

Family Friendly School Walkthrough Checklist

Is Your School Family Friendly?

Research shows that when schools and families work together to support the education of a child, not only does the student perform better in school, but all throughout life! The best way to nurture a strong relationship between school and family is to create a friendly and welcoming school environment.

What is the purpose of a Family Friendly School Walkthrough Checklist¹?

The checklist is designed to allow schools to assess their “family friendly” practices. This tool gives school leaders the opportunity to evaluate how inviting and “customer friendly” their school is to families and the community. It can also help to point out various areas that may have been previously overlooked and can be easily addressed.

Walkthrough Components

Three areas will be evaluated during the walkthrough:

- A. Welcoming Environment
- B. Policies and Practices to Engage Families in Student Achievement
- C. Home-School Communication

Suggested Walkthrough Guidelines

- Select a team leader to coordinate the walkthrough.
- Choose 6-9 people to complete the checklist. The team should include district leaders, school administrators, parents/family members, and school faculty members (teacher, secretary, counselor, etc.). Others may include bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and community leaders. Each team member can complete the walkthrough separately or as a team, but each person must complete their own checklist.
- After all parties have completed the walkthrough, the team leader will collect the checklists and schedule a meeting to discuss the final scores and how to address areas that need improvement.

School: _____ Date of Walkthrough: _____ Team Leader: _____

Observer's Name: _____

Observer's Role (check one): Parent ___ Community Member ___ School Leader ___ School Faculty ___ Other: _____

¹ Adapted from New Jersey State PIRC Family Friendly Schools Checklist

Using the Rating Scale

1. Use the rating scale below to score the items under each area and provide comments and suggestions in the designated section.
2. Add your scores at the end of each area section and calculate the total score at the end of the checklist.
3. Please return your completed checklist to your team leader and plan to attend a brief meeting to discuss and address the findings.

Rating Scale:

- 1= No Evidence**
- 2= Some Evidence, Needs Improvement**
- 3= Meets Minimum Standards, Could Enhance Area**
- 4= Exceeds Standards**

| Area being rated: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Comments/Suggestions: |
|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| A. Welcoming Environment | | | | | |
| 1. Visible signs direct families and visitors to the parking area. | | | | | |
| 2. The front entrance can be easily identified and the school's entryway is inviting with a sign/banner/bulletin board welcoming families and visitors. | | | | | |
| 3. There are signs by the school entrance that clearly guide or show visitors to the main office. Signs are translated into the languages represented in the school community. | | | | | |
| 4. The school creates displays of student achievement, student work/art, and school news which are visible when entering the school. | | | | | |
| 5. The school has established standards for welcoming behavior that apply to all staff including, office staff, bus drivers, security, custodians, cafeteria staff, etc. | | | | | |
| 6. A mission statement and/or policy on family engagement is posted in the languages of the families, and guides them to more information about opportunities to get involved with school programs. | | | | | |
| 7. The office staff immediately recognizes visitors with a smile, answers the phones politely, and easily provides adequate information in the languages of families. | | | | | |

| Area being rated: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Comments/Suggestions: |
|--|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| 8. There is comfortable seating and relevant reading material in the office area for visitors who need to wait (parent handbook, parenting magazines and books, student published work, etc.). | | | | | |
| 9. The school has volunteers or staff to act as parent mentors who provide tours, translations, guidance and support to newly enrolled families. | | | | | |
| 10. There are signs located outside each classroom door noting grade level/course title, and teacher's name. | | | | | |
| 12. Student work is displayed throughout the school. The work also includes a description of the purpose and related academic standards. | | | | | |
| 13. A Family Center or Family Resource Room is located in an easily accessible area of the school and is designed as a gathering place where families, school staff, students, and community members are welcomed and supported. It supports special events and features like clothing banks, lending libraries, health fairs, parenting workshops, etc. It allows families to have access to books, educational materials, and other resources. | | | | | |
| 14. The school is clean and well kept, including classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, and all other areas. | | | | | |
| B. Policies and Practices to Engage Families in Student Achievement | | | | | |
| 1. The school has a Family Engagement Committee or Team who works to ensure that programs are carefully planned, evaluated, and celebrated. | | | | | |
| 2. The school includes parents and family members from all backgrounds on the school planning/school improvement team. | | | | | |
| 3. The school has and shares a school-level family engagement policy developed by school staff and families (required by Title I). | | | | | |
| 4. The school has and shares a school-parent compact that is tailored to the school and community. Parents and families were involved in the development of the compact (required by Title I). | | | | | |

| Area being rated: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Comments/Suggestions: |
|--|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| 5. Professional development for all staff includes annual trainings/workshops on family engagement and working with diverse families. | | | | | |
| 6. The school has a parent coordinator or home-school liaison that helps connect all families with the school community. | | | | | |
| 7. The school holds events early in the year to welcome families, make introductions, and share how families can be involved. | | | | | |
| 8. The school offers workshops and trainings for families to help them understand the academic standards, student progress, classroom curriculum, and how they can help their children at home. | | | | | |
| 9. The school actively recruits and welcomes new parents/guardians from all backgrounds for school committees such as the PTA/PTO. | | | | | |
| 10. The parent handbook with school policies, school calendar and other information are provided to the parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year in a format that is easily understood. | | | | | |
| 11. Families are informed of the process to schedule meetings with teachers or school staff. | | | | | |

Policies and Practices Total Score: _____

Effective practices being used and ideas for improvement:

| Area being rated: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Comments/Suggestions: |
|--|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| C. Home-School Communication | | | | | |
| 1. The school establishes a tone of respect for all families, regardless of culture, ethnicity, language or disability. | | | | | |
| 2. The school has a system in place for ongoing assessment and feedback from parents regarding the school climate | | | | | |
| 3. The school informs families of policies, events, & opportunities using a variety of media – e.g., newsletters, flyers, meetings, volunteer phone tree, etc. | | | | | |
| 4. The school maintains an up-to-date website which includes useful information and learning activities for all grade levels. | | | | | |
| 5. Written materials are translated into other languages according to the school community's demographic make-up. | | | | | |
| 6. Parents are surveyed regarding their interests, talents, and availability to volunteer. | | | | | |
| 7. Parent-teacher conferences are carefully planned and accommodate families' schedules and transportation needs. | | | | | |
| 8. The school offers a variety of opportunities for families and teachers to meet, get to know each other, and build relationships such as class meetings, home visits, open house, classroom observations, parent-teacher conferences, etc. | | | | | |
| 9. Homework is carefully planned and managed to include families and ensure that the purposes and benefits of the homework are clear. | | | | | |
| <p>Home-School Communication Total Score: _____</p> <p>Effective practices being used and ideas for improvement:</p> | | | | | |

Total Score (combine all three scores): _____

Scoring Guide for Each Section:

- 0-9 = Not so family friendly
- 10-18 = Slightly family friendly
- 19-27 = Family friendly
- 28-36 = Five star family friendly

Scoring Guide for Overall Walkthrough:

- 0-36 = Not so family friendly
- 37-72 = Slightly family friendly
- 73-108 = Family friendly
- 109-144 = Five star family friendly

Next Steps and Questions to Consider (for school leaders and personnel):

It is suggested that all areas that were scored with a 1 or 2 should be addressed promptly according to priority. Areas scored with a 3 should be discussed and plans for enhancements are encouraged.

- 1. In what sections (A, B, or C) does the school need the most improvement?**

- 2. What steps will your school take to make appropriate improvements?**

- 3. When do you plan to implement the improvements and who will be responsible?**

