

Center for Active Family Engagement (Café)
Family Friendly Walk Through



Martin Luther King Elementary

Family Friendly Walk Through Report

August 2012

Introduction

What is a Family Friendly Walk Through?

The purpose of the Family Friendly Walk Through (FFWT) is to assess how welcome families are in your school and how welcome families are in the learning process. CAFÉ staff members completed a FFWT of your school on May 9th, 2012. The FFWT included: (1) a physical walk through; (2) a review of printed material; (3) a review of the school’s web site; (4) a “shopper call;” (5) an interview the building administrator; (6) a survey of school staff; and (7) a survey of parents.

This FFWT report is designed to help your school have a richer conversation about how welcome families are in your school and how welcome families are in the learning process. The report includes ratings, commendations, and recommendations for 4 different goal areas—Communication, Information, Participation, and Welcoming.

Goal 1—Welcoming

The **Welcoming** Goal helps you know if your parents feel they belong on the school campus. Here are the indicators for this goal area along with the number of items used to determine the rating for each indicator.

Indicators	Definition	# of Items
Parent Visits	Procedures are in place to accommodate parent visits to the school	5
Making Parents Comfortable	School personnel help parents to feel comfortable	7
Respect	Parents’ culture and language are respected	3
Appearance	The school is physically attractive	2

Goal 2—Communication

The **Communication** Goal helps you know if you have systems in place for home-family communication that are inviting, useful and set up for two-way communication. The following table lists the indicators for this goal area along with the number of items used to determine the rating for each indicator.

Indicators	Definition	# of Items
Nature of the Contact	Contact between schools and families is frequent, comfortable, and two-way	11
Ease of Use	Written and oral communication is clear and comprehensible	4
Opportunities	Meetings and events are scheduled regularly, widely advertised, and well attended	2
Documents & Website	Print information is available, attractive, useful, and family/culturally friendly	4

Goal 3—Information

The **Information** Goal helps you know if your families receive the information they need in order to function as an integral part of their child’s school. Here are the indicators for this goal area along with the number of items used to determine the rating for each indicator.

Indicators	Definition	# of Items
School Resources	The school provides resources and materials to help families learn about school goals, policies, and procedures	8
Programs and Procedures	The school has programs and procedures to inform families about their child’s classroom and activities	7
Student Performance	Families are kept current on their child’s school performance	4
Involving Parents with Achievement	The school has programs and procedures to involve parents with their child’s academic achievement	6
Connecting Parents with Community Services	The school has programs and procedures to inform families about available community assistance	3

Goal 4—Participation

The **Participation** Goal helps you know if your family participation programs invite involvement, value parents as key resources, and engage the entire school community. The following table lists the indicators for this goal area along with the number of items used to determine the rating for each indicator.

Indicators	Definition	# of Items
Supporting Parent Ideas	Individuals and existing documents support parent input and ideas	5
Working Together	Parents and teachers meet and work together	7
Learning & Volunteering Opportunities	Schools provide parents with education and volunteering options	2
Valuing Parent Knowledge	Parents are valued as an education community resource	7

Rating System

Each indicator received a rating of High Quality, Emerging or Low Quality based on the average score of the items associated with each indicator.

Rating	Range
High	2.75 to 3.00
Emerging	2.00 to 2.74
Low	1.00-1.99

Contact Information

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Summary

Your Scores

Goal	Score	Rating
Welcoming	2.11	Emerging
Communication	2.70	Emerging
Information	2.30	Emerging
Participation	2.21	Emerging
Overall Score	2.33	Emerging

Survey Information

- 25 **staff** completed the online survey
- 65 **families** completed the parent survey
- 1 staff completed the **parent liaison** survey

School Visit Highlights

- The principal at Martin Luther King understands the importance of effective family engagement and strives to integrate family engagement in every facet of her school. She promotes multiple efforts to meaningfully engage parents and clearly understands the value of parent engagement, which she articulates to her staff. Evidence of King's parent engagement efforts is clear throughout the school!
- Martin Luther King has an excellent Family Engagement Center that helps parents be engaged in many different ways!
- Martin Luther King teachers invite parent participation in multiple, creative ways. The home learning materials for the early grades is a great way for engaging parents in the learning process.

Recommended Next Steps

To take your family engagement practice from involving parents in the school to engaging parents in student learning, CAFÉ recommends the following:

- Structured professional development for all staff (certified and non-certified) that helps staff members understand:
 - **Why** family engagement matters and how family engagement efforts can positively influence student learning;
 - **What** specific practices affect student academic progress; and
 - **How** Martin Luther King Elementary can create a school-wide culture which promotes a range of family engagement practices and strategies that are student-centered and designed to improve learning.
- Provide a school-wide definition of parental involvement with input from administration, staff and families. This facilitates an awareness, which often translates into action to merge student learning with parent involvement.

Promote this definition to staff and families at every opportunity much like you would a mission statement, (i.e., school-to-home communications, newsletters, staff meetings, website, etc.)

- Adopt multiple practices that help all parents feel **welcome** to participate in their child's learning as a member of the education team.
- Create explicit, positive school assumptions about the importance of parent contributions to student success, and **communicate** that all parents, regardless of education level, can support student success.
- Give parents specific **information** on their child's academic performance and teach how to interpret this data in the context of overall classroom performance, school benchmarks, and state standards.
- Establish a parent involvement action team comprised of parents, staff, and administrators to implement ongoing strategies for the purpose of motivating parents to **participate** in student learning.

Welcoming

Your Score

Definition	Score	Rating
Procedures are in place to accommodate parent visits to the school	1.40	Low
School personnel help parents to feel comfortable	2.09	Emerging
Parents' culture and language are respected	2.45	Emerging
The school is physically attractive	2.50	Emerging
Overall Score	2.11	Emerging

Commendations

- Campus is well maintained and there is an adhered to visitor policy upon entering the campus.
- Families overwhelmingly feel very positive about King Elementary. They feel extremely comfortable communicating with their child's teacher and feel that school personnel are friendly when they visit the campus. They also feel that their culture, ethnicity and religion are respected. The photo at the right shows how King Elementary welcomes families at the main entrance in many languages.

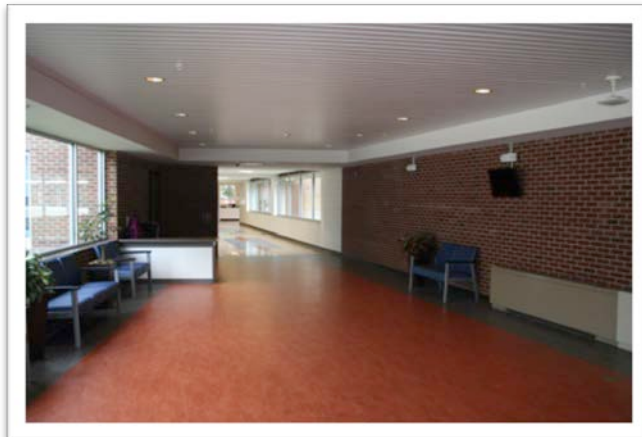


Recommendations

- Display a campus map and have handouts of the map readily available for families and visitors.
- The school parking lot is often a visitor's first impression of the school's climate. Provide directional signs for entrance/exit and flow of traffic within the parking area and designate a few parking spots as "Family/Visitor" parking to reinforce the message that the school welcomes and has a place for visitors. The barricades in the parking lot give the impression that visitors are not welcome.

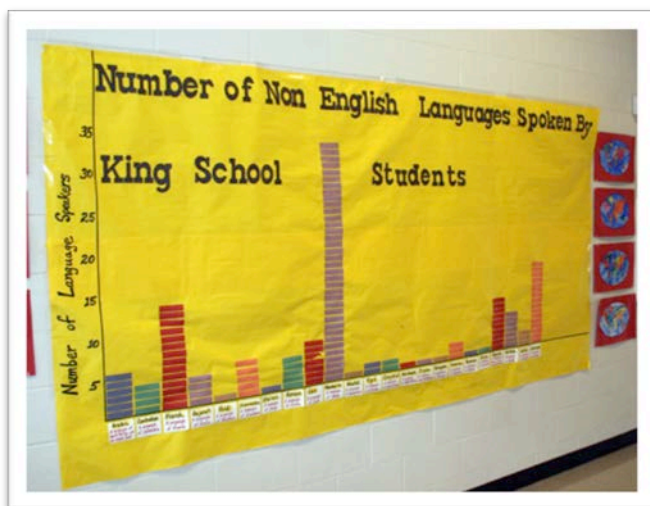


- Greet visitors to the school by displaying welcome signs at all school entrances. These welcome signs can also serve as a designation to main entrances to school campus. During the visit to King Elementary, it wasn't clear where to park or where to find the main entrance. The photo on the left shows an entrance with no signage or instructions. The photo on the right is of the entrance hallway we encountered after being buzzed in. As you can see there are no directional signs to the office.



