

101 Pieces of Great Advice for Engaging With Families

Recently, we here at Teaching Strategies asked early childhood educators to share with us the best advice they've ever received about engaging with families. As so often happens, we were deeply touched by both the volume and the richness of the responses. Many of the respondents mentioned very similar ideas, such as developing positive relationships, communicating frequently, listening carefully, being warm and genuine, beginning and ending conversations on a positive note, smiling, greeting family members by name, building trust, and intentionally demonstrating respect for all families. We believe that these are words to live by.

Here are 101 of the 1,000+ pieces of great advice we gathered from teachers and administrators for engaging with families.

Be sincere, kind and honest.

Make sure to make them feel welcome and comfortable with you. Be respectful and always talk from your heart, appreciate them and their cultural background.

Escuchar a las familias y dejarle saber que trabajando juntas para el bienestar de sus hijos tendremos mejores resultados.

Show sincere interest in the child, the parent child relationship, and what is important to the family. The visits are the family's visits.

Relationships can make all the difference.

Don't judge a family, take the time to get to know the family. There could be things going on in the family you are unaware of, such as family member out of work, they are poor, or someone could have an illness, etc.. . Always take the time to get to know the family.

Come to the conversation with an open mind.

Think of them as your co-teacher, after all, aren't they actually the lead teacher in their child's life!

To lead one of the first conversations with, what are your hopes and dreams for your child. Asking this question empowers the family and lets them know that I am on their team to support their child in the direction they have set for them.

Arrival and dismissal are great ways to connect and engage with families.

Covid taught me that I get MUCH BETTER ENGAGEMENT when families can join me for meetings/workshops/events ONLINE. It's difficult for families to schlep their whole lives to the school for an hour, then have to schlep it back. If they can join us for a learning experience from the comfort of their living room, they are more likely to engage. I have always been a fan of technology and what it can do for us, and I'm glad that others are FINALLY listening.

Create positive relationships, respect.

The Golden Rule: Treat others as you want to be treated. Also, realize that you are all advocating for what you think is best for the child so assume that you all have the same goal in mind and be open to the variety of ways there might be to achieving the goal—optimal health and well-being for the child.

To be yourself and be the teacher that you always wanted your children to have.

Aprender a escuchar las necesidades de los padres de familia y en como poder ayudar a sus hijos a lograr sus metas.

To listen to their concerns and input and let them be aware of the fact that their opinion and involvement is respected and valued.

Be friendly and personable.

Provide learning activities to families.

Not every family communicates in the same way! Use different forms (verbal, written, electronic) to make sure your families are all receiving the same message and can stay informed.

Be genuine, transparent, empathetic, and supportive.

Take time to understand the differences between families and their unique backgrounds. Everyone lives a different lifestyle and it is important to respect that.

Make the family feel welcomed and comfortable. Research cultural differences and always know what's acceptable so that respect is always there.

Parents are their children's first and forever teachers! Keeping that in mind, really helps guide my interactions with families.

Nothing happens without a relationship, get to know them and allow them to get to know you.

Be genuine.

Listen without judgement and be willing to acknowledge struggles of parenting.

With a welcoming smile and a positive attitude.

Treat them the way you would like your family treated.

The best advice to engage with parents is to earn their trust then reassuring them their child is in a safe caring environment, from there we start building a connection between home and school. We need to respect, listen and have empathy we might not know what they going through. Also, keeping them inform about their child's academic progress.

Escucharlos y no juzgar ninguno de sus comentarios y respetar siempre sus creencias culturales.

Talk to them about something great you have seen their child do. Families love to hear great things about their children!

Show respect for their values and not try to act like you are the expert.

Tratar de comunicarme con las familias siempre con respeto, respetando sus creencias, su lenguaje y su cultura.

Open conversation, honesty and integrity really help cement the relationship thus allowing the opportunity to engage. Smile, use pleasant voice, and bring on the positives!! Address concerns using shared information and ideas between family and teacher/provider. It Works!!

Always think of the parents as your team mate because we have to work together to support the kids to give them to best care.

Make them feel welcomed.

El mejor consejo es la importancia de llevar una comunicación efectiva con las familias ofreciendoles estrategias para la educación a distancia y como seguir juntos trabajando por el desarrollo y aprendizaje de nuestros participantes como equipo tomando siempre en cuenta su necesidades, intereses y fortalezas.

Be friendly, carry yourself as a professional, show them that you truly care for their kids.

Always make the families feel valued and appreciated. Assure them that if they have any questions concerns or suggestions to feel free to share. Also that together you are a team and are working together for the child's developmental growth.

Treat them as equals, we are a team!

Ser lo más transparente posible y tratar de ayudarlos en los más que se pueda.

Always speak from the heart and stick to the facts about what you observe about their child.

Ser amable con las familias y tratar de entender las necesidades de cada una.

Escuchar sin juzgar.

Listen, listen, listen!

La mayor manera de interactuar con las familias es haciendolos parte del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de los niños. Orientarlos y brindarles las herramientas que ellos necesiten para apoyar el aprendizaje de los niños desde casa.

To make them feel welcome and a part of the school family.

When engaging with families, its important to be understanding, patient and open minded. Make the environment comfortable and welcoming.

Including families in their children's education will encourage children to love and enjoy school more.

Open communication is the best way to engage with parents about their children on all levels of engagement. Parents are eager to know what and how they can be of help with their children's education Academically Socially and Emotionally.

Siempre escucharlos atentamente y tratar encontrar soluciones o interés a sus dudas y SONREIR.

