

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Making Parents / Families Feel Welcome and Valued in Out-of-School Time Programs

How do you involve and engage families in your out-of-school time program? Research shows that family engagement in after school can lead to increased family involvement in children's education and school, improved relationships between parents and children, and improved after school programs. Please use this tool to get started on improving family involvement and engagement in your programs! Through BOSTnet's Engaging Families Initiative, this checklist has been tested by Boston-area programs to help them assess their own strategies. Whether you have a history of making family engagement a priority or are just recently considering the needs of families in your programs, BOSTnet lauds your efforts. Please review the following checklist to assess whether your program is at a Basic (Level 1 – Parents and families attend program events and communicate with staff periodically), Intermediate (Level 2 – Family engagement is a core principle in the overall program development), or Advanced (Level 3 – Parents are acting on behalf of the program and their children in after school) level in involving families in programs. Using the information from this checklist, BOSTnet urges you to seek additional resources to implement family engagement practices to improve your programs.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY CHECKLIST



Making Parents / Families Feel Welcome and Valued in Out-of-School Time Programs

PROGRAM NAME: _____

Completed by: _____ **Date Completed:** _____

LEVEL 1 - (Basic) Involvement & Engagement Strategies

| | STRATEGY | Rarely | Some-times | Consistently | Priority |
|----|---|--------|------------|--------------|----------|
| 1 | There are signs welcoming parents into the program space. | | | | |
| 2 | There are signs or a person directing parents where to find their children within the building/program. | | | | |
| 3 | Staff greet parents in a friendly, respectful manner at pick-up time. Staff can address parents by name. | | | | |
| 4 | Staff ask parents how they are, how do they feel. Good Day? Bad Day? Compliment them. | | | | |
| 5 | At family and program events staff greet parents in the front of the room or building when they arrive. For example there are greeters, and tour guides on hand. | | | | |
| 6 | Staff introduce parents to each other. | | | | |
| 7 | Staff make an effort to communicate to each parent something interesting /positive that their child did or said at least once a week. | | | | |
| 8 | Staff ask parents regularly for input about their child's needs. | | | | |
| 9 | Program has a space where parents know that information/communication is available for them - a "Parent Comfort Corner," a lounge, a corkboard, a table, a shoetree, etc. | | | | |
| 10 | Program has community resources available for families. The area that resources are located allows for privacy and confidentiality. Resources may include: mental & physical health, nutrition, housing, schools, heat, freebies, etc., | | | | |
| 11 | When communicating verbally or in writing, staff are specific in what they ask of parents –they give dates and times of events, what they need, supplies, a potluck dish, how the parent can be involved, etc. | | | | |
| 12 | Program hosts at least one annual open house to attract and inform new families and recognize existing ones. | | | | |
| 13 | Program holds periodic parent orientations - at different times and dates to allow for more parent participation. | | | | |
| 14 | Program has a clear and concise "Parent Handbook" that explains all program policies and procedures that families need to know. Family friendly language is used, not jargon or acronyms, in all written communications to families. | | | | |
| 15 | Staff phone parents to remind them of meetings and call them after to thank them or tell them that they were missed. Program personalizes written invitations and requests. | | | | |
| 16 | Family activities are planned at various times of the day or week and take into account the parent's work schedule. | | | | |

