



Kansas Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through



What Is a Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through?

The Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through is a tour and evaluation conducted by a team of representatives selected by school personnel to help gather information on whether families and community members feel they are welcomed partners in the school. Results will provide the school with information on how inviting the school appears, which will allow the school to implement new strategies to make the school more family-friendly and improve parent engagement.

Who Should Be Included on the Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through Team?

The team should be made up of ten people: three school staff, six parents and/or community members, and a team facilitator who oversees the Walk-Through but does not complete the tour or evaluation. It is suggested that the facilitator be the parent involvement coordinator, the parent liaison, or the school staff member primarily responsible for parent outreach. It is important to make sure that the team members are representative of your school and community's population. Team members you may want to consider are: an administrator, a teacher, a bus driver, a secretary, a nurse, a custodian, a cafeteria worker, a counselor, a paraprofessional, a local business owner, an education partner, a community leader, a parent leader, a parent volunteer, a parent teacher association or parent teacher organization officer, an English as a second language parent, a parent who will have a child in the school for the first time next year, or a special education parent.

How Does the Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through Work?

The team will be divided into three groups of three and will examine how inviting the school appears by evaluating checklist items divided under the National PTA's Standards for Family-School Partnerships (1). It is important to make sure that the three school staff members in the team are each in different groups. After completing the tour and evaluation, team members will compile a summary of their findings and create a list of commendations and recommendations for the facilitator. The facilitator will then report the results to school administrators and facilitate the next steps of action.

Note: It is important to make sure that Walk-Through date and time is kept confidential so school faculty and staff do not modify normal daily activities.

How Long Should the Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through Take to Complete?

Please allow a total of three hours. The suggested schedule is as follows:

- Welcome, Introductions, Purpose, and Guidelines (30 Minutes)
- Team Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through Tour and Evaluations (1 Hour)
- Small Group Team Discussion and Create Summary of Commendations and Recommendations (1 Hour)
- Summary Report from Each Small Group Team to Facilitator (30 Minutes)

What Is the Role of the Facilitator?

The facilitator's role is to plan the Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through, provide follow up to team members, and assist the school in implementing the recommendations. In addition, to make sure the Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through is a success the facilitator should be responsible for the following:

1. Establish permission from the school principal to conduct a Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through.
2. Develop and confirm a team based on the guidelines set on the previous page.
3. Locate a meeting room large enough for team members to discuss their evaluations and compile results.
4. Organize refreshments for the meeting.
5. Prepare a copy of the Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through Evaluation Checklists and school maps for all team members.
6. Collect samples of all written communications provided by the school to parents/families. In addition, provide any telephone numbers given to parents to contact the school. This information will be reviewed by the team members.
7. Divide the participants into teams and develop a staggered tour schedule.
8. Write a summary of the team's observations, commendations, and recommendations.
9. Present results to the school principal and administrators.
10. Implement the next steps of action to bring about changes recommended if approved.

Instructions for Walk-Through Participants

Thank you for agreeing to participate in your school's Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through! It is very important that families feel welcome in our school. The responsibility for creating that environment belongs to both schools and families. By using the National PTA's six standards to assess the school climate, we will be able to determine where adjustments are needed in order to create a welcoming environment and increase parent engagement! Your input is essential in ensuring that our students, parents, families, and community members feel welcome, comfortable, accepted, and secure at our school!

As you complete the evaluation checklist please examine the school from one or more of the following perspectives:

- You are a parent wanting to volunteer your time at the school
- You are a parent of a special needs child
- You are a father
- You just moved here from a different state
- You are a community leader
- You are a parent looking at moving to the area
- You are a local business owner wanting to become an education partner
- You are a parent who does not speak English
- You are a grandparent
- You just moved here from a different school within the state
- You are a parent with a disability
- You are a parent of a child who will go to Kindergarten next fall

To complete the evaluation checklist you will be divided into teams of three. Evaluation checklist items are divided into six parts under the National PTA's Standards for Family-School Partnerships. In order to remember your thoughts, please make notes as you complete the Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through next to your checklist items.

Once your small group team completes the Family-Friendly Partnership School Walk-Through, you will have one hour to gather and share your team's findings.

Remember: Record commendations and recommendations!

The meeting will conclude with each small group team reporting their results. The facilitator will collect the summaries from each team and compile a complete report to share with the school's principal and administrators. After this meeting, team members will receive information regarding the next steps and implementation.

