Building a Foundation for Lasting Family Engagement
Presenters

Latasha Battie
Program Director of Community Schools
Chicago Youth Centers

Sarah Ogeto
Principal Consultant
Illinois State Board of Education

Lacy Wood
Project Manager
Illinois Quality Afterschool
Engaging Families is a Priority for ISBE

ISBE believes meaningful family engagement is a cornerstone of effective schools. Meaningful family engagement is based on the belief that parents, educators, and community members all share responsibility for a child’s education and well-being. Families have a stake in all aspects of our education system and are key partners in every area of school improvement.

Family engagement has been identified as a “Hot Topic” for the 2016 School Year.
Afterschool Programs Function as a “Broker” Between Families and Schools

- Promoting a welcoming environment
- Addressing misconceptions that may be held by teachers and families about the role of family engagement
- Using resources toward supporting increased family engagement
- Understanding the effect of children’s home environment on their academic performance
- Organizing the program structure to encourage parent engagement
- Providing families with the information and tools to support their children’s academic success

(After School Alliance: http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_57_Parent_Engagement.cfm)
Developing Structures that Support Effective, Meaningful, and Lasting Family Engagement
Primary Factors in Families’ Decision Become Engaged

- Belief that this is part of their role as a parent
- Welcoming and supportive environment
- Relational trust
- Requests and invitations from staff and students
- Confidence in their abilities, skills, and knowledge
- Demands on their time and energy

Building the Foundation

✦ Create a welcoming environment
✦ Strengthen communication and outreach
✦ Provide sustained, systemic supports
Welcoming Environment

Programs that focus on building trusting and respectful relationships among staff, families, students, and community members are most effective in creating and sustaining meaningful partnerships.
Building Relational Trust

- Honor any type of involvement or contribution
- Recognize, respect, and address cultural and class differences
- Embrace a philosophy of partnership
- Promote shared responsibility
Outreach and Communication

- Two-way
- Specific and targeted
- Strength-based
- Ongoing
- Accessible
- Responsive to needs
Outreach and Communication

- Back to school kickoff initiatives
Creating a welcoming environment includes understanding and addressing context, culture, and language.
Developing Meaningful Partnerships with All Families

Students enrolled in afterschool programs come from diverse families who are engaged with the children’s learning and healthy development in a number of ways.
What is Cultural Competency?

- It is a key factor in enabling educators to be effective with students and families from cultures other than their own.
- It is having an awareness of one’s own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families.
- It is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make individuals unique, while celebrating the between-group variations that make our country a tapestry. This understanding informs and expands educational practices in culturally competent schools and districts.

(National Education Association, 2015: http://www.nea.org/home/39783.htm)
# How Does Cultural Competency Impact Family Engagement?

| Building a Family Engagement System | • Addressing cultural bias  
• Promoting assets and self-efficacy |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Building a Welcoming Environment    | • Cultivating relational trust  
• Developing appropriate responses to family needs |
| Enhancing Communication             | • Ensuring awareness and access to information |
| Including Parents in the Decision-Making Process | • Building capacity for meaningful engagement |
The Johari Window

Known to Self | Not Known to Self
---|---
Known to Others | OPENLY VIEWED | BLIND SPOT
Not Known to Others | HIDDEN from VIEW | UNKNOWN
Addressing Bias and Its Impact

The reflexive loop (our beliefs affect what data we select next time)

1. I take actions based on my beliefs
2. I adopt beliefs about the world
3. I draw conclusions
4. I make assumptions based on the meanings I added
5. I add meanings (cultural and personal)
6. I select "Data" from what I observe
7. Observable "data" and experiences (as a video tape recorder might capture it)
Tools to Build Cultural Competency

Afterschool Programmatic Teams

- ISBE Foundational Services Trainings
- Y4Y

Afterschool Teachers

- The Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning
Strategies for Family Engagement from the Field

- Consider using 21st CCLC funds to hire a part-time or full-time family engagement specialist or coordinator to focus solely on family engagement events, activities, and workshops in your program.
- Ensure family engagement activities are culturally relevant to the families and communities you serve.
Strategies for Family Engagement from the Field, continued

- Offer parent workshops on content that impacts student achievement, such as:
  - Creating a learning environment at home
  - Transitioning from middle school to high school
  - Understanding standardized testing (PARCC)
  - Ensuring health and wellness
  - Developing personal empowerment or enrichment skills
- Offer workshops at different times during the day and evening to accommodate both the working and at-home parent.
Strategies for Family Engagement from the Field, continued

- Use parents as facilitators to lead clubs that utilize their skill sets.
- Connect with parent stakeholders already involved at the school to increase their involvement and get them to be ambassadors for your program.
- Create Planning Tools
ISBE Resources

ISBE Resources for Afterschool Programs and Families

Resources for Afterschool Providers

Resources for Families
http://www.sedl.org/afterschool/iqa/index.html