

Family Engagement Ideas

Classroom Tips

Share the Good

Take a moment each day to personally recognize at least one child's efforts with a written note/email to the parent.

"Homework"

Give parents a fun, brief activity to do at home with their child and ask for a picture to post in the facility or classroom.

Literacy Bags

Create simple literacy bags with a favorite classroom book, a spiral journal, crayons, and an activity card. Send home with a child on Monday, to return it on Friday. Bags can be themed to match classroom learning.

Student/Family Showcase

Each month, each classroom picks a child (or two) to showcase. The chosen child/family can create a simple poster about them to be displayed for others to see. Additionally, ensure you are posting photos and art of the children in your classroom in a way that honors the child's accomplishments.

Facility Tips

Set Expectations from the Start

Host a "back-to-school" event and let parents know the expectation for the upcoming year. Ensure working and at-home parents have different ways to help out.

Children's Show

Host a child performance show each quarter or twice a year. Before the show, hold a parent meeting to discuss important topics and resources available.

Strengths-Based

Conduct a survey of parents' employment and hobbies. Have a parent who dabbles in photography? Ask them to take photos of the site/children (with permission) for projects and wall postings. Have a parent who enjoys woodwork? Ask if they can help with garden boxes for the outdoor environment.

Provide Resources

Having a small area in the front office with hot-topic resources helps a parent when they may be too reserved to ask. Additionally, host some parent learning events around hot topics. Many nonprofits, state agencies, and/or local trainers are willing to come and talk about topics that may interest your families (such as biting, developmental red flags, community services, and transitioning to a "big school")

Potluck Meals

Ask parents to join staff for potluck-style dinners or lunches, including the children. These can be outside of the normal holiday events the classroom may be hosting. Making it a facility-wide event can help bring families together. Also, those parents with multiple children can enjoy the event as a whole family.

Donation Site

Ask parents to donate new or gently used items, such as real objects. Keep a list in each classroom or near the office of specific wants or needs. This could be displayed to catch the eye, such as a “laundry line” or a “giving tree” with cards that have one item on it. One item at a time is often less daunting than a list.

Volunteer Days

Set specific days once or twice a year when parents can volunteer to help maintain the facility. This could include anything from painting walls and clearing out flower beds to power washing playground equipment and organizing closets. An incentive could be a percentage of money off their monthly tuition for that month or the next.

Survey

This can include questions about how they like the school and staff or what they hope their child accomplishes. Remember to include things that can help coordinate family engagement events and ensure all family cultures are honored.

Family Culture Day

Host an event that honors the cultures of all your families. Allow family members to participate as they feel comfortable. They could provide a special meal; share a story, talent, dress, or music; or even coordinate a special guest. It can be as small or grand as needed.

Bake Sales/Meal Night

Host simple bake sales or meal nights, where parents can grab goodies for a small donation. You never know who may need a quick snack before heading to dance class or a dinner instead of drive-thru. Some parents may even help out with bringing items to the sale.

Painting with a “Twist”

Much like the company Painting with a Twist™, the facility can host a “paint with your child” night, complete with canvas/heavy-duty art paper, paints, and appetizers and juice. Grab a creative teacher to lead the group through painting a specific picture or just allow whatever the parent/child wishes.

Clothing Exchange

Host a clothing exchange for parents to bring in gently used, freshly laundered clothes to swap with another. Clothes can be organized by size, and parents can fill a bag or select a predetermined number to swap.

Book Fair

Host a book fair for families to purchase books for their family or the child’s classroom. Many book fairs offer an incentive back to the program for participating and typically last for a week or more, allowing multiple opportunities for families to participate.