School Name: _____ City, State: _____

Type of School (Please Circle): Elementary Middle High

At this school, I am a (Please Circle All that Apply): Parent Teacher Administrator Staff Community Member Other

For the following, please circle the box that you observe during your walk-through:

SA – Strongly Agree A – Agree N – Neutral D – Disagree SD – Strongly Disagree

Welcoming all Families

Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

“Parents report that a welcoming process creates a sense of belonging. Not only do parents feel that they belong to the school, but they also feel that the school belongs to them.” (2)

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| There are dedicated parking spots for parents at the front entrance of the school. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school provides opportunities for parent training and education. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The front office staff is helpful and friendly to all visitors. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school has established support networks that are available to parents. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school uses home visits to share information with families. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The principal is open and available to parents to discuss various issues and schedule meetings. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school makes it easy for parents that do not speak English to participate in activities or receive information over the phone or in person. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school has a designated space that provides parents with information about school events and services. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Activities are held at times that are convenient for parents to participate. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school provides a listing or directory of ALL staff to parents. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school has signs welcoming families and directing visitors throughout various areas of the school. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school welcomes parents into the school or classroom at any time during the school day. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents and visitors are greeted or acknowledged by all school faculty and staff while in the school. | SA | A | N | D | SD |

Comments _____

Communicating Effectively

Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

“When families can work closely with teachers, their children adjust to school better, attend more regularly, and stay in school longer. They also earn higher grades and test scores. In addition, families are far more likely to be satisfied with their children’s school (and school district) when they feel it is easy to be partners with their children’s teachers.” (3)

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| The school uses various methods to communicate regularly with families. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Teachers communicate at least once every three months in person, on the phone, or through email with a parent of every student in their class. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school contacts parents only when problems arise. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school keeps parents informed about important events. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school provides parents with information about extra curricular activities. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents receive an annual survey in order to share comments about the school. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school provides written information to parents in their native language if they do not speak English or speak English well. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| There is a way to submit concerns anonymously if parents are embarrassed or reluctant to share their concerns. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school involves parents in the daily activities of children’s education. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school maintains an up to date website that is easy to navigate and provides needed information. | SA | A | N | D | SD |

Comments _____

Supporting Student Success

Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

"Engaging families in children's learning has a positive impact on student achievement." (4)

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| Parents frequently volunteer their time at the school. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parent volunteers are commonly involved in student education. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| There is an established group that organizes parent volunteers. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| There are opportunities for all parents to be volunteers at this school. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents and teachers work together to support learning at home. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents are easily able to tell what homework has been assigned. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents are aware of what their child should be doing at each grade level. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents are actively encouraged to help or monitor homework. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents are informed of the state standards and know of ways to reinforce them at home. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school holds conferences with parents to provide guidance and discuss student goals, strengths, areas needing improvement, etc. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school makes good use of the parents' skills and strengths. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school conducts various workshops regarding child/adolescent development, how families can support their child's learning (homework guidance, ESOL or GED classes, college and career guidance), understanding the state education system (state standards, testing), social and mental health, and other needs of families (special education, etc.) | SA | A | N | D | SD |

Comments _____

Speaking Up for Every Child

Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

“The more parents feel that they have the power to influence their children’s future positively, the better their children tend to do in school.” (5)

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| Parents are aware of the school’s discipline policy and know who to contact if/when there is a problem. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents are given the opportunity to talk to the school about placing their child in a program that best suits their learning style and level. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents have the opportunity to talk to the principal if there is a problem with a teacher. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents have the opportunity to talk to the principal if there is a problem with a school policy. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents are given an opportunity at the beginning of the school year to attend an information session about expectations, rules and policies. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school provides the necessary tools (such as fax machine, copier, phone, computer, etc.) to parent committees when needed. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school encourages committees and parent organization(s) to develop partnerships that bring resources to the school for student academic achievement. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school provides information to parents that address ways to improve grades and close the achievement gap. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school has a parent resource center that parents can utilize at various hours throughout the day and evening that provides educational resources to students and parents as well as provides them with other necessary resources to help their child be successful. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents in the school know who the school faculty and staff are and who they need to go to first to address various issues. | SA | A | N | D | SD |

Comments _____

Sharing Power

Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

“Partnership requires sharing power. The starting point for teachers and administrators is to see families as partners and not simply as clients or guests. All partners must have a voice in school affairs.” (6)

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| Parents are actively involved in school policy development. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents serve in functional roles in school improvement plans. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| All parents have a voice in the direction of the school’s development. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Diverse groups of representation of families serve on all school committees and in leadership positions. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents take active leadership roles in the school by leading parent workshops, acting as parent greeters, serving as a “buddy” to new families at the school, etc. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| There is an active parent organization at the school. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The parent organization reaches out to families that are not involved. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents who are not a member of committees are informed when decisions are made. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents are members of the school improvement team. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| School decisions involve the input and desires of the parents. | SA | A | N | D | SD |

Comments _____

Collaborating with the Community

Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services and civic participation.

“Community partners can include businesses, labor unions, hospitals, public housing projects, and social service agencies. Colleges and universities, churches and other faith-based organizations, museums, youth organizations, and service clubs are other good prospects.” (7)

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| The school is a good place for parents to find resources and support from the community. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| This school is clearly connected to the community by making the building available to community organizations to hold various events. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The community supports this school by attending and participating in school events. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school has partnerships with local community organizations and businesses to bring resources to the school that help in student learning. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Parents are able to attend workshops at the school that are provided by community organizations and local businesses that address non academic needs of the family. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school works with families to develop new partnerships with community organizations. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school assists families in identifying community services as well as using those services. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| The school invites different community organizations and local businesses to support extra curricular activities for the students. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| Community organizations offer activities and services to students during non school hours as well as holidays. | SA | A | N | D | SD |

Comments _____

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