



PARENT OUTREACH & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT HANDBOOK

Strategies for Increasing Parent Participation
in Family Engagement Events,
Workshops, and Parent Education Conferences



Proven Outreach
Strategies



Communications
Toolkit &
Sample Messages



Parent
Ambassador
Program



Event Planning
Checklist



Best Practices
for Family
Engagement



Empowering Parents. Strengthening Families. Supporting Student Success.

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Parent Outreach & Family Engagement Handbook

Strategies for Increasing Parent Participation in Family Engagement Events, Workshops, and Parent Education Conferences



Parents and families celebrating an excellent conference in Somerville, New Jersey

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Serving Families and Schools Since 2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
Foreword: Parent Engagement Is Everyone's Responsibility	4
Building Strong Parent Participation Through Strategic Outreach	5
Why Parents Do Not Attend Family Engagement Events	5
Strategies for Overcoming Attendance Barriers	6
1. Engage the Title I Parent Council Early	7
2. Coordinate with ESL and Adult Education Programs	7
3. Involve Student Leadership and School Organizations	8
4. Partner with Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO/PTA)	8
5. Identify and Engage Parent Community Leaders	8
6. Build Partnerships with Community Organizations	9
7. Utilize School Employees Who Are Parents and Community Members	9
8. Involve Parent and Community Liaisons from the Beginning	10
9. Use Multiple Communication Channels	11
10. Promote Early and Often	14
Final Thoughts	15
Best Practices for Family Engagement	16
Communications and Marketing Toolkit	17
Parent Ambassador Program	18
Event Evaluation and Continuous Improvement	19
About The Latino Institute	20
Appendix: Family Engagement Event Planning Checklist	21

Foreword: Parent Engagement Is Everyone's Responsibility

Family engagement is not the responsibility of one department, one parent liaison, or one annual event. It is a shared responsibility that belongs to every educator, administrator, support staff member, student leader, parent organization, and community partner. It is “all hands-on deck” working on “casting” the widest net possible.

Schools that consistently achieve high levels of parent participation understand that outreach is built on relationships, trust, communication, and respect. Parents are much more likely to participate when they feel personally invited, welcomed, and valued.

We understand parental outreach is not an easy task. It takes time, dedication, and consistent attention to details.

This handbook provides a practical framework for planning family engagement events, individual workshops, and full parent education conferences. The strategies included here are designed to help schools move beyond simple announcements and build a stronger network of parent leaders, school staff, student advocates, and community partners.

Guiding Principle

The most effective parent outreach is personal, consistent, bilingual or multilingual when needed, and supported by trusted voices within the school community.

Building Strong Parent Participation Through Strategic Outreach

One of the most common challenges schools are faced with is attracting meaningful parent participation in family engagement activities. Successful outreach requires more than distributing a flyer a few days before an event. Effective parent engagement begins with intentional planning, relationship-building, and the use of multiple communication channels.

Why Parents Do Not Attend Family Engagement Events

Many schools assume that low attendance reflects a lack of interest on the part of parents. In reality, most parents care deeply about their children's education but face barriers that make participation difficult. Understanding these barriers is the first step toward improving attendance and engagement.

Common Barriers to Participation

Work Schedules

Many parents work evenings, weekends, multiple jobs, or non-traditional shifts that make attendance difficult.

Transportation Challenges

Some families may not have reliable transportation or may depend on public transit.

Childcare Responsibilities

Parents often need to care for younger children or other family members and may be unable to attend without childcare support.

Language Barriers

Families whose primary language is not English may feel uncomfortable attending events if interpretation or translated materials are not available.

Limited Awareness of the Event

A flyer sent home once may never reach a parent. Families often receive large amounts of information and may overlook announcements.

Previous Negative Experiences

Some parents may have had difficult experiences with schools in the past and may feel hesitant about attending school-sponsored events.

Uncertainty About the Value of the Event

Parents are more likely to attend when they clearly understand how the information will benefit their children and family.

Strategies for Overcoming Attendance Barriers

Schools can improve participation by:

- Offering events at varied times, including evenings and Saturdays.
- Providing interpretation services and translated materials.
- Utilizing multiple communication channels.
- Offering childcare when feasible.
- Holding some programs at community locations.
- Using trusted parent leaders and community ambassadors.
- Clearly communicating the benefits parents will receive.
- Personally inviting families through calls, texts, and face-to-face conversations.

Key Takeaway

When school focus on removing barriers rather than simply increasing announcements, parent participation grows. The goal is not only to inform families about an event, but to create conditions that make participation possible.

