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In this report-

- *The Four I's of Family Engagement*
- *What you can learn from past National Schools of Excellence to Grow Engagement at Your School*
- *AWARD Programs and Grants*
- *Key Dates to Remember*
- *Family Engagement Themes of the Month*
- *Advocacy Calendar*
- *Coming up in This Month and Next*
- *Resources and Links for parents and students-*

The Four I's of Family Engagement –

The Center for Family Engagement has identified four areas that families need to feel engaged. Through extensive research they captured the factors that need to be present in family engagement programs as:

1. **Inclusive**-the program must embrace and value a diversity of perspectives. This enables families to understand that their perspective matters. It builds trust and trust builds relationships. When they feel that their voice matters, they feel welcome and comfortable to participate.

Strategies for Inclusion can be:

- a. Use name tents so everyone can call each other by their name and get to know each other,
- b. Avoid using acronyms and inside jokes that exclude newer families.
- c. Examine your yearly calendar with a fresh set of eyes, to leave room for new suggestions and to examine if the results you had previously match with what you are wanting to achieve now.

Inclusive programs have 3 key elements. They are Intentional- they look to build relationships. They are Inviting- they include diverse backgrounds, ideas and perspectives. Lastly, they are Questioning- old assumptions and the way we have always done it this way mentality.

2. **Individualized**- When parents attend PTA meetings they are looking for information relevant to their specific child. Every parent should leave a meeting knowing how what was discussed is helpful to their unique family.

Strategies for Individualization can be:

- Instead of solely using mass email, try high touch approaches like talking to parents directly at the car line (elementary school) or sports events and calling or texting when possible and appropriate.
 - Rather than one long meeting that might not be relevant to everyone, hold smaller meetings on specific topics that parents care about.

Individualized programs are Personal-including a personal invitation to attend. They are Tailored to the experiences that families care about. And lastly, they need to BE Responsive to the needs and interests of the parents/caregivers.

3. **Integrated**- When PTAs partner with teachers to link PTA programming to what students learn in the classroom, the program is more effective and everyone is more engaged.

Strategies for Integration can be:

- Evaluate how to make parent/teacher conferences more productive for everyone.

- Consider events that go beyond fundraising. Instead of raising money for science supplies, host a STEM forum for families and have the students moderate to include everyone.

The 3 Key elements of Integration are first to put the “t” back in PTA, making sure teachers are active and included. Second, PTA programs need to be Linked to Learning. And last, GO Beyond a one-time event-looking for the integration that builds on the classroom learning.

4. **Impactful**-It can be hard to measure family engagement because it is relationship based and complex. That doesn't mean it is impossible. Measure even the small movement in attendance because it leads to big gains in engagement.

Strategies to increase Impact can be:

- After an event, interview families that attended for feedback about what they learned that they can use to help their student.
- Hold a focus group or listening session to learn about how families feel about their experiences engaging with the school or district.

For Impact the three key areas are - start with Developing the knowledge and skills that are already being taught in the classroom. Then give the students the Opportunity to Practice and Interact with the community through the programs designed. And third, Measure the Success, however small because success builds on success.

To summarize, when PTAs utilize the four “I” approach, they are Inclusive and embrace and value diverse perspectives. They Individualize the approach toward family engagement and meet the unique needs of every family and student. The PTA will have an Integrated approach that they connect and align to the broader educational system and specifically to what is taught at their school. This leads to Impactful family engagement that empowers families to be active in their students' success.

What you can learn from past National Schools of Excellence to Grow Engagement at Your School-

Just having a goal to become a National School of Excellence for Family Engagement puts your school on the right path. Following the steps below will set in motion the right practices and intentions that will make parents feel more welcome.

The steps to apply are below: If you haven't already applied, the enrollment is now closed but you can still put steps 2,3,5 6 and step 8 into practice.

Here are the Steps to enroll:

1. Step #1: Enroll and Gain Support (Enroll by Oct. 1)
2. Step #2: Deploy Baseline Survey (Sep. — Nov.)
3. Step #3: Set a Shared Objective (Sep. — Nov.)
4. Step #4: Complete Initial Application (Submit by Nov. 15)
5. Step #5: Follow Roadmap to Excellence (Throughout School Year)
6. Step #6: Deploy Final Survey (March — June)
7. Step #7: Complete Final Application (Submit by June 1)
8. Step #8: Celebrate Your Excellence (Aug.)

If you did enroll for NSE by the cutoff date, you will be working on Step #2 and Step #3 now and preparing or have already Deployed your Baseline Survey and set Shared Objectives in preparation to submit your Initial Application for submission by Nov 15 (date extended). But even if you didn't enroll to become a National School of Excellence this time around, you can still employ some of the strategies used by past winners to grow your school's Family engagement.

As a reminder there are Six National Standards for Family Engagement which can each be remembered with one word each: 1 Welcoming; 2. Communicating; 3. Supporting; 4. Speaking-up; 5. Sharing; 6. Collaborating.

When planning your strategies and programs it is helpful and practical to tie the program to at least one of these standards as a measure. For instance, you can measure collaboration by the increase in volunteers that participate in programs and who put forth new program ideas. Speaking up can be measured by the increase in participation from your unit on Take Action Tuesday or Lobby days. Welcoming can be measured by the number of new members or increased attendance at your meetings and events.

