



Welcome

To

Family Friendly Schools

Presented by the

**Parent Involvement Council
Washoe County School District**

This Family Friendly Schools Guide is also posted on the district website at www.washoe.k12.nv.us under the Parents section

For more information, please contact
D'Lisa Crain, WCSD Parent Involvement Coordinator
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Family Friendly Schools WCSD PARENT INVOLVEMENT COUNCIL

Dear School Principal, Staff Members, and Parent Leaders,

The Family Friendly Schools Guide has been developed by the WCSD Parent Involvement Council to help schools create Family Friendly Schools. This Guide is your first tool in developing a Family Friendly School. First launched in the 2005-2006 school year, the Guide enters a second year and the Parent Involvement Council looks forward to more schools joining the effort to develop Family Friendly Schools. The Family Friendly Schools Guide is also available in English and in Spanish on the district website in the Parents section.

Why Family Friendly? The positive relationship between family involvement and student academic achievement provides strong incentive to strengthen the family-school partnership. Family Friendly Schools engage families and build that partnership. Family Friendly Schools communicate "Welcome!" to students and families in an environment that is friendly, inviting, and culturally sensitive.

The Family Friendly Schools Guide is designed to be used by a Family Friendly School Team at each school site over the course of the school year. The Guide can be included as a component of your school's Site Improvement Plan. The Guide will help your school identify strengths as well as target areas, and help your school develop goals for improving parent involvement.

Recognizing the importance of parent involvement in student success, the WCSD adopted a Parent Involvement Initiative Strategic Plan which can be viewed on the district website in the Parents section. The Family Friendly Schools Guide integrates the six standards identified in this policy with additional components which include the physical environment, school climate, and sensitivity to cultural diversity. Consistent with the district's policy, "the term 'parent' refers to any caregiver/guardian who assumes responsibility for nurturing and caring for their children."

We hope that your school will find that using the Family Friendly Schools Guide will be a positive, enjoyable, and useful experience. Your leadership in this effort is essential and greatly valued. We will contact you during the school year to collect your feedback on the process and to learn how the Guide has helped your school.

Thank you for your commitment to creating and maintaining a Family Friendly School!

Family Friendly Schools Committee

For information please contact
D'Lisa Crain, WCSD Parent Involvement Coordinator
(775) 353-5533 – dcrain@washoe.k12.nv.us



“How To” Create a Family Friendly School Using the Guide

THE GUIDE <i>IS</i> INTENDED TO:	THE GUIDE <i>IS NOT</i> INTENDED TO:
Be used by your school's Family Friendly School Team to guide discussion, action plans, and evaluation.	Be used as a survey for all school parents to complete individually.
Be used over the course of the school year.	Be filled out at only one point in time.
Encourage dialog and collaboration among administrators, faculty, support staff, parents, students, and community representatives.	Be completed by any single person or single group (such as staff only).
Be used as a tool to help your school improve parent involvement in a positive, enjoyable, collaborative process.	Be a burdensome task.

Steps for Success!

STEP 1: START-UP
<p>Assemble your Family Friendly School Team Recommended composition: at least one representative each from administration, faculty, and support staff, with an equal number of parents, and possibly student and/or community representatives.</p> <p>Pre-Assessment Prior to the first Team meeting, distribute a copy of the Guide to each Team member to complete individually in order to bring his/her ideas to the first Team meeting.</p> <p>First Team meeting Review and discuss ideas. Develop goals, a timeline, and meeting schedule.</p>
STEP 2: IMPLEMENTATION
<p>Develop an Action Plan. Action plan can be incorporated into your school's Site Improvement Plan.</p> <p>Work on Action Plan/Site Improvement Plan. Assign duties and work on implementation. Report progress at Team meetings.</p>
STEP 3: EVALUATION
<p>Completion of End-of-Year Self-Assessment. Review accomplishments of the year and complete the Guide. Discuss possible goals for the upcoming school year.</p>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Physical Environment.....	1
Outside	
Front Entrance/Lobby	
Office	
Interior	
School Climate	3
Visitors	
Customer Service	
School Community	
School Communication	5
General	
Beginning of the Year	
Ongoing	
Personal Communication	6
Personal Contact	
Telephone	
E-mail	
Parent Questions	
General	
Parent Support	8
Outreach	
Parent Learning Opportunities	
Student Learning	
Volunteering	
Decision-Making	
Parent, School and Community Collaboration	
School Score and Comments.....	11
Resources	12
District Resources	
Websites	
Acknowledgments	16

