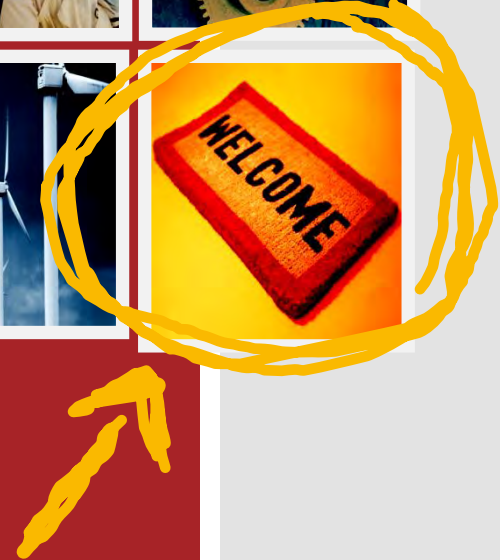


# Creating the Welcoming Environment

Webinar Series from ISBE's Draft Family Engagement Framework Guide



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# Why are We Here Today?

Participants will discover the plethora of innovative strategies, tools and web based resources available by ISBE through the Family Engagement Tool and Illinoisparents.org website to support implementation of building a welcoming and supportive environment.



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# Our Presenters

## Academic Development Institute



**Bernadette  
Anderson**

Director of  
Institutional  
Advancement

## Illinois State Board of Education



**Sarah Ogeto**

Principal  
Consultant



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# How to Participate in Today's Webinar

Questions:

The presenter will respond to your questions during the presentation at identified times.

Participation instructions:

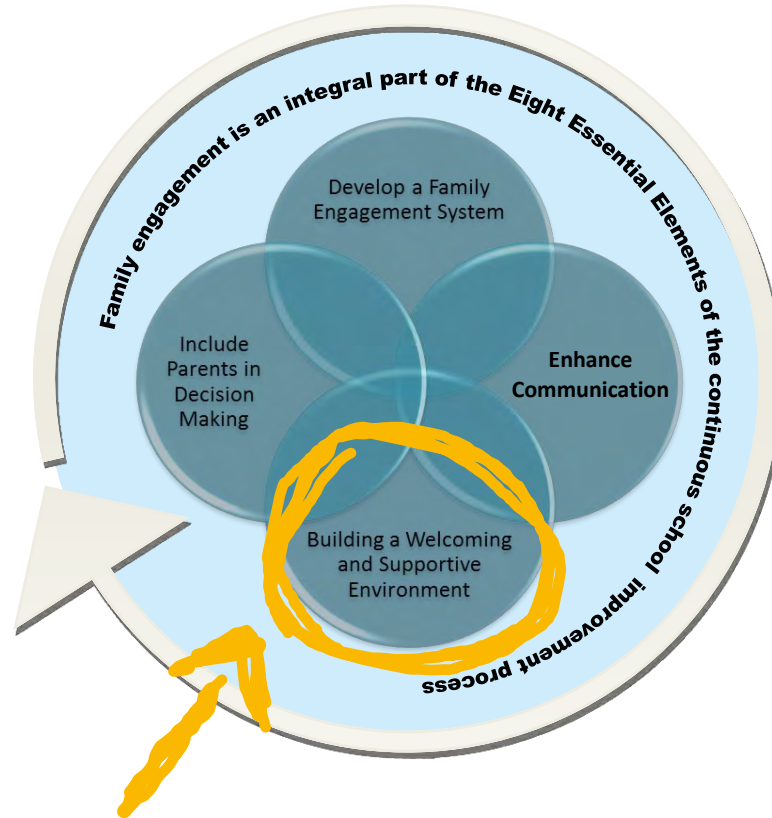
Type your question/comments into the Question Box



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# ISBE Family Engagement Framework Guide Overview



- Districts and schools partner with families
- Families are engaged on a regular basis and are seen across the 8 Essential Elements
- When critical stakeholders partner, educational systems are stronger and more effective



# Evidence-Based Practice: The Research Review

## Research Review: Building a Welcoming Environment

Although many districts and schools recognize the importance of family engagement in supporting the learning and healthy development of students, many struggle with how to engage families. The saying "if you build it, they will come" does not ring true for many family engagement activities and it is not because parents do not care about their children's education (Mapp, 2003; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Quirocho & Daoud, 2006).

