
Topic: Family Engagement

1. What does family engagement mean to you?
2. What have been the most beneficial programs and/or experiences of engagement at your school?
3. What could your school do to help you and your student(s) feel more engaged?

What does family engagement mean to you?

- Open communication between school and parent. Families feel comfortable reaching out to teachers. They feel like open communication is very strong at our school. The staff are all in. From a student's perspective: staff members are so nice and feels like he has a connection with them and really loves school.
- If families showed up to the PTA meetings.
- Equity in dual language- we appreciate everything being in two languages.
- Having opportunities to engage with other families at the school.
- Knowing what is going on in the school. Like knowing the teachers and the other families. The PTA had great programming, donuts, movie nights.
- To have an idea what is going on. The weekly email and VM is helpful; also, being able to volunteer and have access to school.
- Being able to contact my student's teachers/counselor regarding their progress if I feel there are issues that have come up that are impacting their overall involvement with academics and/or attendance. Parents having conversations as a family first is key then bringing their concerns to the school to support the student if they family feels it would benefit the student.
- To be involved with staff on my student if there are any issues—want to hear from school first before my student comes home.
- When families feel connection with the school, they are curious about how to support their student and want to know how to get involved.
- The more engaged families are in their student's schooling, the better the kids will do.
- Opportunities for families to come to school and see what they are learning. E.g., Art Night meant so much for our family.
- I appreciate the weekly email from our child's teacher about what is happening each week with what they're learning and activities on the calendar. The teacher uses the same format and it's always on Sunday and I really appreciate it.

- PTA has several activities planned for next year, we have at least 2-3 family events next year. We talk about this a lot and it's getting people together again and learning how to be a community again.
- Being able to bring daughter lunch.
- Emailing and communicating with teachers.
- Would like to be on campus more to help the schools to have bilingual individuals helping the students. It is hard to be in meetings on the computer online for multicultural families.
- To be part of the kid's life, know the friends, the school, and knowing what is happening in the everyday life of students
- My son started in K here at virtual. This year I've been slowly getting to see the school. I would love a little more parent involvement in getting to know the school for new parents. What's my son's day like. Where's the cafeteria, etc.
- Informal times to get together - coffee w/principal
- Action, taking responsibility and involvement, how systems work, not just relying on teachers/faculty. How can we support school staff?

What have been the most beneficial programs and/or experiences of engagement at your school?

- Everett Ready: great for shy students and getting students comfortable as they transition into kindergarten
- Remind: being able to easily communicate with teachers and collaborate
- STEM Nights (On Zoom): got to experience how their child learns and was very interactive and fun
- STEM Nights (In person): got to meet families and their child's friends and got to see what their child is learning
- Boo-hoo breakfast for kindergarten families
- Kindergarten Orientation: getting to know incoming Kindergarten families and being able to figure out a new school together
- Movie Nights put on by the PTA
- MLK event walk through event (sparked a lot of conversations regarding equity)
- Event nights- fundraiser nights
- Math and science nights have been great via zoom (thank you to the teachers who stayed late. We recognize how hard it is. It is a different level of engagement.)
- Back to school nights were fantastic- we felt welcomed
- Moms and Muffins; Art Auction; Curriculum Night, and conferences.
- Evening of the Arts was a great event to experience
- When we had the handing out the materials drive through during Covid. All (most) of the teachers were involved, and you don't see that very often.

- One of the more successful parent engagement programs was the Natural Leaders program. Families who spoke Spanish were connected to the school and resources.
- We had a group of Natural Leaders moms that used to come in for a weekly parenting class. I partnered with Cocoon house to offer onsite. They also share a bit about their heritage by setting up a Day of the Dead exhibit on the stage.
- Feedback was given that outside gatherings seem to work better, as opposed to sitting in a cafeteria. When outside, parents are more mobile thus having more room to better interact with more parents, especially from other grades. This was a high value to this parent. It feels that the school should intentionally look for ways which allow for parents to mingle across grade levels.
- Newsletters from the teachers are valuable. These make parents feel included and part of their child's learning.
- A parent felt that Whittier was doing quite a lot with its attempts to partner with parents and soliciting feedback from families via the surveys.
- Parents appreciated the number of times a principal sent the previous school's survey (4 or 5 times).
- The families' events like Art Show...loved it!
- Going on fieldtrips and change lunch periods because she gets to see other friends
- Apex fun run
- Music and Ukulele Club
- Robotics Club, who is involved. Older students mostly involved.
- 5th grade Camp Out...will that stay in the fall and return to overnight next year. Yes.
- Its early to say but enjoy the collection of sanitary products for students with Natural Leaders.
- Natural Leaders.
- Ice cream social - getting to meet students and families
- Multicultural night-sharing talents/dancing and singing
- Aladdin presentation
- Book fair-good time in the library
- Trunk or Treat
- Holiday caroling drive thru
- What you're doing now is really nice. Different meetings SBA assessment, talk and information and video sent regarding sexual exposure, whatever has been done so far from the school has been very nice, really helpful, and very positive.
- Parents want more information and sessions on the Math Curriculum - conceptual understanding of math information evening? Parents would like math night to better understand the new curriculum.
- Musical events
- Plays/Performances
- COVID protocol have been very positive and really helpful.