The following strategies can help increase attendance and create stronger connections between schools and families.



Parents engaged in a workshop in Passaic, New Jersey

1. Engage the Title I Parent Council Early

Where constituted, the Title I Parent Council is often one of the most valuable resources available to schools. These parents are already engaged in educational issues and can serve as ambassadors for your event.

Recommended Actions:

- Present the event concept during the planning stage.
- Request feedback on workshop topics and event format.
- Ask members to personally invite other parents.
- Encourage Parent Council members to assist with event promotion and registration.

2. Coordinate with ESL and Adult Education Programs

Parents enrolled in ESL, adult education, citizenship, or family literacy programs are often eager to participate in educational opportunities.

Recommended Actions:

- Partner with ESL instructors and program coordinators.
- Invite ESL classes to attend as a group.
- Provide translated materials whenever possible.
- Offer bilingual presentations and interpretation services when needed.



Student leadership involvement in Somerville

3. Involve Student Leadership and School Organizations

Students can be some of the most effective promoters of family engagement activities.

Recommended Actions:

- Seek input from Student Government Associations.
- Engage leadership clubs, honor societies, and service organizations.
- Ask students to create promotional materials, videos, or social media content.
- Encourage student leaders to personally invite their families.

When students are excited about an event, parents are much more likely to attend.

4. Partner with Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO/PTA)

Parent organizations have established relationships with families and can significantly expand outreach efforts.

Recommended Actions:

- Invite PTO/PTA representatives to planning meetings.
- Request assistance with promotion and volunteer recruitment.
- Encourage PTO/PTA members to share event information through their networks.
- Consider co-sponsoring activities whenever possible.

5. Identify and Engage Parent Community Leaders

Every school community includes influential parents who are trusted by other families and whose opinions carry weight.

Recommended Actions:

- Identify highly connected and respected parents.
- Invite them to serve as event ambassadors.
- Seek their advice regarding barriers to attendance.
- Encourage them to personally recruit parents through calls, texts, and conversations.

Personal invitations remain one of the most effective outreach tools available.

6. Build Partnerships with Community Organizations

Potential partners include community centers, faith-based organizations, libraries, cultural organizations, nonprofit social services agencies, and family service organizations.

Consider also advocacy groups such as immigrant rights groups and others with similar objectives.

These organizations often run their own ESL classes and trade related courses. They could be excellent partners in reaching out to parents. A school district could also fund a particular workshop at their premises as they already are serving families and parents.

Bringing programs into the community can often reach families who may not typically attend school-based events.

7. Utilize School Employees Who Are Parents and Community Members

School employees who live in the community frequently have strong relationships with local families. They are *also* parents, aunts, uncles, or grandparents.

Security personnel, custodians, maintenance staff, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and paraprofessionals know local families personally and can help spread information through trusted relationships.



Parents participating in a Family Engagement event

8. Involve Parent and Community Liaisons from the Beginning

If the district employs Parent Liaisons, Family Engagement Coordinators, Community School Coordinators, or Bilingual Family Outreach Specialists, they should be included in planning from the earliest stages.

Recommended Actions:

- Include them on planning committees.
- Seek advice regarding effective outreach strategies.
- Utilize their knowledge of community needs and preferences.
- Engage them in follow-up communication and registration efforts.

9. Use Multiple Communication Channels

Relying on a single communication method rarely produces strong attendance. Families receive information in different ways, making a multi-channel approach essential.

Recommended Communication Tools:

Printed Materials

- Attractive flyers
- Posters
- Backpack notices
- Bilingual materials
- QR codes linking directly to registration forms



Digital Communications

- District website announcements
- School website announcements
- Email campaigns
- Electronic newsletters

Direct Communication

- Text message reminders
- Robocalls
- Personalized phone calls
- Parent liaison outreach

Example: English & Spanish Robocall Scripts

English Robocall Script

“Dear Parents:

You are invited to a special Parent Education Conference next Thursday, May 21st, at Pleasantville Middle School beginning at 3:30 p.m.

Join us for helpful workshops on how to help your kids with schoolwork, family communication, study habits, and social media safety. We will also have a big raffle with great prizes at the end of the program.

We look forward to seeing you there!"

Spanish Robocall Script

"Estimados padres:

Les invitamos a una Conferencia Educativa para Padres el próximo jueves, 21 de mayo, en Pleasantville Middle School, comenzando a las 3:30 de la tarde.