So, why do families become engaged? One contributing factor is a welcoming and supportive environment. According to research by Hoover-Dempsey, et al. (2005), a welcoming environment is one of the most influential indicators of family engagement. Schools that cultivate relational trust reach out to families, respond to family and student needs, and give attention to cultural-sensitivity (all components of a welcoming and supportive environment) to increase family engagement (Bryk, et al., 2010; Epstein, et al., 2001).

### Relational Trust

Researchers have found that cultivating relational trust is essential to building a welcoming and supportive environment. In addition, relational trust is found to be a key factor in parents, parents, and community members' efforts at building the environment. When relational trust is present and supported, families feel safe to try new practices (Bryk, et al., 2010). A study of over 400 elementary schools in Chicago found that relational trust can be established through communication, personal regard for others, and the fulfillment of core role responsibilities and behaviors were present in the environment. Trust: A person has to say and do what they say and account in subsequent actions; the formal and informal communication contract; and the fulfillment of core role responsibilities; and

### Outreach

Another key motivator to parents' decisions to become involved is receiving invitations from teachers. Epstein and colleagues (Epstein, & Van Voorhis, 2001, Dauber & Epstein, 1993, Kohl, et al., 2002) found that teacher attitudes about parents and teacher invitations to parents had a significant impact on parents' decisions to become involved, especially for parents from lower-socio-economic backgrounds and families.

When relational trust is present and school personnel feel supported, they feel safe to try new practices and reach out to parents (Bryk, et al., 2010).

### Responsiveness

Parents' perceptions related to the time, energy, skills, and knowledge necessary to support their child's learning have significant influence on parents' decisions to become involved. Socio-economic backgrounds and family cultures and circumstances also play a role in involvement. Families experiencing circumstances in which resources are scarce, family values and priorities differ from the school system, and knowledge of school expectations and policies is limited face additional barriers to involvement.



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# Family Engagement Standards of Effective Practice

## Principle 2: Build a Welcoming Environment



District and school personnel foster a welcoming environment for families that is responsive to student and family needs.

### Standards:

- 2A. District and school personnel, families, and community members **acknowledge a shared responsibility** for the academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral development of youth.
- 2B. District and school personnel develop **relational trust** with families and community members.
  - 2B.1. District and school personnel listen to family and community members and respect their opinions.
  - 2B.2. District and school personnel show personal regard for their students, their families and the community.
  - 2B.4. District and school personnel have the knowledge, skill, and capacity to follow through on their commitments.
  - 2B.5. District and school personnel demonstrate integrity by being transparent, acting in an ethical manner, and following through on commitments.
- 2C. District and school personnel **reach out to families** to support student learning and healthy development.
- 2D. District and school personnel are **responsive to student and family needs**.
  - 2D.1. District and school personnel learn about the children and families in the community.
  - 2D.2. District and school personnel effectively engage parents from diverse backgrounds.
  - 2D.3. District and school personnel utilize a strength-based approach when responding to student and family needs.
- 2E. District and school personnel **share student accomplishments** with his/her family.

### Notes

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# What Do We Mean by Creating a Welcoming and Supportive Environment?



District and school personnel foster a welcoming environment for families that is responsive to student and family needs.

Stakeholders acknowledge a **shared responsibility** for student achievement and healthy development

District and school personnel are **responsive to student and family needs**

District and school personnel develop **relational trust** with families and community members.

District and school personnel **reach out to families** to support student learning and healthy development.

District and school personnel **share student accomplishments** with his/her family.