Kara Georgi of WH Seward Elementary shares some of her schools practices in “Strong Parent & School Partnerships”.

When you are wondering where to start in engaging parents she recommends:

- “Ask parents what they want and need from your program.
- Frame it in terms of protective factors-
 - *What’s hard about parenting?
 - *How can we be a more welcoming place for parents, where families feel comfortable asking for help or advice?
 - *How can we reach out to and support families when they are overwhelmed, stressed or isolated?
 - *How can we make it easier for parents to connect to each other?”

It is often helpful to model your program after a successful past program. What follows are three past National School of Excellence in Family Engagement winner’s tips and examples:

Zane North PTA chose the theme of Health and Safety and Bullying Prevention leveraging a peer buddy relationship model.

Younger children were paired with an older student peer buddy. Every day, the students recited a Kindness Pledge to start their day. The PTA sponsored Friendship Day, which consisted of outdoor, partnered challenges, activities and competitions performed with preselected Peer Buddies. In addition, the music teacher led a sing-a-long and chants. Zane North, held monthly core value lessons that were associated with and relevant to the current lesson. The PTA sponsored an anti-bullying show at a local theater. Zane North revised its fundraising plan to include more community building activities like bowling and ice skating. They celebrated their successes with an event, bringing in their Congressman and the media. They held a Banner Reveal to celebrate the recognition the school earned by becoming a PTA National School of Excellence.

Wiregrass Ranch High School (WHRS) PTA worked to increase Family Engagement by coordinating social media and outreach, which resulted in a record 18 new student liaisons. These liaisons managed the PTA twitter account. They attended the PTA legislative conference and met with legislators.

Leroy Gordon Cooper PTA hosted an Art and Musical Festival. They held contests for the program and T-shirt designs to increase engagement in the program. They held an art auction of the student’s art and used the money that they raised to donate funds to the art, music and theater programs at the school as well as, funding an arts scholarship.

These are just a few of the winners. Hopefully, they have provided a little inspiration for you to uplevel your own family engagement programs.

Key Dates to Remember-

October 9, 2019- Yom Kippur

October 14, 2019-Columbus Day

Thursday, October 24, 2019 Candlewood Middle School- 1200 Carlls Straight Path Dix Hills, NY 11746

November 5, 2019- Vote

November 8-10, 2019 - State PTA Convention- Where- Tarrytown, Doubletree by Hilton, 455 South Broadway, Tarrytown, NY 10591

Registration is now closed. If you registered, here are some useful links for reference

Registration Packet-

https://nyspta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Conv19-Registration-packet-2019.FINAL_.pdf

Proposed

Resolutions-<https://nyspta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/PROPOSED-RESOLUTIONS-2019-FINAL.pdf>

December 6 and 7 – Reflections Drop off

Family Engagement Theme for October- LGBTQ History Month

Important Advocacy Calendar Notes-

October to do list-

- Sign up for advocacy communications for NYS PTA and National PTA
- Present Basic Policy, Convention Resolutions and bylaws changes to your unit
- Start Planning a Local Spring Advocacy/Legislation Event

RESOURCES and LINKS-

A *NEW* Resource for Parents and PTA on pertinent topics is PTA.org's new *Notes from the Backpack podcast*. <https://www.pta.org/center-for-family-engagement/notes-from-the-backpack> topics range across the grade levels from elementary to High School.- check out the episode-“Confident Parents-Confident Kids”

Child's Plan-Improving the Social and Emotional Wellbeing of New York's Children and Their Families

https://www.ccf.ny.gov/files/5013/7962/7099/childrens_plan.pdf

Apps for building Resilience in Children and Adults-

Pacifica Stress and Anxiety -4.4stars

Mindfulness Coach-gives tools for getting to sleep- 4.6 stars

HappiMe- 5.0 Stars- free and in app purchases

6 phase meditation- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRhrdm_1afQ

SEPTA-

Accessibility Service- Going on an excursion or day trip to local New York historic sites, Adventure parks, State and Local Parks, Museums? Wonder if they are Accessible for mobility challenges? Check out Destination Accessible to know before you go. This is a free service to make your trip more fun and enjoyable.

www.destinationaccessible.com

or call 917693-3420

<https://www.learning-styles-online.com/overview/>
<https://www.developgoodhabits.com/good-study-routine/>

Other Resources-

NYSED updated ESSA website:

<http://www.nysed.gov/news/2018/state-education-department-announces-updated-resources-every-student-succeeds-act>

Parent Partnership Kit-

<https://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/parentpower/booklet.pdf>

Link to PTA Leadership webinars-

<https://nyspta.org/home/pta-leaders/trainingmaterials-webinars/>

Parent Workshop toolkit link-

<https://www.engageny.org/resource/planning-a-parent-workshop-toolkit-for-parent-engagement>

Link to Common Core Standards-

<http://corestandards.org/the-standards>

Prevent Opioid abuse

<https://www.operationprevention.com/#about>

New ESSA website and explanatory letter:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/#inbox/FMfcgxwBTsXXqxCRwWHpSPdTQJSTtFdJ>