1. Physical Environment

The school campus provides easy access, feels inviting, and reflects the school community.

Directions: Rate your school on a scale of 1 to 5:

1 = Not Yet Present, 2 = Below Average, 3 = Average, 4 = Above Average, 5 = Excellent

Outside

1 2 3 4 5

Families can easily identify the main entrance of the building, by using signs, a building map, foot prints on the ground, and other indicators.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school is handicap accessible.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school exterior is clean and in the best condition possible, including landscaping and courtyards.

Front Entrance/Lobby

1 2 3 4 5

"Welcome to our School" signs clearly direct visitors to the main office.

1 2 3 4 5

Attractive, colorful displays of student achievement, student work and art, and school news are visible when entering our school.

Office

1 2 3 4 5

Our school office arrangement is planned to feel open and inviting, and to make it easy for families to know which staff member to approach with questions.

1 2 3 4 5

Our office has an open access, and if necessary and feasible, we have made modifications, such as lowering counters and eliminating barriers between families and staff.

1 2 3 4 5

Welcoming and professionally dressed staff greet visitors promptly and offer assistance.

1 2 3 4 5

The offices have a comfortable, clean, and well kept place for families to sit when waiting.

1 2 3 4 5

Adult-sized seating is available in offices or waiting areas for families.

1 2 3 4 5

As appropriate and feasible, our school may provide a home-feel environment by using area rugs, benches, and magazines in waiting areas.

Interior

1 2 3 4 5

There are colorful signs posted in visible areas with directions and with words like “welcome”, “thank-you”, and “please”, in English and Spanish, and if possible in languages of all those attending our school.

1 2 3 4 5

Signs or a building map clearly mark directions to the main office, the library, the multipurpose room, the restrooms, the counselors’ office, etc.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school is clean and in the best possible condition, including the halls, classrooms, multipurpose rooms, and all other areas.

1 2 3 4 5

Teachers and staff members’ names, grade levels, and room numbers are posted close to the classroom doors and/or in a directory of the school.

Physical Environment Total Score: _____ out of a possible 75 points.

2. School Climate

A friendly, inviting, and respectful school atmosphere encourages parents to participate, and communicates the importance of family involvement to students, parents, and staff.

Directions: Rate your school on a scale of 1 to 5:

1 = Not Yet Present, 2 = Below Average, 3 = Average, 4 = Above Average, 5 = Excellent

Visitors

1 2 3 4 5

Visitors are immediately greeted once they enter the main office, to make families feel welcome and to promote student safety.

1 2 3 4 5

Family members at school are identified by using large volunteer badges.

1 2 3 4 5

Visitors in hallways or on campus are greeted and assisted by staff members, and those visitors without volunteer badges are directed to the main office to check in.

Customer Service

1 2 3 4 5

Our staff strives to provide excellent customer service to parents. Staff members connect personally with parents, and interact with all parents in a positive, welcoming manner. Staff members provide assistance to parents, such as filling out forms or arranging for translation, in a way that makes parents feel comfortable and respected.

1 2 3 4 5

Friendly greetings and courtesy are a part of all communications with students as well as parents, reflecting the mutual respect shared by families and staff members.

School Community

1 2 3 4 5

Staff members are visible to parents before and after school, during recess and/or lunch, and during transition times.

