Community Arts Partnerships (CCAP)

April Langworthy, Program Director

**Goal:** Engage families in meaningful ways that support children’s learning and healthy development

- **Systemic:**
  - FE integrated into district strategic plan

- **Welcoming:**
  - Weaving FE goals into CIP

- **Communication:**
  - Building audits to ensure FE links to learning and being family-friendly

- **Community Engagement:**
  - Compact for each Title 1 School
Getting There:
The Importance of Asking

* Getting to and Going Beyond Asset-Based Parental Engagement in Community Schools
Year One: Need-Based Model I

“Here’s what you need us to do for you.”
Where we were:

- NCLB meetings planned and facilitated by staff members
- Often off the mark in terms of relevance and popularity (though not always...)
- 10–15 parents, free food
- Classes based on assumptions held by school (“You know what these parents need...”)
- Not much communication between school and parents
- No structure for critique or asking principal questions
Turning Point:

Maria Sanchez-Rico
Parent Resource Leader
Year Two: Need-Based Model II

What do you need us to do for you?
At least now we’re asking…

* Surveyed parents on what classes they wanted, then made those classes happen

* Brought in “experts” as presenters

* First year of Parent Center and Parent Resource Leader

* Maria also NCLB president
Turning Point:

NCLB committee members started planning their own meetings.
Year Three: Asset-Based Model

What can you do?
Parents as Resources

- Surveyed parents on their interests and hobbies
- Painting the room
- Matching assets to interests
- Parent-taught classes
Turning Point:

Parents started suggesting classes they’d like to teach instead of classes they wanted to take.
Year Four: Participatory Planning Model

How do we support you in being resources for the school and each other?
Building Leadership Density

• Professional Development for Parents: ICVP, Literacy Works, Columbia College ECE, BlackStar, etc.
• Parents as Program Planners: Family Nights, Carnival, “What to Expect” Series, Advocacy Efforts
• Parents on Leadership Team: Transition planning, SIPAAA, Relationship between principal and PRL, NCLB committee meetings at 40–50
Year Five: Sustainability

How do we ensure this work continues after the money is gone?
Lessons Learned

* The principal must trust the parents.
* Treat parents like assets.
* Start small and grow a bit each year.
* Empower parents to identify their own needs and to think in terms of solutions.
* Develop a structure for parents to communicate directly with the principal.
* Engage teachers as partners.
* Be visibly of service.

* It matters that you ask, and it matters what you ask.
High Impact
FSCE High-Impact Strategies

Lower impact

- Bulletin Boards
- Fundraisers
- Class Parties
- PTAs
- Student performances

Parent volunteering
Back to school night
Generic newsletters

Parent training events
Regular, personalized communication
Weekly data-sharing folders
Parent-teacher conferences
Positive phone calls home
Home visits
Interactive homework, tips, and tools for home learning

Higher impact

- Goal-setting talks
- Classroom observations or mini-lessons

Source: The Flamboyan Foundation, 2012

© Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc. 2013.
Components of Meaningful and Effective High-Impact Strategies:

- Provide training and supports for both educators and families.
- Leverage funds and resources from multiple sources.
- Create staff positions dedicated to family engagement.
- Focus on school improvement instead of procedural compliance.
- Make student and school data accessible and meaningful to families.
- Link family engagement efforts to learning.
- Build relational trust and respect.

Source SEDL 2014 (http://www.sedl.org/insights/2-2/District_Support_for_Family_Engagement.pdf)
ACT Now Website
http://www.actnowillinois.org/
Low cost capacity-building trainings on family engagement for schools and district teams.

Accessible through local Regional Office of Education

Training Offerings Include:
- Making the case for FE
- Cultural Competency
- FE Framework
- Collaborative Approach
- Assessment and Action Planning

www.foundtionalservices.org

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Need help with your evaluation? e-mail abchelp@1-kan.org

This program is fully (100%) funded by the United States Department of Education using No Child Left Behind, Title I Part A Funds through a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education, Statewide System of Support funds.
Questions?


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Resource Database

http://www.sedl.org/afterschool/iqa/iqa_database/resources