



CHECKLIST:

How to Create a Welcoming Vibe



Use this checklist to ensure your school's physical spaces, communications, and in-person interactions are inviting to all families.

Parents and caregivers are among a child's first teachers. When a child enters school, their families become your best partners for achieving student success. This year, tackle the hard stuff like chronic absenteeism, discipline referrals, and increasing overall learning by taking steps to help parents feel comfortable engaging in their children's education.

PHYSICAL SPACES

- Visually represent your school's different languages and cultures when setting up classrooms and common areas.
 - Idea: Hang a welcome sign in all of the languages spoken in your school at the main entrance.
- Make your front entrance inclusive and accessible. Clearly mark where the main office is located, and have instructions in multiple languages for entering the building.
- Add a bell or buzzer to your front desk so that families can alert staff to their arrival if someone is not there to physically greet them.
 - Idea: Include a sign that says "I need a translator" so that non-English speakers can point to the sign to easily communicate their needs.
- Share artifacts of learning throughout the halls and in public spaces. This will give families insight into what occurs during the school day.



COMMUNICATIONS

- Send an introductory email or letter on behalf of teachers encouraging families to share insights about their children. Include the preferred method for getting in touch with their student's teachers when they have questions or concerns.
- Share wins early in the fall semester to establish positive relationships with families. Focus on upbeat and personal notes such as *"I noticed this great thing your kid did today."*
- Send updates about classroom work in various ways so it is easy for families to understand. Use visuals or showcase student work samples to let families know what you're working on and why. Share little everyday ways to explore or ask about these skills at home.
- Level your text. Check that all communications are at a 3rd-grade reading level before distributing.
- Make take-home communications reflect the families represented in your school or district. When possible, offer handouts in multiple translations and images that look like your students and their families.
- Remove jargon, academic/insider language, and acronyms from messaging. All communications related to learning goals and concepts should be simple so that families can easily understand it, and support it.

IN-PERSON INTERACTIONS

- Train teachers and staff to know about available resources and registration requirements to share with families facing specific hardships like homelessness and food insecurities.
- If a school event like new student orientation needs to be in-person, offer staggered meeting times, make digital or recorded options available, include a meal, and, when possible, have childcare available for younger siblings.
- Consider planning a "fall family conference" rather than an academic conference. In this meeting, explain your testing schedules and student data, review standards, set goals, and discuss how you can work together at school and home to achieve desired outcomes. Write up an explanation of this new conference format and send it to parents in advance so they can come prepared.