1 2 3 4 5

Staff pictures, names, and subjects and/or grade levels are displayed grouped together in a centralized, visible area of the school, to help parents and students know our school staff members and increase the sense of school community.

1 2 3 4 5

Paintings, murals and art demonstrating school pride, community involvement, and student interests are used to demonstrate school spirit, and to reflect the culture and climate of our school community.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school provides a space for parents at the school that is safe, accessible, and comfortable.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school has a trusting climate where parents feel comfortable bringing concerns and suggestions to school, including a suggestion box, brief surveys, informal opportunities for parents to speak with staff members, and/or other means.

School Climate Total Score: _____ out of a possible 50 points.

3. School Communication

School communication provides general information for all families in printed form and on a school website in languages that families can understand.

Directions: Rate your school on a scale of 1 to 5:

1 = Not Yet Present, 2 = Below Average, 3 = Average, 4 = Above Average, 5 = Excellent

General

1 2 3 4 5

Our school communicates regularly with parents in a variety of ways, including newsletters, notices, e-mails, phone calls, etc.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school provides information to parents in a language and format they can understand.

1 2 3 4 5

School jargon is eliminated and not assumed to be known in all communications.

Beginning of the Year

1 2 3 4 5

Initial communication from our school communicates to parents that our school welcomes all families and expects them to be partners in the education of their children.

1 2 3 4 5

Welcome letters, information packets, school calendars, handbooks, directories and/or other materials are distributed at the beginning of the school year.

1 2 3 4 5

Contact information including staff e-mail addresses, and phone/voicemail numbers is distributed to families at the beginning of the school year.

Ongoing

1 2 3 4 5

Periodic newsletters, monthly calendars, and parent information notices are distributed often throughout the year.

1 2 3 4 5

The principal includes a personal letter in each newsletter and communicates often in notices sent home to families.

1 2 3 4 5

Written communication from our school to families includes information about family activities, games, tips, fun, and articles of interest, in addition to information about scheduling, testing, policy, and procedures.

1 2 3 4 5

A school website is maintained to include our school calendar and all pertinent information.

School Communication Total Score: _____ out of a possible 50 points.

4. Personal Communication

Direct personal parent communication with school staff is an important part of creating a Family Friendly School. Every individual communication with parents should be polite, friendly and respectful.

Directions: Rate your school on a scale of 1 to 5:
1 = Not Yet Present, 2 = Below Average, 3 = Average, 4 = Above Average, 5 = Excellent

Personal Contact

1 2 3 4 5

Parents are given the option at the beginning of the school year to designate the best ways to reach them, including e-mail, telephone, and/or written notes.

1 2 3 4 5

Parents are encouraged to maintain ongoing two-way communication with the school.

1 2 3 4 5

Parents and teachers are encouraged to make immediate contact when concerns arise.

1 2 3 4 5

Teachers and staff members know the procedure for translation for parents, and this procedure with contact information is communicated clearly to parents at the beginning of the school year in the language that can be understood.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school uses technology, such as a telephone hotline, translation equipment, e-mail, and/or website, to foster communication with parents.

Telephone

1 2 3 4 5

Telephone calls are answered promptly, and greetings are polite and professional.

1 2 3 4 5

The person answering the phone has basic, up-to-date information readily accessible.

1 2 3 4 5

Callers are put through to appropriate parties promptly.

1 2 3 4 5

Phone messages are returned by the end of the following school day whenever possible, even if just to schedule a time for an extended conversation.

E-mail

1 2 3 4 5

E-mail is addressed personally to parents, and is respectful and courteous.

1 2 3 4 5

E-mails are answered by the end of the following school day whenever possible.

Parent questions

1 2 3 4 5

Staff members encourage parents to contact them with questions, comments, or concerns.

1 2 3 4 5

When parents request information regarding their student's progress or assignments, the teachers respond to the request by the end of the following school day whenever possible.

