

Strategic Learning Initiatives: Parent and Family Engagement

SLI's Parent/Family Engagement Program will focus on maintaining high academic expectations for students, building school, family, and community partnerships, and strengthening the connection between parents and caregivers through interactive workshops. This approach supports the idea that parents and caregivers are a child's first teachers.

SLI will focus on teaching and coaching parents on how they can become more involved in and more supportive of their children's learning. The SLI model encourages parents to maintain high academic expectations for students and to understand that home is a place of learning, and that parents have a vital role in helping their children to become better learners. The Parent Engagement Program equips and coaches parents and caregivers with knowledge, strategies, and tools that enable them to perform effectively in assisting their children and others.

Parents/families will be recruited into the program by a variety of methods, including sending flyers home with students, advertising the workshops within the entire school via posters, personal direct invitations to parents/caregivers, and phone calls. Participation rates tend to be higher when schools participate in the program voluntarily. In addition, the participation rate is higher when school principals and the rest of the school community are committed to the workshop program. SLI has successfully offered incentives to parents directly (e.g., "bring in another parent to receive a free gift") through promotions conducted within the school to build excitement among parents and caregivers and to increase the all-important and very positive word-of-mouth that this program generates.

A cornerstone of SLI's work in parent/caregiver engagement is that its workshops are interactive, offer easily applied and practical education, and are very hands-on. SLI offers a series of annual participatory hands-on educational workshops for parents/families, teaching them strategies and methods they can use at home with their children to develop students' understanding of concepts and skills. To maintain high expectations for students, parents will be encouraged and coached on how to model learning as a continuous process. This is crucial in fostering a lifelong love of learning in their children. With topics ranging from reading and math games and nurturing positive self-esteem to highly effective strategies for teens, the SLI workshops give parents useful and effective tools that strengthen learning for the whole family. These tools will help to build leaders in the home and community, and deepen the relationship between parent and child. SLI also will build leaders in the schools by training parents to lead the workshops and by coordinating ongoing parent involvement.

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