



Consider hosting an “Open Forum.” Choose a night or nights where you can be online to discuss topics regarding school and students. Allowing dialogue between parents and yourself. You could send out a note asking them for suggestions on topics, concerns they would like to discuss or questions. Topics they would like to know more about regarding their child’s education, social and emotional skills, peer pressure, etc. Allow time to build relationships and for parents/guardians to build relationships with one another. They want to know that you are listening to their concerns.

Often, we go instantly into solution mode. Leave space for simply listening. When ready, it is ok to ask open-ended questions like “how are you feeling?” or “what can I do to make you feel better?” Listen to their answers and work together in processing their thoughts.

Interactive learning celebrations - Interactive learning celebrations are so much fun for students and families and can be done in person or virtually. Regardless of the format, celebrations give students an opportunity to show off their learning and families a chance to see what students are doing in the classroom. One example of an in-person learning celebration is a living museum. Students create a museum of their work on a topic and then become the docent and tutor families about the topic. A virtual learning celebration could be to invite students and their families into the virtual classroom to hear samples of students’ writing. Regardless of the subject area, giving families a chance to celebrate students’ learning gives students an increased opportunity to show pride in their work.

<https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/bringing-things-into-view-strengthening-family-involvement/>

With the new year, we often have students transitioning from one school to another. Ask upper elementary students to volunteer to be part of a welcoming committee. Hold a “training for these students and discuss what they would want if they were new to a school in the middle of the year. With suggestions from the committee, and practice with the group and teacher guidance students could greet new students and be a part of making these new students feel safe and comfortable in the new school. Ideas for this committee could be write letters to new students welcoming them to the school, talk about the different school specials, playground rules, games, becoming mentors to these students. You might consider asking your families if they would want to be a volunteer/ mentor for new families coming in. To make a phone call welcoming them and asking if they have any specific questions regarding the school.

How about offering Free or reduced admission for senior citizens to school events, such as sporting events and school plays. Honoring seniors is a wonderful way of recognizing and improving a school culture by showing respect and inviting others into our buildings. You could also include free admission tickets to new families to school events as part of your welcome package for new families.