General

1 2 3 4 5

Staff members use professional judgment and communicate with parents by personal phone call or by meeting, rather than e-mail or note, for discussion of certain topics that would include sensitive information such as discipline matters.

1 2 3 4 5

Staff members do not discuss a student when others are present, including other students, parents, or individuals not involved with the student.

Personal Communication Total Score: _____ out of a possible 75 points.

5. Parent Support

Encouraging active parent involvement and providing strong support for parents is a key component in Family Friendly Schools.

Directions: Rate your school on a scale of 1 to 5:

1 = Not Yet Present, 2 = Below Average, 3 = Average, 4 = Above Average, 5 = Excellent

Outreach

1 2 3 4 5

School staff uses a personal, face-to-face approach to recruit and invite families to participate in the school community.

1 2 3 4 5

Fun, non-fundraising activities are planned as early ice-breaking events.

1 2 3 4 5

School activities and events are scheduled to fit the availability of parents, and staff members are encouraged to participate in these events.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school initiates frequent, informal, and positive contacts between staff and parents.

Parent Learning Opportunities

1 2 3 4 5

Our school plans parent learning activities that match the interests and concerns of our parents.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school encourages parent-to-parent information exchanges, provides opportunities for parents to become acquainted with each other, and helps families build their informal supports.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school provides parents with an opportunity to participate in staff professional development activities as appropriate, such as workshops or technology training.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school provides information to parents about adult education classes and other learning opportunities in the community.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school has a Family Information Center with current notices, updated literature, calendars, school information, school maps, and descriptions of many ways for parents to be involved. When possible, this center is staffed by a volunteer or staff member, during drop off, pick up, and busy times of the day. The center could be on a portable pushcart or located in a highly visible area.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school has a Family Resource Center located in the library with books, district program information, community information, publications, and materials.

Student Learning

1 2 3 4 5

Our school provides clear information to parents in a language that can be understood and at an appropriate literary level to assist parents in understanding grade level standards, and how students can improve skills, get help when needed, meet class expectations and perform well on assessments.

1 2 3 4 5

Regarding homework assignments, our teachers are sensitive to students' home environment, cultural differences, home language, access to technology and supplies, and other considerations.

1 2 3 4 5

Homework assignments include information and instructions that help families expand on the school curriculum, and encourage students to discuss and interact with their parents about what they are learning.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school provides information, resources, and support for families as they develop learning opportunities in the home.

Volunteering

1 2 3 4 5

Parents are surveyed regarding their interests, talents, and availability to volunteer.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school provides many ways for parents to participate, including meaningful ways for non-English speaking parents to participate.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school provides ample training for parent volunteers.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school shows appreciation for parent participation and contributions.

Decision-Making

1 2 3 4 5

School administrators and staff encourage and support our school Parent Group, which can be structured either formally or informally, planning meeting times when parents are able to attend.

1 2 3 4 5

Group processes are planned that encourage parents and staff members to work together, including areas such as our School Improvement Team, committees, and task forces.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school provides training for staff and parents in how to be collaborative partners and share decision-making in areas such as policy, curriculum, budget, school reform, and safety.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school staff shares leadership roles with parents, and encourages parents to participate in decision-making.

Parent, School and Community Collaboration

1 2 3 4 5

Parents are well informed about school and community resources available and whom to contact for information.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school staff utilizes parent liaisons, family advocates, and other members of the community who may be a part of a family's informal support network to help make connections with families.

1 2 3 4 5

Our school encourages members of the community to participate in our school by utilizing the talents and experiences of community volunteers in classroom activities, and by collaborating with community groups.

Parent Support Total Score: _____ out of a possible 125 points.