- To maintain quality customer service, administration should regularly communicate specific “customer service expectations” to staff and encourage staff development opportunities in this area.
- While maintaining a safe campus is paramount, ensure that families always feel that the campus door is open to a family partnership. To ensure the safety of all students, front line staff should enforce visitor check-in procedures on a consistent basis.

- The photo here shows that King successfully displays evidence of student work. When looking at the photo, however, it's not clear what the students were working on, how it is connected to the curriculum, which standard it is aligned with, or how parents can talk with their child about the learning that took place. To connect and include families in student achievement, we suggest displaying more direct evidence of learning throughout the campus. This is the difference between displaying student work and showcasing evidence of learning. Make sure to take advantage of all electronic display devices—make sure to turn your monitors on!



Communication

Your Score

Definition	Score	Rating
Contact between schools and families is frequent, comfortable, and two-way	2.63	Emerging
Written and oral communication is clear and comprehensible	2.65	Emerging
Meetings and events are scheduled regularly, widely advertised, and well attended	2.50	Emerging
Print information is available, attractive, useful, and family/culturally friendly	3.00	High
Overall Score	2.70	Emerging

Commendations

- Parents overwhelmingly praise King for their communication practices. Parents indicated on survey responses that they receive positive comments from teachers, can easily reach school personnel when needed and that school personnel respond to parent concerns in a timely manner. The King principal takes great pride in producing extremely well made parent handouts that convey important information in easy to understand ways. The quality of the layout and formatting demonstrates how much the principal values families!
- Website is easy to navigate, functional, written in a language and format that is easy for families to understand and content is kept current and updated.

Recommendations

- Consider incorporating the use of a suggestion box or other informal method to solicit family input on procedures, policies, concerns, and/or school achievement progress. In order to promote the importance of parent feedback, pair the use of a suggestion box with an explanation of the school's interest in obtaining parent feedback and provide information to parents on the topics for which the school would like their feedback. Posing specific questions or issues for response in the school newsletter, on the school website or during a parent meeting may serve to encourage parent participation.
- When possible, ensure all written communications (fliers, newsletters) are in predominant languages spoken by families and are free of jargon and acronyms.
- Administration should consistently provide formal and informal opportunities to meet with families so they are included in, and aware of school-wide issues

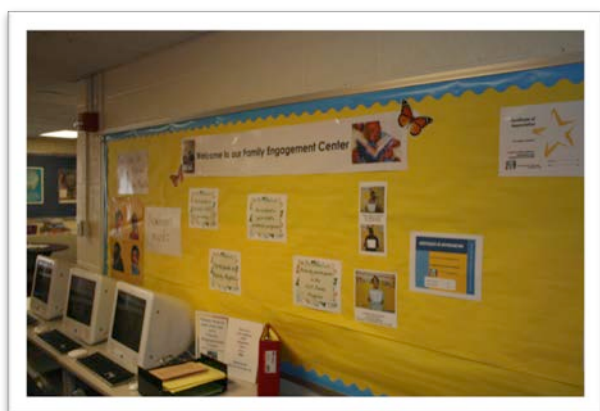
Information

Your Score

Definition	Score	Rating
The school provides resources and materials to help families learn about school goals, policies, and procedures	2.15	Emerging
The school has programs and procedures to inform families about their child’s classroom and activities	1.92	Low
Families are kept current on their child’s school performance	2.47	Emerging
The school has programs and procedures to involve parents with their child’s academic achievement	2.44	Emerging
The school has programs and procedures to inform families about available community assistance	2.53	Emerging
Overall Score	2.30	Emerging

Commendations

- The Martin Luther King Family Engagement Center (picture at the bottom on the left) is an excellent place for parents to engage with the school and support school efforts. The Center is warm and inviting and provides materials for parents to check out and use at home.
- Parent Resource Section is included on school website.
- Families feel informed about policies and procedures. King provides easy to find information via this informational table and several brochure displays (pictured below on the right).



- King does an outstanding job of posting its mission and vision statements throughout the school. It is clear these documents drive the practice of the administration and staff at King.



