

The school and classroom teachers employ a variety of strategies for informing parents and families about the goals of ELA, ELD, and disciplinary literacy instruction and for engaging them in setting mutual goals for their student’s progress. Parents are informed about classroom assignments and the role of homework in reinforcing previously taught material; they also are provided suggestions for supporting their students at home. Schools that have consistent approaches to homework and that provide ways for all parents to support their children with homework are in a better position to create positive school-parent relationships because when parents are able to take an active role in their child’s education, they feel more connected to schools. Parents and family members should be personally invited to visit the classroom and volunteer in the school; when parents do visit and volunteer they need to be welcomed, made comfortable, and given tasks that make them feel like a part of the school community. The school should work with families and the community to increase the number of books in the homes, access to the community library, and other out-of-school literacy opportunities. Importantly, the concerns, hopes, and insights that parents and communities have should be solicited and be heard.

Schools should have systems in place for connecting families new to the U.S. to appropriate social services and community groups. For example, schools make sure that refugee families know where to find different types of support, whether from community groups, government services, or other organizations. Schools should acknowledge that the U.S. schooling system may be extremely unfamiliar to parents and families of some ELs. Schools support families and students not only by welcoming new families to the school but also by providing guidance to parents to navigate through the school system from entry through graduation and engaging parents as valuable partners in their child’s education, regardless of their economic, cultural, linguistic, or educational backgrounds.

Several suggestions for parent and family involvement follow in figure 11.9.

**Figure 11.9. Principles and Guidance for Parent Involvement**

| Principle                                  | We need to . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | We need to avoid . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <p><b>Build parental self-efficacy</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give specific ideas on how to help:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Every 4–5 pages, stop reading and ask your child to tell you what has happened so far.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• To the degree possible, help parents find support if they lack some of the skills or knowledge needed to participate.</li> <li>• Invite parents to participate by sharing their unique skills, knowledge, or histories with the class. For example:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teaching words or phrases in languages other than English</li> <li>- Gardening</li> <li>- Musical talents</li> <li>- Technology skills</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vague requests to work with students:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Make sure your child understands what she reads.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Blame:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “They should know this stuff!”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expectations that all parents should be involved in the same way (e.g., reading a book to the class, sewing costumes for the theatre production).</li> </ul> |

| Principle                                        | We need to . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | We need to avoid . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <p><b>Be respectful of competing demands</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer logistical support for at-school activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arrange for bus transportation or some sort of travel voucher for public transportation</li> <li>- Provide child care for siblings</li> <li>- Provide meals if activities are held near a mealtime</li> <li>- Offer a variety of days and times for participation (i.e., days, evenings, weekends)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide off-site ways to get involved:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Home visits</li> <li>- Activities based in neighborhoods</li> <li>- Meetings by phone</li> <li>- Take-home activities</li> <li>- Communication logs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To the extent possible, requests for involvement that are not mindful of competing demands:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invitations for parents only, unless there is also on-site child care</li> <li>- One-time-only events</li> <li>- Events held only during regular working hours (during which family or friends are less likely to be able to help with transport and child care)</li> <li>- Events that conflict with mealtimes, bus pickup and dropoff times, and other events requiring parental supervision</li> <li>- Events that present only one way to participate (e.g., if a parent cannot attend workshops, not offering an alternative way to get the information)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Support positive role construction</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to create a shared definition of parent roles (which is not the same as convincing parents to take on our vision for their roles):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share our expectations for parent involvement, and ask parents about theirs</li> <li>- Explain why we ask them to do certain things</li> <li>- Explain why they are uniquely suited to do certain things</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ask parents what they view as important in helping their students succeed, and add those things to your family involvement agenda whenever possible.</li> <li>• Be open and inviting to share our roles as teachers—truly seeing parents as partners.</li> <li>• Encourage parents to invite their peers to participate.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking that parents are disengaged or do not care about their children if they do not participate in specific ways.</li> <li>• Thinking of parental involvement as a one-way street (we tell them what to do).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

| Principle                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | We need to . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | We need to avoid . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| <p><b>Provide sincere invitations to get involved</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create inviting spaces for adults to make it clear that school is their place, too:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriate-sized furniture</li> <li>- Adult lending libraries of parenting resources</li> <li>- Prominently posted pictures of students and families interacting at school</li> <li>- Welcoming environmental print, in multiple languages, if possible (e.g., “Welcome, parents! We’re so glad you’re here! Please stop and say hello in the office before joining your student in his or her classroom.”)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Welcome new students and new families:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When a new student enrolls, include a welcome note to the student and his or her family members in a newsletter</li> <li>- Make a point of personally welcoming the family (e.g., “We’re so glad that all three of you are joining our classroom [or school] family!”)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Be sure that students have the chance to invite participation as well:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide students with a lending library of family activities that they can invite parents to engage with</li> <li>- Have students write invitations to such things as school performances</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environments that make adults feel like intruders:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child-sized seating options only</li> <li>- Environmental print sending the message that parents are not a part of the group (e.g., “ATTENTION: ALL PARENTS MUST CHECK IN AT THE OFFICE AND PICK UP A VISITORS’ BADGE!!!”)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Source</b><br/>           Adapted from<br/>           Roberts, Kathryn. 2013. “Partnering with Parents.” In <i>Handbook of Effective Literacy Instruction</i>, edited by Barbara M Taylor and Nell K. Duke, 572-589. New York: Guilford. Copyright Guilford Press. Reprinted with permission of the Guilford Press.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |