Building Strong Relationships with Families & Increasing Parent Involvement to Improve Student Achievement

Farmington Elementary
Mayfield, Kentucky

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School Facts

- Elementary School
- Pre-School – 6th Grades – 310 students
- Rural Western Kentucky
- 23 Teachers, 9 Assistants
- No Child Left Behind – Met all AYP goals
- Kentucky Core Content Tests –
  - 2001-2006 Top School in the Region 5 of the 6 years
  - 2006 Sixth School in the State
  - 2006 Reached Proficiency in All Seven Tested Areas
Building Family Relationships

Home Visits

It’s all about building positive relationships
Teacher buy-in – Just takes one visit
Teachers experience the students’ world outside of school
Parents are in their comfort zones and more likely to discuss concerns
Visits are on a volunteer basis
Our numbers have increased significantly since the first year
Families find out who their teachers are, reduces first day anxiety
Building Family Relationships

**Preparation**

Families sign up in May before school is out and at Kindergarten registration.

Visits are scheduled the week before school starts on the same day from 2:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Teachers meet before visiting homes to focus on the goals and be reminded of protocols.

**The Protocol**

Safety - Go in pairs

Non-threatening - Dress informally – school shirts

Start with a positive - Take school supplies
Building Family Relationships

The Visits

Some visits happen on the front porch – Watch for non-verbal cues
Parents/Families do the talking and need to feel like the experts
Teacher shows the child attention and then talks with the parents
Question sheet keeps the focus on the child
Children love showing the teachers their bedrooms
Teachers become knowledgeable of students’ interests
Parents have a new school friend, someone they feel comfortable calling

Teachers reflect the next day – Important Part
Family Communication

• **Weekly Newsletters**
  Classroom schedules, Instruction concepts, special events, spelling words, homework

• **Constant communication**
  Phone calls, notes home, positive “Happy” notes on small daily achievements students have accomplished
  Notes to former students now in middle school and high school give encouragement and communicate our interest in their graduation
Family Communication

- **School Public Relations**
  - Live Daily News Show
  - School Web-site
  - Teacher Web-sites
  - Monthly Calendars
  - Announcements & Pictures in Local Newspaper
  - Work with District PR person to communicate special school news
Family Involvement

• **Special Family Invitations**
  - Celebrations for Student Achievements
  - Back to School Night
  - Walk the Walk Night
  - Family Nights – Reading with the Eagles
  - PTO meetings with Student Presentations
  - Moms & Muffins, Dads & Donuts,
    Grandparents’ Breakfasts
  - Open Invitations for Breakfast and Lunch
  - Collaboration on Special Projects
Family Involvement

- **Volunteer Efforts**

  Classroom
  
  Classroom assistance at special times when extra help is needed, Field Trips, Celebrations

  School
  
  Office help, Beautification, Special Events, Extra-Curricular

  Community Reading Coaches
  
  One on one relationships centered around reading
  
  Same child, twenty minutes once a week
Family Involvement

- Parents and Families take the initiative to address school needs:
  - Walking Trail
  - Library Transformation
  - Renovation of Office
  - Washington DC Fundraising and Trip
Summary Points

• Building Family Relationships and Increasing Family Involvement leads to improvements in Student Achievement

• **Challenges still ahead**
  
  Many families had negative school experiences and see schools as the enemy.

  Socio-economic issues are used as excuses for weak relationships and lack of involvement.