

QUICK WINS: Engaging High School Parents



1. Be intentional and focused about family engagement.

Engage all employees in creating a mission and vision statement that speaks to your commitment for ensuring that all students will graduate with a regular high school diploma. This commitment should include specific strategies that guide families of students with disabilities on their journey toward high school graduation.

Quick Win #1. A mission and vision statement developed with multiple perspectives from all employees can be a powerful tool that declares your commitment to engaging families for every student in the building. Post this district-wide commitment on school stationary, websites, report cards, newsletters, and social media sites. Recognize employees who actively engage with students and families.

2. Partner with feeder schools to engage with families early on.

Reach out to the elementary and middle schools that feed into your district's secondary school(s) to mitigate "transition anxiety" for students and families.

Quick Win #2. Host an elementary or middle school parent event at the high school to introduce students and families to potential learning that occurs during high school. At these events, familiarize students and families with the importance of instilling habits that lead to high school success and graduation.

3. Create lesson, projects, or assignments where students need to interact with parents, and family or community members.

These activities promote student learning through dialogue between students and adults about life experiences. When students engage in these types of learning activities, they gain valuable research and communication skills that can help them become successful citizens in their communities

Quick Win #3. Encourage teachers in core subject areas to incorporate at least one lesson, project, or assignment each semester that involves interaction with a parent or supportive adult outside of school. When appropriate, display or highlight student learning by posting final products on the website, on school walls, in newsletters, through presentations at school board meetings, and opportunities for "gallery walks" throughout the community.

4. Encourage parents and families to participate in their student's educational journey by providing multiple options for them to engage.

Providing a welcoming environment for families to attend events and conferences in the school building is great, but there may be barriers (e.g., jobs, transportation, health, etc.) that could prevent some families from attending. To enable families to stay connected with their smart phone or computer, provide current and relevant information on your school's parent portal. Using technology to access graded and missing assignments, attendance, as well as standardized test scores creates another way to engage parents and families in their student's education.

Quick Win #4. Put QR codes and website URLs on refrigerator magnets so that parents have easy access to the portal, current school information, and technical support. Using your website, provide both written and video instruction on how to use your parent portal. If they choose not to use the portal, or they do not have access to the internet or a computer, give parents an option for information to be emailed, picked up at school, or sent by regular mail.

5. Provide workshops, focus groups, and information for families directly related to students' preparation for post-secondary goals.

At the middle school level, this may include discussions related to high school graduation requirements or ways to prepare for challenging classroom content. At the high school level, this could include family focus groups or newsletters outlining education and employment options after high school.

Quick Win #5. Host a Student Success Summit (formerly known as back-to-school night or parent teacher conferences) and include discussions or breakout sessions on topics such as: accommodations available in college or the workplace, how to apply for FAFSA and scholarships, vocational programs available through Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), and potential work-based learning opportunities. Encourage students to attend with their families. Keep these sessions fun, accessible for everyone, and memorable.

For additional family engagement ideas, please see [Links to K-12 Learning - WVDE Learning at Home](#).