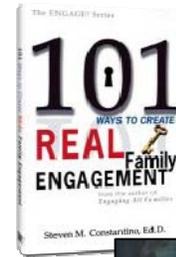


**101 Ways to Create Real Family Engagement**, Steve M. Constantino  
ENGAGE! Press, 2008

Steve Constantino has provided a very readable and practical book for parental involvement practitioners. The book does identify 101 descriptive ideas a school or district might employ to enrich its parental involvement program.



“The book has two parts. Part I shows you how to make cultural changes that support real engagement. Part II focuses on the techniques that will help shape a framework for real family engagement. Included are 101 practical and tested strategies, organized under the four domains of family engagement:

- Creating a welcoming environment
- Effective two-way communication
- Degree of engagement of every family
- School support for home learning”

Part I, “What Is Engagement? Why Does It Matter?” lays a solid foundation upon which to build a family engagement program. Constantino affirms that parental involvement is all about developing meaningful relationships with parents and families, and one of the results is an increase in student achievement. He also identifies assumptions parents and educators tend to make regarding family engagement. The key to success is cultivating a culture within the school that is family friendly, and three rules of engagement must be in place to generate real family engagement:

- “Families must find personal meaning and relevance in their children’s educational experiences,
- Families must receive positive interpersonal support from school employees on a regular basis and in a consistent manner,
- Families must see evidence that their children’s school is successful, safe and committed to establishing healthy relationships with parents and families.”

Part II, “101 Strategies That Create Real Family Engagement” is relevant. The ideas arise from real life experience – strategies that have been and are being put into practice in schools. Each strategy is introduced with a description and concludes with a variety of practical suggestions of “things to do.” It would be tempting to select strategies because they seem easy to implement or might provide a quick-fix. I caution the reader to not cherry-pick ideas because they sound interesting. Adopt and modify these ideas based upon the needs and programmatic goals of your school and district.

Some of the ideas are novel. Other ideas will affirm practices you already have in place. A few ideas may encourage you to take a risk for the good of the students and families. Some of the strategies may not fit the context of your school while others may cause you to say, “Why didn’t I think of that?” The ideas are worth a careful review because one select strategy may be the key that opens the door to real family engagement in your school.

Review, Skip Forsyth, 03/03/2010