

This Week's Topic: Communicating with Families

Engaging families can improve your program's quality in many ways. Family engagement is linked to improved parent-child relationships, increased family involvement in children's education and school, better ELO programs, better youth participation, and increased equity and cultural responsiveness. Time and resources are scarce in the ELO field and family engagement is often an afterthought brought on by a child's or youth's challenging behavior. Yet, incorporating some simple, proactive strategies not only benefits your program, it can also have considerable personal benefit for the child. These include increased social skills, reduced aggression, decreased risky behavior, improved grades, and improved school attendance for your program's participants.¹

Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips for communicating with families.

Welcome Parents

Greet them with a smile, eye contact (if culturally appropriate), address them by their name. Have signs that welcome parents in all the languages your families speak.

Have Conversations With Parents That Focus On Them

Ask parents how their day went, introduce them to other parents, get to know them as people, and build a relationship with them outside of just talking about their child.

Communicate Frequently And In Positive Ways

Check in with parents regularly for input about their child's needs. At least once a week, make an effort to communicate with each parent. Make sure to connect with each parent over something positive about their child.

Ask Parents For Input

Ask them informally if they have any input on the program.

Tips in Action!

[Watch](#) staff from Launch at Maple Elementary share about the value of connecting with families in his program.

Want more two-minute tips?

Check out:
<https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expand-ed-learning-opportunities/>

¹ Oregon Community Foundation (2016). *K-12 Student Success: Out of School Time Initiative Family Engagement; A Learning Brief*