

Creating a Welcoming Environment in Your School



Mark S. Lewis, Ed.D.
Director
PA Parent Information & Resource Center
Wednesday, October 26, 2011
12:00 p.m. to 12:45 p.m.

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

Presenter for Today's Session

Dr. Mark Lewis

Director
PA Parent Information & Resource Center
Center for Schools & Communities
275 Grandview Avenue, Suite 200
Camp Hill, PA 17011
Phone: 717-763-1661, ext. 137
Email: mlewis@csc.csiu.org

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

“When programs and initiatives focus on building respectful and trusting relationships between school staff and families, they are more effective in creating and sustaining connections that support student success.”

Ann Henderson and Karen Mapp

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

School Environment Factors

*** Communication**

- * Two-way home-school communication?
- * Frequent and comfortable contact?
- * Clear and understandable communication?
- * Meetings/Events: Regularly scheduled? Widely advertised? Well attended?
- * School providing all needed information for families to be effective force in children’s education?

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

School Environment Factors

• Information

- * Schools help families learn about school goals, policies and procedures, and their child's classroom and activities?
- * Families kept current on their child's performance?
- * Programs and procedures in place to involve parents with their child's academic achievement?
- * Parents made aware of community services and assistance available to them, as needed?

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

School Environment Factors

• Participation

- * Families considered valuable resources contributing to school's overall success?
- * Meaningful involvement in key decisions affecting their children?
- * Parents given equal voices in school governance issues?
- * Parent education opportunities and multiple ways to volunteer?
- * Parents' talents or expertise shared with the entire class?

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

School Environment Factors

• Environment

- * Families feel they belong in the school?
- * Personnel help parents feel comfortable & “at home?”
- * Parents’ language/culture respected?
- * Warm, physically attractive school environment?

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

Surveys

Parents—Educators—Principal—
Parent Liaison

- Are welcoming environmental factors in place?
- Are they occurring with enough frequency?
- Are groups’ perceptions aligned?

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

Parent Survey

- Are school personnel friendly?
- Do you feel informed about policies & procedures?
- Do school personnel respond to concerns in a timely manner?
- Are you encouraged to join a school committee? To participate in decisions that affect your child?

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

Educator Survey

- Do parents know how to contact you?
- Do you offer resources to parents to help their child?
- Do you send a classroom newsletter or bulletin regularly to your students' parents?
- Do you have information about your classroom available on the school's website?

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

Principal Survey

- Do you communicate positive “customer service” expectations to your staff?
- Do you involve a variety of parents in school planning committees?
- Do you clarify with your staff the meaning of effective parent involvement?
- Do you provide parent involvement training for your staff?

School Walk Through

- Convenient, clearly-marked visitor parking area?
- Clean and litter free school?
- Courteous and attentive office staff?
- Welcome packet for new families?
Registration information?

School Walk Through

- Evidence of learning?
- Designated center/area for family resources?
- Mission statement posted? Evidence of embracing mission?

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

School Website

- Eye appealing?
- Easy to navigate?
- Contact information accessible?
- Information in more than English?
- Current information?

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

School Website

- Calendar of school events/important dates?
- Online grade access?
- Parent resource section?
- Directions to the school? Online mapping feature?
- Online newsletter?
- Curriculum information?

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

Documents-Flyers-Newsletters

- Eye-appealing?
- Meaningful information?
- Easily available?
- Correct grammar, punctuation, & spelling?
- Available in languages other than English?
- Feedback system for continuous improvement?

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center

Key Elements of a Welcoming Environment

Communication

Information

Participation

Environment

© PA PIRC - Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center