LEVEL 2 (Intermediate) -

| | STRATEGY | Rarely | Sometimes | Consistently | Priority |
|----|--|--------|-----------|--------------|----------|
| 1 | During Staff Orientation the program has training on how staff can make an effort to understand and respect cultural differences, to be non-judgmental, and keep an open mind about all families. | | | | |
| 2 | Staff receive training and support in being aware of their own “cultural lenses” and/or biases, and how to be respectful of families and children no matter their backgrounds and cultural identifiers such as ethnicity, education level, race, sexual orientation, employment status, language, disability, socioeconomic status, etc. | | | | |
| 3 | Program communicates with families constantly, using flyers, newsletters, phone calls, e-mails, welcome packets, coffee hours. | | | | |
| 4 | Program has a parent suggestion box and staff are prepared to address parents’ suggestions constructively. | | | | |
| 5 | Staff ask families what they want and need and really listen to their answers. Staff address all issues or concerns that parents bring up no matter how small. | | | | |
| 6 | Staff keep parents informed of any major policy change that will affect them. | | | | |
| 7 | Program makes on-going feedback forms available - Allows families to prioritize-to decide what activities are most important to them. | | | | |
| 8 | Staff help parents identify and interact with staff informally. For example program uses a photo board, rotating staff “greeter”, informal social events, has parents and staff serve together on committees, staff /parent talent night, etc. | | | | |
| 9 | If the staff doesn’t speak the languages of all families, the program uses interpreter services for communicating verbally and in writing. | | | | |
| 10 | The program makes childcare available for younger siblings at meetings/conferences. | | | | |
| 11 | Program offers informal social events or activities that are fun! For Example: Mom’s Night/Day Out, Family Craft Night/Day, Family Recreation Day/Night, Parents/Couples Night Out, Dad’s Day, Potluck dinners, etc. | | | | |
| 12 | Program offers activities for both parents and staff together: Exercise classes, art workshops, first aid course, etc. | | | | |
| 13 | Program provides refreshments and transportation for meetings/ events, etc. | | | | |

| | Strategy | Rarely | Sometimes | Consistently | Priority |
|----|--|---------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 14 | Program helps to provide a bridge between the family and the child's school if needed. | | | | |
| 15 | Program helps to support families' involvement in their child's academic and informal learning by holding events connected to their child's learning. For example a Family Literacy Night , Science Night, Health Care Day, Math Night, Make It and Take It Night, family fishing expedition, art walk, etc. | | | | |
| 16 | Staff nurture parents and focus on the family. Staff give them time to talk about themselves instead of only talking about their children. They meet the needs of the adult and not just the child. | | | | |
| 17 | Program hosts parent forums and/or discussion groups. | | | | |
| 18 | The program cultivates volunteers and invites the larger community in to support the program. Staff invite parents to participate in program activities and/or field trips. Staff invite parents to help them locate resources to support program activities. | | | | |
| 19 | The program publicly recognizes volunteers: a program newsletter that thanks all the parents and families that have been involved or helped out the program in any way the month before. | | | | |
| 20 | Staff conduct formal and informal surveys on a regular basis. | | | | |
| 21 | Staff take pictures/videos of the children engaging in activities that parents can watch at the program or take home. | | | | |
| 22 | Staff invite parents to make recordings of them reading, singing or talking and make the tapes available for children on a daily basis. | | | | |
| 23 | Staff invite families to share family traditions - Cook family recipes,send in photos, help plan a special event related to their cultural background. | | | | |
| 24 | Staff encourage children to keep a daily journal - children can keep photos, drawings, stories, that they can share with their parents at the end of the day. | | | | |
| 25 | Staff work with the children to plan and host a "Parent Appreciation Day/Night/Week - Children make special badges, prizes, cook a special meal, make gifts, perform songs, etc. | | | | |

LEVEL 3 (Advanced) - Strategies to Develop Family / Parent Leadership

| | STRATEGY | Rarely | Sometimes | Consistently | Priority |
|---|---|--------|-----------|--------------|----------|
| 1 | Staff assist parents to advocate publicly for issues that affect the program and their child. For example: Education, child-care, health care, tax breaks, etc. | | | | |
| 2 | Staff ask parent volunteers to call other parents to invite or remind them of upcoming events. | | | | |
| 3 | Staff celebrate and recognize those parents that contribute their time and effort. For example their ability to be handy, write a grant, sew a pillow, talk to a legislator, etc. | | | | |
| 4 | Staff ask and/or assist parents to write an article for the newsletter: For example there is an "Ask Another Parent" section, or an editorial section that parents can contribute and voice their ideas/opinions. | | | | |
| 5 | Program offers Parent Leadership Courses and actively recruits parents for those opportunities. | | | | |
| 6 | Program has a program improvement council or Advisory Board where parents can help set the agenda. | | | | |
| 7 | Program offers home visits to provide information about parent opportunities directly to the parents and build relationships. | | | | |
| 8 | Program staff help to facilitate families and schools working together as a team to set goals for the child; they work with outside specialists when necessary. | | | | |