



Quick Guide - How to Involve Hard-to-Reach Parents: Encouraging Meaningful Parental Involvement with Schools

At Project Appleseed, we believe in the transformative power of family engagement. To support schools in fostering meaningful relationships with all families, especially those harder to reach, we've adapted evidence-based strategies into an actionable framework. Rooted in the Six Slices of Family Engagement, this guide provides practical steps to build strong, inclusive, and impactful family-school partnerships.

Each slice outlines specific goals and strategies designed to help schools connect with families, enhance communication, support student success, empower parental voices, and foster community collaboration. Whether you are looking to welcome families, share power, or build lasting partnerships, this guide is a valuable resource to enhance engagement efforts at every level.

Slice 1: Welcome All Families

Goal 1: Build a Community of Belonging

- Home visits
- Visits to school followed by invitations to see what the children are doing
- Monthly drop-in sessions
- Open sessions in school to engage with learning on a weekly basis
- Personalizing letters to parents

Goal 2: Create an Inclusive Environment

- Signage in various languages
- Parent laundry mats and cafés in school
- Translators and childcare facilities
- Community activities after primary drop-off time
- Parent Liaisons and parent volunteer coordinators
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Slice 2: Communicate Effectively

Goal 1: Exchange Information Between School and Families

- Newsletters
- Text messaging alerts
- Use of website for information
- Phone, text, and email communication
- Principal calls parents directly

Goal 2: Facilitate Parent-Teacher Communication

- [Parent Engagement Pledge](#) learning compact
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Flexible scheduling for parent-teacher conferences
- Learning mentor building relationships with hard-to-reach parents
- Regular parent consultation

Slice 3: Support Student Success

Goal 1: Team-Up For Student Success

- Parent liaisons
- Fund more social workers
- Attendance officers employed by the school to target persistent absentees]

Goal 2: Support Learning by Engaging Families

- Reading workshops with parents listening to their child read
- Homework clubs
- Family learning days
- After-school clubs for children and parents with a craft focus
- Pyramid for Parents group

Slice 4: Speak Up for Every Child

Goal 1: Navigate the School System

- Advice on higher education
- Meetings with the principal once a month
- Parent council and parent governance
- Stakeholder day

Goal 2: Address Inequitable Outcomes and Access

- Use of language services, e.g., Language Line
- Parent-led curriculum
- Parents are invited to attend courses and workshops run by the school and external providers
- Special educational needs drop-in sessions
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Slice 5: Share Power

Goal 1: Strengthen the Family's Voice in Shared Decision Making

- Parental contributions to the school improvement plan
- Parent questionnaires and surveys
- PTA and parent council meetings

Goal 2: Build Families' Connections

- Family after-school clubs
- Family sports
- Buddy system for parents who want to come to school but are not at ease or confident alone
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Slice 6: Collaborate with the Community

Goal 1: Build a Strong Foundation for Community Partnerships

- Invitations to events where children are performing or receiving awards in and outside school
- Links with the children's center
- Engagement with city learning centers and library media centers
- Community fun day

Goal 2: Connect the School with Community Partners

- Theme days or weeks that involve external agencies
- Enterprise days
- Visits to the local university
- Collaborating with community organizations for charity events and fundraising activities

Adapted from Campbell, Clare. *The National College for School Leadership: How to Involve Hard-to-Reach Parents: Encouraging Meaningful Parental Involvement with Schools*, Autumn 2011.



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