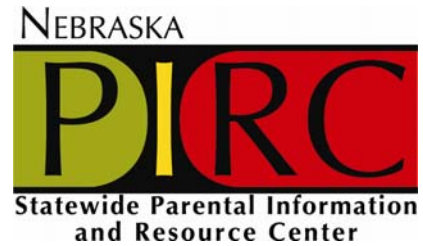


# Information Brief on Building Family-Centered Practices in After School

Information from this brief was synthesized from “Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After School” available at [www.hfrp.org](http://www.hfrp.org).



## Strategy 1: Support Families

### How to Support Families

- Focus on families’ assets
- Consider the concerns and needs of the families and children served
- Solicit family input

### Easy Things You Can Do to Support Families

- Have a parent suggestion box
- Conduct formal and informal surveys about the program on a regular basis
- Host parent forums or discussion groups that allow parents to meet one another and discuss their concerns about child rearing, parenting adolescents, supporting homework, and other family matters
- Strike up conversations with parents that focus on them. Give them time to talk about themselves instead of their children.
- Work with the children to plan and host a family appreciation event

## Strategy 2: Communicate and Build Trusting Relationships

### How to Communicate and Build Trusting Relationships

- Communicate frequently and in positive ways
- Be there for families (Check out “Be There” Nebraska Campaign at <http://www.nebr-schoolboards.org/NASBmain/index.asp?area=bethere&pid=index.html&ver=win>)
- Provide leadership opportunities for families

### Easy Things You Can Do to Communicate and Build Trusting Relationships

- Make a regular effort to share positive news with each parent about their child
- Welcome parents. Greet them in the front of the room or building when they arrive. Always call parents by name and make a point of smiling
- Offer informal social events or activities that are fun, such as craft nights, potluck dinners, and weekend trips to museums, theaters, and other cultural institutions
- Conduct periodic family orientations to familiarize new families with the program. Ask current program family members to help you present the materials

### Strategy 3: Hire and Develop Family-Focused Staff

#### How to Hire and Develop a Family-Focused Staff

- Designate a staff member with family engagement responsibility
- Hire staff with family engagement experience
- Hire staff who share parents' experiences and backgrounds
- Foster professional development

#### Easy Things You Can Do to Develop a Family-Focused Staff

- When interviewing potential staff, consider candidates' experiences working with families and ask them how after school programs can engage families
- Invite a family engagement expert from a local K-12 school, university, family support agency, or guidance center to speak to staff
- Offer programs, such as exercise classes, first aid courses, and art workshops, for both parents and staff

### Strategy 4: Build Linkages Across Individuals and Organizations

#### How to Link with Individuals and Organizations

- Collaborate with local organizations
- Act as a liaison between families and schools
- Help parents develop advocacy skills

#### Easy Things You Can Do to Build Linkages Across Individuals and Organizations

- Encourage parent leadership by inviting parents to help you locate resources in the community to support program activities, including local community colleges and universities, field trip sites, philanthropic organizations, or support services for families
- Ask a classroom teacher to talk to parents about grade-level expectations and developmentally appropriate activities for children in different subject areas
- Invite a family advocate to offer workshops on how parents can obtain the services their children need and how they can develop relationships with schools, strategies for supporting ACT or SAT testing and college planning, etc.
- Offer to attend parent-teacher conferences with families who feel that they need support in discussing their concerns and asking teachers questions

**Nebraska State Parental Information & Resource Center: Technical Assistance and Leadership Center for Parent Involvement**  
[www.NebraskaPIRC.org](http://www.NebraskaPIRC.org)