



Promise South Salt Lake Principles of Parent and Family Engagement

1) Definition of parent/family involvement: **Anything anyone does anywhere anytime to help a child succeed in school or life is family involvement.** (Joyce Epstein's School, Family & Community Partnerships- A Handbook for Action (Table 1.1.1 from the National Network of Partnership Schools)

2) Parent/family involvement is not just about what the families do. Much of it is about the things *we do to empower families.*

3) Honor parents for all they are doing to help their children. If their kids are enrolled in an afterschool program, if they TRUST us with their children, that *is* involvement! They may have endured hardships, come across the globe, or risked their lives to help their children to have better opportunities for education, jobs and lives. That's about as involved as anyone can be. There may be cultural mores about what involvement is even allowed, let alone desired by a school or program. **Assume they are the best parents you have ever met. Treat them that way.**

3) Go to them!— Make home visits. Take little tokens of goodwill. (Items such as the city newsletter, information about upcoming events, and/or donated blankets, books, baked goods, fruit, nice smelling soaps, etc.) Families need to trust us, even if we can't speak the same language. Make LOTS of home visits...lots of nodding and smiles, keeping it positive. If language is a barrier, we should consider if it's appropriate to have a child interpret. If it's just to tell the family how much we enjoy having their child in our program and that we love how he/she adds _____ (enthusiasm, kindness, energy, etc.), then the child may love to deliver that message! Make several visits before asking a parent to come to the center for anything. Invite them to many activities, events, field trips, family science nights, literacy parties, etc.

4) Remove barriers— Whenever we invite families to any of the above, we must work to address the 5 big barriers:

1. Assure a welcoming environment (recognize that means different things to different people, but they know we love their kids and we are glad they have come out to see us)
2. Provide language interpretation
3. Provide transportation (we give lots of rides to parents)
4. Provide childcare
5. Provide a healthy and delicious dinner, taking into account what families may like to eat.

5) Most folks want to learn English— Help them to have access to ESL. The family may still have a caseworker through their resettlement agency. Assure families have access to ESL and other immigrant/refugee services at our centers during the daytime hours, while the children and youth are in school. There is common paperwork (usually on their fridge) that will help you to know which agency. (IRC, Catholic Community Services or Asian Association). Reach out and let the resettlement caseworker know that you are here to help the family. Try to find out more about how we can coordinate our resources and relationships to benefit the families whose children are in our programs.

6) Parent to Parent— We can use other neighbors or families in the area who we have a relationship with and that speak a particular language (that have been here for longer and whose English is getting pretty good) to connect to folks we need to speak to. We have to have active relationships with lots of families to make this work, but it is a great way to deliver information, and **more importantly to give a family a voice, so they can let us know what they are thinking about, worried about, wondering about...** Also teens catch on so quickly, so that sometimes works for interpretation.

7) Parent/family involvement is not one big thing. It's many, many small things; just like any other relationship we have. We love all our families. We respect that they are doing the best they can for their children, and we understand that they are likely overwhelmed. We are here to help and support their family, and particularly, their child.