Remember, your goals and the families goals are the same.

He recibido muchos consejos en como interactuar con las familias, siempre partiendo del respeto a su cultura y costumbres, tenemos varias formas de comunicarnos con ellas desde el intercambio diario hasta la documentación y recepción de los instrumentos de evaluación y observación.

Make sure that you communicate your "why". I'm not asking folks to connect because I'm nosy or want to control them, I'm forging connections to figure out the best way to serve their family and child. I'm really transparent about how attachment and care support learning and growth both from a scientific and anecdotal standpoint.

Take the time to talk to them about what they do together. Invest in them personally, not just pertaining to education.

Earn their trust.

My advice on how to engage with families is to be a good non judgmental listener.

Start off with a success story.

Be genuine. Every family is different, but most families have the same thing in common with you in regards to their children...they want them to be the best they can be!

No he recibido consejo pero siempre he dicho que las familias son importantes y debemos interactuar con ellas con mucho amor y sobre todo respeto.

Be patient and calm, because you never know what to expect. Always treat them the way you want to be treated.

Meet them where they are at. Trust is a two way street and it is important to work with the families in ways that they can relate to.

Take a genuine interest in their child and follow up on inquiries about their wellbeing.

Ser claro y hablar con la verdad y entender a que todas las familias son diferentes y estar preparado a entender, tolerar y sobre todo respetar.

Communicate, and celebrate the uniqueness of each family, use community resources to help with extra support. Advice from my Mentor, previous Boss, and former Principal.

Get to know the families!

Never be judgmental, and respect people for who they are.

Ponerles attention al 100% y decirles “dime más” cuando me platican algo y no estoy segura que me están diciendo.

Remember that the parents are the child’s first and most influential teachers--what they have to tell you about their child is valid. Love the children, love their parents, and don’t judge them. We all have strengths and challenges--help parents see that you want only the best for their child and are doing your best to help them succeed.

Promote an environment of open communication.

Siempre ser amable, ser respetuosos, respetar su cultura y lo que piensan, intercambiar conversaciones acerca de sus hijos.

Be open minded and don’t ever make judgement or assumptions.

Show respect. I keep in mind the quote “Parents are a child’s first and most influential teacher. “I don’t believe in “School Problems” or “Home Problems.” We work as a team to support each other out of mutual concern and love for their children.

Mantener una comunicación cordial y eficaz, y tener en cuenta que la familia es el primer educador.

All families want their children to be successful, it may be in business or in just showing up to school, but when approaching a family remember that they too, want success, just as much as you do.

Saludarle con una sonrisa para que se sientan bienvenida y mostrar respeto.

Respetando su cultura, idioma, y religión, haciéndoles sentir lo importante que es seguir creciendo en su desarrollo educativo para ayudar a sus hijos.

Give families a variety of options for ways they can be engaged in your program. Volunteering to label shelves or wash chairs, cut out materials needed for lessons, share their job or expertise with the children when relevant, organizing parties, making donations of books, supplies, or materials to the classroom, going on field trips, reading a book to the children, attending parent-teacher conferences, help manage a school website, attending an event to culminate the end of a study, participate in the parent policy council or sit on a board of directors—these are all just a few of the many, many ways a parent can be engaged in your program. Giving parents options allows them to choose how they can best be engaged without feeling pressured or putting a hardship on families.

By simply showing genuine love and care for the children, and accepting each other’s differences!

Listen to what they have to say. You may be the professional, but they are the parent!

Never imagine that you know more than the parent regarding the child’s individual needs.

Give the gift of your presence. Being fully present and engaged with the family you are speaking to, listening to understand. Years from now, a family may not remember what you said, but they will remember how you made them feel.

Continuously add “deposits” into your relationship account by sharing areas of growth and exciting moments their students have in class. That way, if there’s ever a time where you need to share something less positive, there will be a healthy relationship developed.

Put yourself in their shoes.

Make them feel welcomed, supported and heard, because we never know what they're going through in life.

Listen. Sometimes parents just need someone to talk to, to vent to, and to also be reassured that they are doing a good job.

Mantener comunicación permanente.

Escuche con empatía.

Cuidar las palabras. Las ideas deben ser claras por medio de palabras entendibles y coherentes para evitar malas interpretaciones.

Cuidar el tono de voz y volumen al hablar.

Tener actitud positiva y respetuosa con los niños y los padres.

View relationships with families as a collaborative partnership—we are in it together. This fosters a sense that everyone is valued and can learn from one another to build positive learning experiences for their child.

The best advice I've ever gotten about how to engage with families is to be approachable and friendly.

Be authentic and genuine.

Always assume positive intentions. Always assume everyone is trying their best with the information and resources they have.

Be understanding, show you care & want what's best for the child.

Primero ser amable con ellos y darles una buena bienvenida. Y hablarles más de las cosas positivas que hace su hijo.

Build relationships! Get to know them! Ask about their dreams for their children.

Be a good listener and remember your common goal regarding the well-being of their child.

Interactuar con las familias y los estudiantes, conocer de sus culturas, sus familias y actividades que les gusta realizar en familia.

Offer multiple ways of communication: call, text, message, not every family is comfortable communicating in the same way.

Try to not only make family engagement a priority, but also view every interaction with families as an exciting opportunity to better serve each child as an individual!

Don't be afraid.... to engage with families!

The best advice I ever received about how to engage with families is to meet them where they are and be a person they could trust.

Care about them first. The rest will come.