

DOINGWHATWORKS



Video

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Creating Strong Relationships Through Parent Workshops

P.S. 24, New York • May 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Collaborative Relationships

Highlights

- The parent coordinator of P.S. 24 acts as a liaison between parents and school staff, creating strong relationships so families come to view the school as a resource.
- Family workshops help parents in many aspects, such as learning English, mediating conflicts together, improving their English, encouraging healthy eating, and assisting their children academically.
- Trust between families and school staff is essential to making parents feel welcome and safe when sharing concerns and problems.

About the Site

P.S. 24

Brooklyn, NY

Demographics

91% Hispanic

3% Asian

3% Black

3% White

94% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

43% English Language Learners

P.S. 24 has several behavior management practices in place to maintain a safe, caring, and positive learning environment for students. Key elements of the schoolwide approach include:

- Teaching students to identify and manage their emotions,
- Social skills training including effective communication and conflict resolution skills,
- Designing and implementing “Peace Education,” a process for conflict resolution facilitated by peers,
- Helping students to develop cultural awareness through student-led Diversity Panel discussions, and
- Collaborating with families and community service organizations to support social-emotional learning.

Full Transcript

My name is Tamara Estrella, and I am the Parent Coordinator here at P.S. 24 in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. As parent coordinator here at P.S. 24, there’s really a lot that goes into my work here. One of the more important things that I do is that I act as the liaison between the parents and the staff of the school. And I say the staff because it’s not only with the teachers but also with the administration, as well as with the guidance counselor and the school psychologist. So, anything that a parent comes to me with—whether it’s a bit of information that they need about a meeting, whether it’s a resource they need for their child, a resource they need for themselves—I act as the person who will get them that information and find them that resource, whether it’s here in the school or within our community.

Some of the other things that go into my work here are conducting workshops and also organizing workshops, working with community-based organizations here, and bringing in the resources that parents need. Whether it’s ESL classes, which we do have for parents, or workshops around health issues that are affecting them or their children, such as childhood obesity, which is something that’s affecting our community, asthma, diabetes, domestic violence, these are all issues that I would find someone, some professional from a community-based organization, to come in and give all of that information to a parent and help them not just in that way but then also with their child’s education.

There would be many purposes to the parent workshop. Definitely, some of the workshops that we offer are educational based. So, let’s say a state exam is coming up—math state exam, ELA, which is the English Language Arts exam—what I would do is I would get some professionals actually in our school, find our literacy coach, our math coach, to offer maybe a series of workshops for parents so that they can not only understand the exam but maybe give parents some tools so they can help their children at home to practice

for the exam.

Some of the other workshops that we have offered as well, working in conjunction with our community-based organization, which is here and runs our after-school program as well, is a series of Peace in the Family workshops because that's also a very important component for us. We don't want to just focus on the education of the child in terms of books and reading and math and numbers and the diet of the child. We also want to focus on the social-emotional health of a child and of their family, and so what we do in this series of workshops is we introduce all of the themes that we are teaching to the children here in school: how to mediate a conflict, how to be a good listener, how to do what we call "I Messages" where, "I feel this way when you..." things like that. And so we teach parents to do that. And after the first couple of workshops, we then invite their children to come in, and we watch them mediate a conflict that they're having.

The workshops that we conduct here at our school are very informal, all of them. We want parents to feel as welcome and as comfortable here at the school as possible. There are no prerequisites. There are no, "You have to sign in before the date." No. We give you the date. We give you all the information, and we want you to come. We definitely focus on the informality of it because we do want parents to feel comfortable. Trust is a key component in parents feeling welcome in our school, welcome in sharing, feeling safe in sharing any issues that may be going on. And so, that trust piece is a very big component, and so we don't like to try to make anything too formal. We have several different people who facilitate workshops. We definitely have in-school staff like our literacy coach, our math coach, our dual language coordinator, the assistant principal. These are all people who can facilitate and do facilitate workshops with parents. But we also have our community-based organizations who offer their professionals to give workshops.

Parent response has been really great. Year after year, we're finding that parents are getting more and more involved, and I think it's because—actually, no, I know it's because they're beginning to view the school as a resource not just for their children but also for themselves. We've been able to develop that basic level of trust with them. They know we want the best for their kids. We want the best for them, and they view us as a resource.