

Developing Relationships Between Schools and Families

The beginning of the school year is a key time to communicate with families. Some may be new to the school. Some may have older children at the school. All will want to know what to expect from schools and new teachers, and how they can help their children learn. Some of this information can be mailed to families. Below are some methods of communicating information families want to know.

Welcome Letters

Welcome letters are generally sent by teachers at the beginning of the school year, or when a new student enrolls. Remember to be direct, use clear language, and avoid education jargon. (See information under newsletters for more on how to make written material engaging.)

Information Packets

Ideally, this information should be provided during Kindergarten registration so families can be well prepared prior to the start of school.

Calendars

Ideally, this information should be provided during Kindergarten registration so families can be well prepared prior to the start of school. Monthly or annual calendars highlight upcoming school events and meetings.

School to Home Handbook

The School to Home Handbook provides families with information about the school and can help families understand school policies and programs. Handbooks may also provide ways families and their children can be involved in the school, such as Parent Teacher Associations or other volunteer opportunities.

Contents

A School to Home Handbook serves as the school's calling card, establishing a tone for its relations with families. It also provides all the basic information, such as staff names and positions, emails, website information, phone numbers, and school operation information.

Handbook Preparation

Handbooks that are prepared collaboratively by administrators, teachers, and families are able to reflect the interests of each group.

Open House

Schools need to share information about their programs with all families. One widespread approach is the open house in which a school is open to families for inspection and observation. It is a great way to welcome all families to the school. The open house works best if schools:

Publicity

A carefully thought-out publicity campaign is essential to the success of a well-attended and received Open House. The Open House event should be scheduled about a month after classes start so that teachers are somewhat familiar with their students and there is time to invite all families. Districts need to hold their schools' open houses on different evenings so families with children in more than one school and teachers who have school-age children can attend each open house.

Planning

Open houses are successful when they meet the real needs of families. The best way to ensure success is to involve families in the planning process.

Preparation

The school will want to convey a warm and inviting atmosphere to families and ensure that teacher and staff presentations are welcoming, informative and enjoyable.