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# Alignment with the Continuous School Improvement Process



We engage families as partners in all aspects  
of building effective schools



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## Family Engagement Tool

### Purpose

The Family Engagement Tool guides a school-based team through an inventory and self-assessment of parent involvement policies and practices.

A Tool to  
Assess and  
Plan



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A Tool to  
Assess and  
Plan

## Time Commitment

The time investment necessary to complete the analysis process is approximately 5 to 6 hours.



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# Additional Resources

## Resource Menu

[Home](#)[Shared Leadership](#)[Goals and Roles](#)[Communication](#)[Education](#)[Connection](#)[Additional Resources](#)

### Connection...

Face-to-face association; forming common understanding; engaging in common experiences

#### Connections at School

- [Parent Rooms](#)—Often equipped with books, parenting materials, and information on how to support learning beyond the classroom hours, parent rooms can also provide space for parent workshops and a place where parent groups can meet. There are plenty of ideas to consider in this section when establishing a parent room at your school.



#### Parent Room

- [Open House](#)—Open house is the perfect opportunity to convey to parents that success in school depends largely on what goes on at home. Use our tips and tools to help you get these important learning conversations started with families.



#### Open House

- [Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences](#)—A Parent-Teacher-Student Conference is the best opportunity to get all the invested parties to the table joined in one conversation about student progress. These conferences can be very effective if a few principles are followed. Use these tips and ideas to organize your conferences and help to move conversations toward unified strategies centered on unified goals.

- [Family Nights](#)—Common experiences work to strengthen relationships. When families and schools come together while reinforcing one or more of the school community's goals, the experience becomes especially valuable. There are plenty of ideas and tips in this section to help your school organize family nights with a focus on your school's goals.



#### Family-School Nights

- [Creating a Welcoming Place with Welcoming Place Walk-Through and Checklist](#)—The school must be a safe and orderly environment where learning can take place. Procedures should be established and other elements in place that make a visit to the school a pleasant experience for families and other visitors while keeping students safe. Our tips and ideas will give you plenty to consider in creating a Welcoming Place at your school.



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# A Web of Resources



Starting Friday, April 25 at 5:00 p.m. CT until Sunday, April 27 at 10:00 p.m. this website will be unavailable due to upgrades by our Cloud service provider. We apologize for any inconvenience.

**Illinois Parents** is the connecting link to resources for Illinois families on raising and educating their children and a menu of resources for schools in their work with families.

Here you will discover educational resources, local programs, organizations, and events that provide parenting information and services for Illinois families.

Share [IllinoisParents.org](http://IllinoisParents.org) at your next parent meeting or event ([PowerPoint](#))

**NEW! Illinois Family Engagement Framework**

**Register for ISBE Webinar**

**FET Registration**

**FET Login**

**Spotlight Resources**

**FACE Handbook**

**Ask a Parenting Question**

## Organizations Serving Illinois Families

**jccchicago**

Jewish Community Centers of Chicago-Skokie  
Chicago, IL

We provide full day care, preschool, kindergarten, and after school recreation. The JCC serves families and children ages two months through grade school. We offer parenting information, recreation, day camps, and family activities. We have more things to learn, more ways to stay fit, more connections to make to get more out of life. Everyone is welcome. Bring the whole family.  
**Phone: (847) 763-3500**



University of Illinois Extension- Calhoun, Cass, Greene, Morgan, and Scott Counties  
Jacksonville, IL

Our program areas include: 4-H and Youth; Agriculture and Natural Resources; Children, Families, and Seniors; Horticulture and Environment; Just for Kids; Just for Teachers; Nutrition and Health; Money Management and Consumer Economics; Community and Economic Development; and Schools Online. Ages served include: adults, children birth to 5 years old early care and education, elementary, middle, and high school students.  
**Phone: (217) 243-7424**



Heartlinks Grief Center  
Belleville, IL

Heartlinks is a place of hope providing a variety of services to children, teens, families, and adults who are trying to manage the serious illness or death of someone they love. We offer support groups for families and adult individuals, counseling services, trauma services, and grief services to schools and communities in six counties in southwestern Illinois.  
**Phone: (618) 684-3143**

Provided by Illinois State Board of Education in partnership with Academic Development Institute and Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative at UIUC



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# A Welcoming Place

A safe place for students and  
teachers and

An orderly place where learning can  
happen.