Tendremos talleres sobre cómo ayudar a sus hijos con las tareas escolares, comunicación familiar, hábitos de estudio y seguridad en las redes sociales. También tendremos una gran rifa con excelentes premios al final del programa.

¡Les esperamos!"



Workshop in collaboration with community center in Randolph

Social Media

- Facebook
- Instagram
- X (Twitter)
- School social media accounts
- Community group page



Discussing the topic “Managing Stress in the Family”

10. Promote Early and Often

Parent outreach should begin several weeks before the event and continue consistently. The following timeline provides a recommended schedule for promoting family engagement events, workshops, and parent conferences.

Timeframe	Recommended Activities	Primary Responsibility
4–6 Weeks Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announce the event • Launch registration • Begin social media promotion 	Family Engagement Coordinator Parent Liaison School Administration
2–3 Weeks Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute flyers • Present information at PTO/PTA meetings • Engage parent leaders and community partners • Send email reminders • Increase social media posts 	Parent Liaison PTO/PTA Leadership Parent Ambassadors Parent Liaison School Office Staff
1 Week Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct personal outreach calls • Send text reminders 	Parent Ambassadors School Administration
2–3 Days Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct robocalls • Post final announcements online • Send a final reminder via text and social media 	Communications Office Parent Liaison Event Coordinator Volunteers
Day of Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome families and participants 	Parent Ambassadors

Best Practice

The most effective outreach campaigns use multiple communication channels and repeated reminders. Parents often need to see or hear about an event *several times* before deciding to attend. Schools that combine flyers, personal invitations, emails, texts, robocalls, social media, and community outreach consistently achieve higher attendance rates

Final Thoughts

The most successful family engagement events are built on relationships, not simply announcements. Schools that engage parent leaders, student groups, community organizations, PTO/PTA members, ESL programs, and family outreach staff create a network of advocates who help spread the message and encourage participation. When parents feel welcomed, valued, and personally invited, attendance increases significantly, leading to stronger partnerships between families and schools and ultimately better outcomes for students.



Workshop at faith-based organization

Best Practices for Family Engagement

Create welcoming environments, provide interpretation services, recognize parent participation, schedule events at convenient times, use personal invitations, and collect feedback after every event.

Make the event welcoming from the moment parents enter the building.

- Use bilingual signs and materials whenever needed.
- Provide interpretation services when possible.
- Schedule events at times that reflect parent work schedules.
- Use personal invitations in addition to electronic announcements.
- Recognize parent participation and thank families publicly.
- Collect feedback and use it to improve future programs

Best Practice

Parent participation increases when schools combine trusted messengers, repeated reminders, convenient scheduling, and clear benefits for families.

Communications and Marketing Toolkit

Sample Email Invitation

Dear Parents and Guardians:

You are invited to a special family engagement event on Tuesday, May 21st at 5:00 pm, School 6, designed to provide practical information, resources, and strategies to support your child's success in school. Important workshop topics, raffle at the conclusion of the event. We encourage you to attend, participate, and share your ideas with us.

Sample Text Message

Join us for our upcoming Family Engagement Event on Tuesday, May 21st at 5:00 pm at School 6. Workshops, resources, and helpful information for parents. Please register using the QR code on the flyer.

Sample Robocall

Dear parents, you are invited to a special family engagement event on Tuesday, May 21st at 5:00 pm. School 6. Featuring helpful workshops, resources, and opportunities to support your child's education. We look forward to seeing you there.

Sample Social Media Post

Parents are invited! Join us for an informative family engagement event on Tuesday, May 21st at 5:00 pm, at School 6. We will have practical workshops and resources to help students succeed. Register today using the QR code on the flyer

Parent Ambassador Program

A Parent Ambassador Program can help schools reach families who may not respond to traditional outreach. Parent ambassadors are trusted voices who can personally invite other parents, answer basic questions, and encourage participation.

Ambassador Responsibilities

- Invite parents through personal conversations, calls, and text messages.
- Share flyers and registration links with other families.
- Welcome parents at the event.
- Assist with registration and directions.
- Provide feedback to the planning committee after the event.

Recognition Ideas:

- Thank ambassadors publicly at the event.
- Provide certificates of appreciation.
- Invite ambassadors to future planning meetings.
- Feature parent leaders in newsletters or social media posts



Parents gather for a group photo a conclusion of event

Event Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Evaluation should be part of every family engagement event. Schools should collect attendance data, parent feedback, volunteer feedback, and planning committee recommendations. This information helps improve future events and demonstrates the value of family engagement efforts.

