

The Eight **P**s Of Parent Engagement

PRAISE



We've heard it before but it deserves saying again. Call a parent for positive reasons before you have to call for negative ones. Teach with an asset-based lens and acknowledge the strengths in every student. Find a way to praise those strengths so parents see you as an ally, not an adversary.

PUBLIC



School can be a gatekeeper for many parents, in particular for our English language learners. Just the act of coming onto campus can be nerve wracking for adults and students alike. Therefore, we have to be creative with our outreach. Try hosting coffee with the principal in a parent liaison's living room or a local coffee shop. Don't just ask families to come to school for information; sometimes go to where the families are.

PURPOSE



- Be transparent in our initiatives. So many schools are adopting restorative justice practices, for instance, but many see them incorrectly as a lack of a discipline plan.
- Communicate the purpose of a shift in practice or procedure. Adopting project-based learning or a new social-emotional learning program? Make those decisions, their rationale, and research transparent.

PERSONALIZE



Many teachers already find ways to communicate in a general way via classroom websites or weekly newsletters. But we also have to personalize for our diverse families. How will you communicate if a family doesn't have access to a computer? What if they don't have voicemail set up on their phone or what if they don't even have a home phone? What if a family doesn't speak the teacher's language? Teachers need to be adept in reaching out comfortably in ways that work for the many families in their classrooms, and schools need to provide supports such as translators and family liaisons that represent multiple demographics.

PERSONALITY



As I wrote here last year, if we want our students engaged, it's vital to share our personalities with them. They have to know us as humans. They have to laugh or know what makes you laugh. Then those students will be your ally in bridging gaps between the classroom and the home. Let students know who you are and they will open doors between you and their parents.

PERSISTENT



Don't give up. Keep at 'em. Keep sending those newsletters. Keep posting those videos. Keep calling to praise. Keep trying to set up vital meetings. I know we're short on time too, but through pleasant persistence, we might see an uptick in activity.

PIECE OF CAKE



Make things easier. Life is hard for a parent. We have to empathize with this generation of parent because it has its own unique challenges. Make things as easy as possible for them to check grades so they can support your efforts. The school also needs to communicate the calendar in multiple modalities to make information easier to find too: on the website (no more than one click away), posted in the front office, on the digital sign that greets them at drop-off, etc. ... Be as communicative as you can be, then figure out one more way to do it.

PROVIDE SUPPORT



I'm a big believer in the community school model. The school can be a hub of support and information for many people, and it can have a larger role in the community overall. Schools can be the place where parent education classes are held. There can be ways to provide childcare during parent/teacher conferences and other meetings. We can open up our multi-purpose rooms for lectures and movies. The school need not only be seen as a place of assessment, but as a place where the community goes to learn and celebrate learning.