What could your school do to help you and your student(s) feel more engaged?

- Looking forward to more in person events
- Would love to see more events that continue to encourage community with staff and families
- Want to get to know the Principal and Assistant Principal more
- Would like to bring back Missoula Children's Theater, the talent show and music concerts
- Immersion pre k
- Other ways of communication
- Conferences, 20 minutes is never enough. Feels like a cram session. Can we make it 20 min as a default, but the option to make it a double slot?
- Back to school nights
- There was a suggestion to translate the newsletters.
- The school should find ways to counter the various barriers (culturally, long work hours, need for childcare) that keep parents from attending school community events.
- Informational nights every other month w/different topics? Academic learning, emotional health, current topics
- Can we introduce math clubs - create more engagement and prepare kids for math competition in middle school?
- Bring back the Science projects/science fairs.
- Put Let's Connect meetings in person so that parents can meet other families, connect and learn from each other.
- Robotics class - can we increase this to add 3rd and 4th graders and add other activities on the same day as robotics?
- Having childcare for PTA meetings
- Invite so families know what they can do to volunteer.
- Information from teachers and building.
- Projects list for parents to know what they can do to help Emerson.
- Events beginning at 5:30 was too early.
- During the day or afterschool clubs.
- Social skills or groups.
- Organic socializing opportunity. Seemed back a while ago there was a program where older kids were paired up with younger kids. I think we have had these in the past and just need to bring them back.
- Create supervised spaces for kids to gather around a common interest (dinosaurs, Pokémon, Minecraft)
- I think sporting events and different shows like are and science are great ways for us to enjoy as a family. Maybe a speaker of some sort?

- To know that my student's teachers care for every student equally. To have more time at conferences or more than 1 or 2 a year.
- PTA seems very intimidating and exclusive—I wonder if there is a way to break down that perception?
- Watch DOGS!
- Junior math coaches make their child feel more engaged.
- A parent shared feedback from another non-English speaking parent. She shared that the parents appreciated being given the opportunity to be in the classroom her child. This allowed her the opportunity to learn English while in her child's classroom as a volunteer. She felt that if more non-English speaking parents were given this opportunity, then more would eagerly come into the school.
- Would like to learn more about testing that is happening. How to translate what all the test stuff means. E.g., iReady (I don't know what the scoring means.). I would like to be able to identify what things we can focus on at home.
- Kids Cooking sharing family traditional meals or recipe books.
- It was expressed that the PTA can be intimidating for parents of color. Feels as though the parents attending the PTA doesn't represent the community and the PTA doesn't feel relevant for today's diverse families. Particularly it seems that the PTA doesn't take into consideration minority parents, reaching ELL parents or parents who are working multiple jobs.
- There should be a way for families to reach other parents in their child's classroom i.e., make it easy to contact other parents.
- Maybe students and families to meet by grade level on the playground with popsicles/ice cream. It might also make it more manageable with less people. (Anna Ganje)
- I like that idea because a lot of our events are usually all together and we don't get a chance to meet by grade level
- How can we periodically throughout the year reach people and get more people involved? Maybe just feeling like you are connected to one family.
- Want to know how we can connect Special Education kids with more kids at Jefferson.
- Could we do more after school programs? What would it take? Could PTA or parents interested be able to supervise them? Another idea is to put together options and share them with families.
- Math night or science night organized by PTSA...suggested idea.
- Lego Clubs or Chess Club...haven't had this year, but those are paid positions.
- When the sandwich board goes out, it helps! We are getting an electronic leader board! Yayyy!
- Communications are clear (flyers, newsletters). Would like to have more list of clubs, and communities, school activities happening at Eisenhower from the beginning.
- Staff have been very supportive of Natural Leaders program. Need find more ways to get families more engaged. Ask Natural leaders and PTSA and other groups to help and recruit to get more involved in the school. Keep encouraging teachers to keep communications open with parents.

Having a sense of trust and collaboration between parents and teachers.

- Important to ask families what is stopping them from being engaged? It would be easier to help if we know so that we can help guide families to participate.
- Would like to see parenting sessions around Love and Logic
- Would like more family engagement around Social Emotional Learning/Support learning connection for families - Second Step session for families & RULER is coming.
- More involvement in after school program.
- Improve the parent/teacher relationship, more face-to-face time.
- Would appreciate teachers to understand student family dynamics: questionnaires about family life or other information to help connect teacher to parents and families—ultimately to assist teachers to better support students.