



FEATURED *resources*

REACHING OUT TO DIVERSE POPULATIONS: WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO FOSTER FAMILY-SCHOOL CONNECTIONS?

www.sedl.org/connections/resources/rb/rb5-diverse.pdf

ORGANIZING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS WITH SCHOOLS: HOW DO SCHOOL STAFF BUILD MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS?

www.sedl.org/connections/resources/rb/rb4-Rel.pdf

AFTERSCHOOL *news*



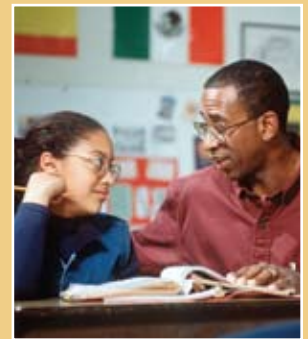
How to Increase Family Involvement in Afterschool

In 2002, SEDL published *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf). This resource examined growing evidence that family and community connections with schools make a difference in student success. SEDL identified more than 50 studies in its findings and concluded there is a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. It's easy enough to entice parents to see their children perform in a play or talent show, but how can afterschool practitioners encourage and create opportunities for parental involvement in academics?

Literacy. Family literacy events are scheduled days when parents and caregivers visit their child's afterschool program to attend homework or parenting workshops, see a presentation or play, or view exhibits of student work. The Afterschool Training Toolkit for literacy offers great tips for planning such events (www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/literacy/pr_family_literacy.html).

Math. At family math nights, family and community members attend a variety of events and have fun exploring content, activities, and games that support mathematical learning. Practical, hands-on activities can teach parents how to support what their child is learning. The Afterschool Training Toolkit contains helpful information and guidelines for designing a successful family math night (www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/math/ex_math_nights.html).

Science. Actively engaging families in science-related events encourages students' interest in science and supports science learning. Family events can engage parents and students in a typical afterschool science activity or can be led by a science expert in the community. Depending on their familiarity with science content, some parents may need extra encouragement. Seek out parents who work in a science-related field and invite them to speak or involve them in planning an event or project. The Afterschool Training Toolkit offers useful advice and tips for designing fun, engaging activities for family science night (www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/science/ex_science_night.html).



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The National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning helps state education agencies and local practitioners develop high-quality programs for academic enrichment as well as youth development activities.



"If you can get parents in the building, they become more interested in everything about their students."

GAIL PIPPEN
program director

Sparks Program

COATESVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

The Sparks Program at Scott Middle School in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, has partnered with Penn State University to offer Project PA, a program promoting family nutrition and wellness. Sparks combines the research-based nutrition curriculum with embedded academics to create a dynamic program that is very popular with the community. During family events, students and their parents prepare a healthy snack or meal and then participate in some sort of physical activity. One night had a hip-hop theme; on another night students and their families danced on geo-mats, which are low-impact exercise mats.

Gail Phippen, Sparks program director, says that sometimes all parents need is an invitation. "We made personal phone calls to encourage our families to come. It's a big investment of time, but it makes a tremendous difference," she says. "If you can get parents in the building, they become more interested in everything about their students." Phippen also recommends having afterschool staff take turns planning family events. It prevents one person from feeling overwhelmed by the job, and the staff member who is planning each event will be motivated to make it a success. Consistency is key: Sparks holds a minimum of three family events per year, but usually has six or perhaps as many as eight. Building momentum and establishing consistency can be effective strategies to promote family involvement.

IN YOUR *words*

Do you have family nights in your afterschool program?

- Yes, but only for student performances or showcases, not for academics.
- Yes, and we have them for many subject areas, not just arts.
- No, but it's something I'd like to try.
- No, and I don't think we'll be trying it any time soon.

To participate in this survey and view results, submit your vote at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/survey200711.html.

TRAINING *tip*

Feed Them and They Will Come

Food is the currency of many social transactions, but 21st Century Community Learning Centers may not be able to purchase refreshments for parent involvement activities. Existing or new community partners may be able to help. Consider contacting local food service businesses such as a coffee shop or pizzeria for donations. The United States Department of Agriculture Child and Adult Care Food Program provides nutritious meals and snacks as well. See www.fns.usda.gov for more details.

Do you have a training tip you would like to share? E-mail us at afterwords@sedl.org with "training tip" in the subject line.

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NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL LEARNING

at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory



EVENTS *calendar*

Feb. 28–29 PEAK Afterschool Workshop Series:
Literacy and Arts
KANSAS CITY, MO

May 1–2 PEAK Afterschool Workshop Series:
Math and Science
DENVER, CO

For more events, visit our calendar at www.sedl.org/afterschool/training/calendar.html.