Recommendations

- To keep family members informed and connected to student progress, consider updating your current quarterly progress report to include information on how family members can support student learning at home, based on individual student data. These “Data Tracker” guide reports should be updated with individual student progress, provided to families on a quarterly basis and paired with a curriculum outline to keep family members informed on what students are learning in class.
- Many educators indicate that they do not provide newsletters/class bulletins to families. Encourage all educators to do so on a monthly or quarterly basis, with information on class assignments, upcoming events, etc. Utilize technology and social media to make them available on the web and easily communicate with families on a regular basis.
- Educators indicated on survey responses that they do not discuss social behavior and discipline policies with families. Consider incorporating this information at registration and including the information in a welcome packet.
- Various educators responded that they do not frequently communicate to families when a student shows improvement, does something well, or when the student is having difficulty. Encouraging a practice in which educators consistently communicate with families regarding the status of a student’s improvement will strengthen communication channels and establish effective partnerships with parents that support student learning. Utilize these communications to aid parents in understanding academic standards, assessment data and evaluation tools including progress reports and report cards.

- To keep parents connected with student learning, consider enhancing or including the following content on your website:
 - Individual classroom or subject area information - To establish consistency among teacher web pages ensure that all teachers, at minimum, post a short bio, include information on yearly student learning objectives, homework assignments, ways for parents to be active participants in their child's education and current newsletters. For accountability, review these pages on a consistent basis.
 - Curriculum and assessment information
 - On-line grade review
 - School Key Term Guide
 - School or district newsletter
 - School location and link to mapping program
 - Frequently Asked Question section on:
 - School office hours and student hours
 - Volunteer opportunities
 - Who to contact in the office
 - What to do if a child will be late or absent
 - Bus information
 - Homework expectations
 - School dress code
 - Behavior expectations/what not to bring to school
 - Enrollment requirements
- Parent surveys indicate a need to provide more information to families regarding student learning and how to provide support for learning at home. To foster parent partnerships and facilitate two-way conversation regarding student achievement, provide on-site and online opportunities that explain to families how to support learning at home. Encourage educators to outline strategies for promoting learning at home on their classroom web page, in school-home correspondences, and during parent-teacher conferences. To assist with learning at home strategies, encourage educators to discuss the individual learning style of students with parents, and send home student work for parent review and comment.
- To facilitate school transitions ensure families are provided opportunities to participate in meetings, activities, and orientations. Have your parent teacher organization work with staff and school administration to organize transition meetings for families that explain school policies and procedures, academic standards, report cards, and specific ways that families can assist with student learning.
- To direct families to needed resources, encourage teachers to have a list of important community numbers (tutoring and homework assistance, counseling services and social and financial assistance) readily available for parents.

Participation

Your Score

Definition	Score	Rating
Individuals and existing documents support parent input and ideas	2.15	Emerging
Parents and teachers meet and work together	2.28	Emerging
Schools provide parents with education and volunteering options	2.50	Emerging
Parents are valued as an education community resource	1.90	Low
Overall Score	2.21	Emerging

Commendations

- Parents feel included at King Elementary and feel informed about opportunities through the Parent Teacher organization.

Recommendations

- Many educators responded that they do not ask parents about their child’s strengths, talents, interests, or needs. In order to maximize instruction and learning, encourage educators to discuss this with parents.
- Encourage staff participation at events to demonstrate a sincere interest in school-family partnerships and provide opportunities for teachers, parents and community members to interact in smaller groups, and encourage processes for direct and positive contact. Additional recommendations to encourage family attendance at meetings and events are: utilize parent event punch cards, host lunch and learns, extend personal and print invitations and hold events outside of school.
- To promote successful family and community engagement practices in your school and district, we recommend adding a family engagement professional development track to your current offerings that will include training on how to communicate with families, asset building, cultural competency and community mapping.
- Have a plan in place to monitor school/parent initiatives for the purpose of improving school and parent partnerships, including evaluations and/or surveys at parent workshops, events, and meetings.
- Consider forming a Family Involvement Action Team comprised of parents, staff, administrators and community members to assess, plan and implement on-going strategies for the purpose of increasing parent involvement.
- Educators reported that the majority of parents do not attend meetings or regularly scheduled school events. However, the majority of parents surveyed, responded that they attend school events, meetings, conferences, etc. To facilitate partnership and address the disconnect, encourage ALL staff to participate in afterschool and evening activities to demonstrate a sincere interest in school-family partnerships, provide opportunities for teachers and parents to interact in smaller groups, and encourage processes for direct and positive contact. Additional recommendations to encourage family attendance at meetings and events are: utilize parent event punch cards, host lunch and learns, extend personal and print invitations and hold events outside of school.
- Survey families, mentors, and community members on their talents and skills and provide various opportunities for volunteering that match their interests and different levels of engagement. This “survey” can be done the traditional route, be posted on your website, or be conducted in an informal way every time a family member is on campus or when teachers call home. When possible, invite parents, mentors and community members into the classroom to share their expertise and experience (cultural or technical background) with students. In order to maximize parent participation, involve parents in recruiting others. To cultivate a positive “word of mouth campaign”, ensure to create