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# Characteristics of a Welcoming Place

## Characteristics:

1. The school telephones are answered by staff who are pleasant, cheerful, and helpful.
2. All staff- including teachers, teachers' aides, clerks, custodians, cooks and others-greet visitors in the hallway in a pleasant helpful manner, to solicit their needs, and to direct them to the office.
3. Office staff greet visitors promptly, cheerfully and helpfully.
4. There are written procedures regarding visits by parents to their children's classroom.



# Characteristics of a Welcoming Place

## Characteristics continued:

5. The signs that greet visitors outside the door and in the hallways are friendly while also being clear about the expectation that visitors register in the office.
6. The school provides special attention to welcome families that are new to the school.
7. The school has clear expectations of all school staff that they address students and parents respectfully.
8. The school makes every effort to minimize interruptions in the classrooms, including the frequency of announcements.





# Creating a Welcoming Place

## Training for Support Staff:

### Procedures 101

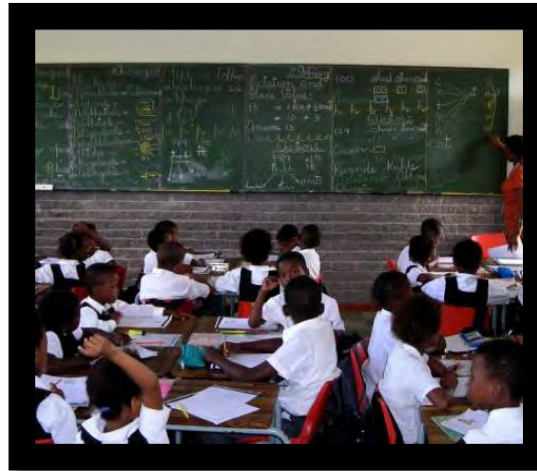
- Discuss the importance of parents in the work of the school.
- Discuss friendly and helpful ways to answer the telephone.
- Discuss greeting visitors, listening to them, and offering help.



# Creating a Welcoming Place

## Ask the following questions:

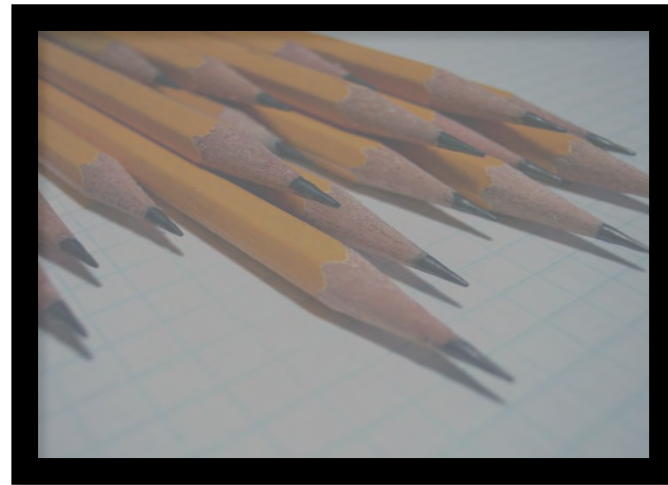
1. Is advance notice required? If so, how much in advance? Whom does the parent call to request a visit? Where does the visitor first report when entering the school?
2. How is the teacher notified?
3. What is the role of the parent when visiting? Where is the parent to sit? How much is the visitor to be involved?
4. What is the role of the teacher?