Recommended Evaluation Questions:

- Was the event useful to you as a parent or guardian?
- Was the information presented clearly?
- Did the schedule and location work for your family?
- What additional topics would you like to see in the future?
- Would you recommend this event to another parent?



Presenting the topic "How to Help your Kids with Math"



About The Latino Institute

Since 2004, The Latino Institute has worked in collaboration with school districts, community organizations, and public education support groups to provide essential information to parents in New Jersey. The Institute has supported families through parent education conferences, individual workshops, keynote presentations, and culturally responsive family engagement programs.

The Latino Institute provides educationally empowering conferences and workshops designed to help parents become engaged, informed, and effective partners in the education of their children.

Programs are available for in-person and virtual delivery, with a primary service area in New Jersey and a national footprint through virtual workshops

The Institute offers more than 25 workshop topics, including Study Habits, Communication Skills at Home, Social Media Safety, Benefits of Being Bilingual, College Financial Aid, Health Care Insurance in New Jersey, Financial Literacy, Special Education, Immigration Rights, Reading and Writing at Home, and many others.

Programs are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and selected topics in Haitian Creole, and are available to be presented mornings, or evenings during the week and on Saturdays.

For additional information, please contact us at parentconferences1@gmail.com or call Bill Colon at 201-401-0291. The Latino Institute's website is www.thelatinoinstitute.com.

APPENDIX

Family Engagement Event Planning Checklist

Pre-Planning (8–12 Weeks Before)

- Identify the purpose and goals of the event
- Select workshop topic(s)
- Confirm presenter(s)
- Establish budget and funding source
- Select event date and time
- Reserve facility and meeting rooms
- Arrange interpretation/translation services
- Determine registration process
- Establish attendance goal
- Form planning committee
- Include Parent Liaison(s)
- Include Title I Parent Council representatives
- Include PTO/PTA representatives
- Include student leadership representatives

Outreach Planning (6–8 Weeks Before)

- Present event plan to Title I Parent Council
- Meet with Parent Liaisons
- Meet with PTO/PTA leadership
- Contact ESL and Adult Education programs
- Identify influential parent leaders
- Contact community organizations
- Recruit volunteers
- Develop promotional strategy
- Create registration form
- Create QR code
- Prepare bilingual materials Promotional Materials

(4–6 Weeks Before)

- Design flyer
- Translate flyer
- Create QR code registration link
- Post event on district website
- Post event on school website

- Schedule social media campaign
- Create email announcement
- Create text message announcement
- Prepare robocall script
- Print posters and flyers
- Distribute flyers to students
- Share information with community partners

Community Outreach (3–4 Weeks Before)

- Contact community organizations
- Ask parent leaders to personally recruit families
- Promote through churches and faith-based groups
- Promote through libraries and community centers
- Utilize security and maintenance staff to spread awareness
- Encourage teachers to promote event
- Encourage counselors to promote event
- Encourage students to invite parents
- Make presentations at PTO/PTA meetings

Registration Monitoring (2–3 Weeks Before)

- Review registration numbers
- Identify underrepresented groups
- Increase outreach where needed
- Send first reminder email
- Send first reminder text
- Continue social media promotion
- Contact parent ambassadors
- Confirm presenters and workshop materials

Final Preparation (1 Week Before)

- Confirm room setup
- Confirm audiovisual equipment
- Confirm interpreters
- Confirm volunteers
- Prepare registration table
- Print sign-in sheets
- Prepare name tags
- Prepare workshop handouts
- Prepare evaluation form

- Prepare raffle tickets
- Confirm refreshments, if applicable
- Send reminder email
- Send reminder text
- Schedule robocall

Day of Event

- Place directional signs
- Set up registration table
- Test technology
- Welcome volunteers
- Welcome presenters
- Conduct registration
- Collect attendance data
- Distribute materials
- Conduct workshops
- Conduct raffle
- Thank attendees
- Collect evaluations
- Take photos for future promotion

Follow-Up (Within 1 Week)

- Send thank-you email
- Share event photos
- Review attendance numbers
- Review evaluation forms
- Identify strengths and areas for improvement
- Recognize volunteers
- Report outcomes to administration
- Begin planning the next event
- Add attendees to future outreach lists
- Maintain contact with parent leaders

Success Indicators

Target Attendance: _____

Actual Attendance: _____

Number of New Families Engaged: _____

Evaluation Rating: _____

Number of Community Partners Participating: ____

Recommendations for Future Events: _____