positive relationships with every family member you connect with as they will be sure to spread the news about the wonderful opportunities available at the school.

- Ensure that parents have access to the school Parent Involvement Compact and information regarding Title I. Post this information on the school website, in the Welcome Folder and in the student handbook. It is important that this document is actively utilized to reinforce the King Elementary commitment to engaging families in student learning.
- Look for creative ways to provide educational resources and education to families on school campus (i.e. language, computer, parenting classes, workshops). Establishing partnerships with community organization and Institutes of Higher Education can assist with accomplishing this.
- To maximize parent participation ensure accommodations for family involvement such as transportation, childcare and translation are always provided. Advertise the availability of these services when promoting events to families.

Parent Liaison Recommendations

Communication

Communication	Score	Rating
Contact between parent liaison, schools and families is frequent, comfortable and two-way.	3.00	High
There is a shared understanding among administration, staff, families and parent liaison of position goals and responsibilities.	2.50	Emerging
Families and educators are aware of the services offered by the parent liaison	2.48	Emerging
Overall Score	2.66	Emerging

- Educators indicated on surveys that they do not connect families to the services offered by the parent liaison. To establish a relationship between King’s parent liaison and educators, schedule time at a staff meeting for the parent liaison to present priorities and goals for the position, services and materials available, upcoming events and contact information. Build in time at the meeting for a facilitated discussion on how the liaison and educators can work together to increase student achievement at King. To ensure the staff is regularly updated on the services offered by the liaison, include this information in weekly staff bulletins, monthly newsletters and staff meetings. Incorporating these methods will assist the parent liaison in fulfilling the responsibility of assisting teachers, staff and families to develop strong partnerships and enhance two-way communication.

Linked to Learning

Linked-to-Learning	Score	Rating
The parent liaison is trained to inform families about academic standards, accountability, and state/federal legislation.	3.00	High
The parent liaison is supported in developing programs and materials to involve parents with their child’s academic achievement.	2.29	Emerging
Overall Score	2.65	Emerging

- The majority of educators responded that they do not collaborate with and provide information to the parent liaison regarding ways for families to support learning at home. Encourage collaboration opportunities between educators and the parent liaison by communicating the importance and purpose of the parent liaison position and modeling for the staff ways in which collaboration can occur to increase student achievement and promote partnership among families.
- The main responsibility of the Parent Liaison should be to help move family engagement from being primarily **social, celebratory, and informational** in nature toward activities that are more explicitly about the **academic progress of students**. It is important for school staff and the Parent Liaison to work collaboratively on efforts to engage all families. This is the difference from moving from the basic of level of parent **involvement** to a more substantive level of family **engagement**.

Participation

Participation	Score	Rating
The parent liaison position is a valued member of the educational team at the school.	3.00	High
Collaboration exists between parent liaison and staff at the school	3.00	High
Parent liaison is included in key meetings at the school.	2.67	Emerging
Families take advantage of opportunities presented by the parent liaison.	2.07	Emerging
Overall Score	2.69	Emerging

- So that families at King utilize the parent liaison position to its full potential, it is recommended that the liaison begin to publicize the position among administration, faculty and the community. Creating a brochure with information about the position, services, materials, upcoming events, etc. is an excellent way to market services. Include the brochure in the welcome packet and place in a predominant area of the school. Encourage staff and faculty to distribute the brochure to families and community members. Another suggestion is to devote a section of the website to parent resources. Included in the section would be an introduction to the liaison, contact information, upcoming classes and services available. Lastly, encourage the liaison to be visible at the beginning of the day, end of the day and at other times when families frequent the campus. This will provide an informal opportunity to build relationships with families and help to publicize the parent liaison position at the school.