# Classroom Visit Guidelines

## Procedures include:

- A provision that advance permission is requested,
- Procedures to notify the teacher,
- A friendly hand-out for visiting parents to explain their role in the classroom-where they should sit and what the teacher will expect them to do, and
- Guidelines for teachers to greet parents warmly and explain to them what is going on in the classroom.



# Classroom Visit Guidelines

## Classroom Visit Procedures Worksheet

Review the current procedures for parents visiting the classroom using the rubric below.

If the school has no procedures in writing, use the rubric as a resource to develop procedures.

Elements of Classroom Visit Procedures	Score	Criteria for Scoring The classroom visit procedures...
Score Guide: 0 = No evidence of criterion being met, 1 = Evidence that criterion is met		
1. Discusses the importance of parents in their children's learning.		Includes a statement of the importance of parents in their children's learning and the school's encouragement of parent participation.
2. Written in friendly and welcoming language		Is written with parents as the intended audience, in language that is friendly, welcoming, and translated into the major languages spoken by the families in the school.
3. Either states that no advance notice is required or specifies how much advance notice is required.		Explains the school's procedures for scheduling and advance notice for classroom visits.
4. Tells the parent who to call to set up a visit.		Provides the name, position, a telephone number, and email to call/contact to schedule a visit.
5. Tells where the visitor first reports when entering the school.		Gives directions for where the office is located and check in procedures.
6. States how the teacher will be notified of a visit.		Explains how the teacher is notified that a visit has been scheduled or, when advance notice is not required, how the teacher will be informed that the parent is in the office and will soon be



# Classroom Visit Guidelines



## Resources for Classroom Visits

The following information is from *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*, by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (p. 85 & 90).

Classroom visits give parents a front-row seat on what happens at school. Parents may know something about standards, but they probably don't know what a standards-based classroom looks like. How do teachers structure lessons so that students do research, solve real-world problems, and pursue their own interests? What are the critical thinking skills and how do teachers develop them?

Start the school year with "Check Out the Classroom" days and encourage families to visit throughout the year. For families who can't come during the day, demonstrate lessons at curriculum nights, book fairs, Saturday academies, and other family events. In middle and high schools, parents can "shadow" their students, following them from class to class during a morning or afternoon.

### *Preparing Parents to Work in the Classroom*

Although volunteering in the classroom is a good way to see what students are learning, many parents don't feel confident taking on that task. Mary Lou Amato, a principal in Los Angeles, has this advice: "We had a big push to get parents involved in the classrooms and it didn't work. There were language issues, and parents felt they lacked content knowledge. Then parents came up with an interesting idea: why can't we work in the parent center to support the teachers? This was a big stepping stone to getting parents into the classrooms. The Open Court reading program has take-home books and other things that need to be put together. Parents were proud to do that and bring them to the teacher. They started reading things. They felt productive and that they were doing something important. Then they were ready to go into the classroom."

By the time students are in middle and high school, many of their mothers are working full time. Instead of volunteering in the classrooms during the day, parents can run a student study center after school. Teachers can help parents develop the program and learning materials such as prac-



# A Welcoming Place Plan

## The plan offers:

1. A training session for our support staff.
2. A review of our “safe and friendly school” procedures with teachers and parents.
3. A walkthrough, from the parking lot through halls, offices, and classrooms to note signs, decorations, displays of student work, welcoming appearance, and direction.
4. A way to systematically ask parents for feedback on how welcome they feel in the school and ask them for suggestions.
5. Procedures about classroom visits for teachers and parents.
6. A welcome letter for parents who visits classrooms.
7. Ways to welcome families that are new to our school.

