

Ideas for Engaging Families

in an Afterschool Program

Engaging parents and families is an ongoing effort in ELO programs. Engaging families helps students and is beneficial for your entire program. Parents and families are often your best advocates!

There are many approaches to involving families and creating opportunities for them to voice opinions, learn, contribute, engage with their children, staff or other parents.

Effective family engagement is an ongoing process and involves clear communication with mutual responsibility and respect.

Parent handbooks, newsletters, showcase events, etc., are often utilized as means to engage families in their student's Afterschool program.



- Develop a parent advisory group to allow for input into programs.
- Create a parent focus group that meets to address a specific topics and concerns.
- Communicate with parents quarterly with positive news about their child.
- Hold a weekend event. You may be able to attract parents who typically do not attend weekday events.
- Consider short meetings. Establish monthly parent meetings and require parents/students to attend one meeting per semester.
- Encourage parent volunteers. Develop a volunteer inventory checklist with ways that parents could contribute their time to the program. Try a "Three for Me" Project (parents pledge to volunteer three hours per year, per child).
- Consider parent education or skills development classes (frequency could be weekly, monthly, quarterly).
- Ask for suggestions. Send home parent input sheets and surveys for parents to make suggestions for creating the type of environment in which they would feel comfortable participating.
- Offer informal social events or activities that are simply for fun! For example, Family STEM, arts, or sporting events. If your student population is heavily Latino, provide bilingual instruction.
- Publicly recognize volunteers in 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
- Arrange an International Night to showcase different cultures.
- Organize a Restaurant Night. Ask a local restaurant to donate 5-10% of their profits from sales from an evening. Encourage families to dine at the restaurant that night.
- Host a Parent Appreciation Day/Night. Ask students to make special badges, prizes, cook a special meal, make gifts, perform songs, etc.