



# What Parents Want School Staff to Know

Presented by the State Superintendent's  
Parent Leadership Corps

# What does the research say?

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- Family involvement helps student achievement
- Trust and strong relationships build good family involvement
- Partnerships will look and feel different for each school

# Engagement

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**When school staff engage in caring and trustful relationships with families, the families are more apt to participate in their children's educational development.**

**This is the most significant finding of the research.  
(Karen Mapp, 2002, "A New Wave of Evidence")**

# State Superintendent's Parent Leadership Corps

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“Clearly, when families are involved in their children's education, children do better in school, and the schools they go to get better. The Parent Leadership Corps will play a vital role in helping us get this critically important message out to all families, educators, and policy makers at the state and local levels.”

Wisconsin State Superintendent Elizabeth “Libby” Burmaster

# Relationship before Content

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- Think about a time when you had a positive interaction with a teacher, parent, or principal.

What did it feel like it?

What was the subject?

Why was it positive?

# Parents Want Staff to Know

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## ■ **Respect**

- Parents want you to respect them and their commitment to their child.

## ■ **Relationships**

- Parents want to have a trusting relationship with teachers.

## ■ **Rules**

- Parents want to know the rules and be part of how learning at school works.

# Respect

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Parents want you to know

1. They are important to their children's school success and are their children's first and most influential teachers.
2. Every parent has strengths and abilities that benefit their children.

# Relationships

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Parents want

3. to feel welcome in the school building.
4. you to encourage them to ask questions and seek information.
5. you to invite them to express their ideas and opinions in many ways.
6. to know why you are asking them to do something.

# Rules

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Parents want

7. to know the chain of command in school and how the system works.
8. to know how to be involved and how to contribute.
9. the school to provide clear, concise information.
10. schools to provide parent leadership training.

# Effective Strategies to Engage All Families

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1. Assess the level of trust in your school.
2. Personally welcome students and families.
3. Begin parent-teacher relationships with the positive.
4. Recognize, honor, and respect diversity.
5. Create a family resource center.

# Effective Strategies to Engage All Families

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1. Assess the level of trust in your school.

*Some ideas:*

- Survey parents.
- Ask parents what would they like to see changed in the school that would allow parents to participate more.
- Respond back to the parents with results of survey in a timely manner with mailed responses.

# Effective Strategies to Engage All Families

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2. Provide a welcoming climate in the school.

*Some Ideas:*

- Post welcome signs in different languages.
- Set up a welcome center or desk to direct parents and other visitors.
- Involve parent and student volunteers in planning and holding the Back-To-School Night.

# Effective Strategies to Engage All Families

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3. Begin parent-teacher relationships with the positive.

*Some Ideas:*

- Greet with smile.
- Ask parents their opinions.
- Make personal phone call with each parent.
- Ask parents to talk about their children's talents and likes.

# Effective Strategies to Engage All Families

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## 4. Recognize and respect diversity.

### *Some Ideas:*

- Provide interpreters.
- Use pictures and posters with ethnicities and history.
- Invite parents to school to do oral history lessons for all students.

# Effective Strategies to Engage All Families

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## 5. Create a family resource center.

### *Some Ideas:*

- Involve parents in setting up the center.
- Ask for volunteers to help staff the center.
- Connect with community centers/leaders.
- Partner with community businesses.
- Provide resources to parents.

# POINTS TO REMEMBER

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- The evidence: family engagement is critical to student achievement.
- To develop family-school connections, foster a family-friendly approach, attitude, atmosphere, and actions.
- Remember to welcome and honor parents, and connect all activities to the students.

# Resources

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- **DPI Community Learning and Partnerships**  
Website: [www.dpi.wi.gov/fscp/bbhghlts.html](http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fscp/bbhghlts.html)
- **National Network of Partnership Schools**  
[www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org)
- **Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL): National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools**  
[www.sedl.org/connections](http://www.sedl.org/connections)
- **Harvard Family Research Project**  
[www.finenetwork.org](http://www.finenetwork.org)