<http://www.indistar.org/VideoPlayer/Videos.aspx?VideoGroupID=27>



# Welcoming Place Action Plan

## resources

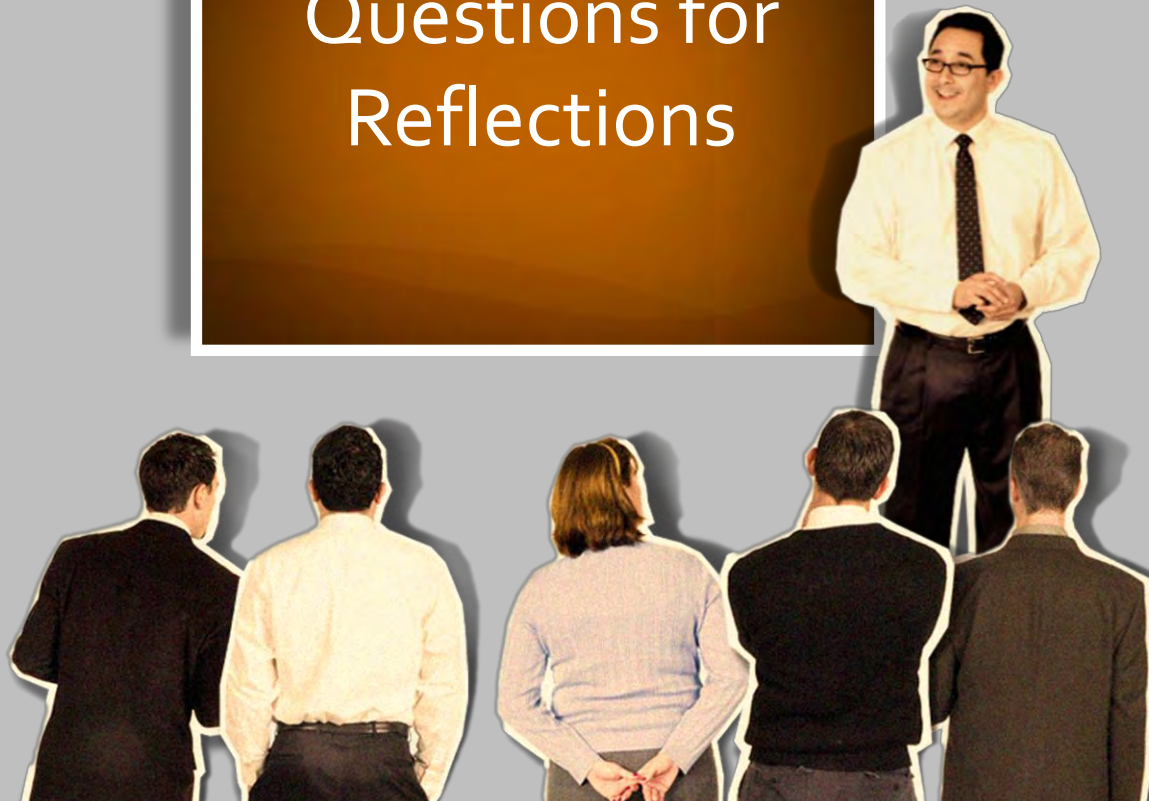
### Welcoming Place Action Plan Worksheet

After reviewing the Welcoming Place Walk-Through Report and Next Steps and Priorities, develop a 3-month plan to address the areas in need of improvement.

Welcoming Place Action Plan		
	Target Date	Person Responsible for Monitoring Progress and Reporting Back to SCC:
Checklist item in need of improvement:		
Task 1:		
Task 2:		
Task 3:		
Checklist item in need of improvement:		
Task 1:		
Task 2:		
Task 3:		
Checklist item in need of improvement:		
Task 1:		
Task 2:		
Task 3:		
Checklist item in need of improvement:		
Task 1:		
Task 2:		
Task 3:		
Checklist item in need of improvement:		
Task 1:		
Task 2:		
Task 3:		



# Questions for Reflections





# Next Steps: What Will You Do?



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**Thank you for participating!**

We can help you to build strong  
school communities  
within the schools you serve.

All webinar sessions are recorded and posted  
to the ***Tool Box*** page at ***IllinoisParents.org***.



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