School Score:

Focus Area	Our School's Score	Total Score Possible	Percentage
1. Physical Environment		75	
2. School Climate		50	
3. School Communication		50	
4. Personal Communication		75	
5. Parent Support		125	
Total Score:		375	

Comments:

Areas of strength (highest scores):

Areas we want to make "Excellent":

Strategies:

Areas in need of improvement (lowest scores):

Strategies:

Action Plan, including timeline for re-assessment:

Barriers:

Resource Needs:

District Resources for Family Friendly Schools

Please contact WCSD Parent Involvement Coordinator D'Lisa Crain at 353-5533 or dcrain@washoe.k12.nv.us, or contact the Parent Involvement Office at 851-5655 or parentinvolvement@washoe.k12.nv.us, if you have other resource recommendations.

WCSD RESOURCES	RESOURCE SERVICE	CONTACT NUMBER	E-MAIL	PHONE NUMBER
WCSD Parent Involvement	Parent Involvement Information	D'Lisa Crain, Parent Involvement Coordinator	dcrain@washoe.k12.nv.us	353-5533
WCSD Volunteer Services	Volunteer Support	Lisa-Marie Lightfoot, Volunteer Services Coordinator	lflightfoot@washoe.k12.nv.us	851-5655
WCSD Safe and Drug Free School	Parent Information and Chair of the Family Friendly Schools Committee	Katherine Loudon Safe and Drug Free Schools Coordinator	kloudon@washoe.k12.nv.us	850-8016
WCSD Family Resource Centers	Referral services for families information, translation help	Dianna Haberland Family Resource Center Coordinator	dhaberland@washoe.k12.nv.us	348-0333
Education Collaborative, Partners In Education	Business community/partners for projects	Debbie DeLauer Partners in Education Coordinator	ddelauer@washoe.k12.nv.us	353-5533
WCSD Diversity Office	Liaison to the Hispanic Community	Fatima Rivas Hispanic Liaison	frivas@washoe.k12.nv.us	358-3850
WCSD Diversity Office	Cultural information and awareness	Debbie Feemster Diversity Director	dfeemster@washoe.k12.nv.us	325-2071
WCSD Translation Department	Language translation support	Margui Griggs Spanish Translator, CCO	mgriggs@washoe.k12.nv.us	325-2077
WCSD Building Renewal Projects	Possible support for physical improvement	Rick Martin Facility Construction & Renewal Projects	rmartin@washoe.k12.nv.us	789-3839
WCSD Communications Department	Communication information, newsletter trainings, E-news and website support	Steve Mulvenon Communications Director	smulvenon@washoe.k12.nv.us	348-0371

WCSD RESOURCES	RESOURCE SERVICE	CONTACT NUMBER	E-MAIL	PHONE NUMBER
WCSD Community Education Department	Classes and information of interest to parents	Debbie Melahn, Community Education Coordinator	dmelahn@washoe.k12.nv.us	353-5780
WCSD State & Federal Programs	Grant writing classes	Lauren Ohlin, Grant Writer	lohlin@washoe.k12.nv.us	348-0254

For the complete WCSD Parent Involvement Policy, see
Washoe County School District Parent Involvement Initiative Strategic Plan
<http://www.washoe.k12.nv.us/parents/parentinvolve/>

Websites for Family Friendly Schools and Parent Involvement

General Parent Involvement Online Resources:

National Network of Partnership Schools

Organization headed by Joyce Epstein, national parent involvement expert. Comprehensive site on best practices in parent involvement with sample activities and resources.

www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/

National Education Association

Describes importance of parent involvement, research, resources, and parent guides.

www.nea.org/parents

Pritchard Parent Center

Parent involvement information and strategies for schools and parents.

<http://www.fcps.net/fcs/>

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

National PTA site includes information and research on parent involvement.

<http://www.pta.org>

Mid Atlantic Equity Consortium

Involvement of parents of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

<http://www.maec.org/parntlep.html>

Family Friendly Schools Online Resources:

Colorado Parent Information Center

In Spanish and English: information for parents. A No Child Left Behind information section, educational terms, a parents guide, and how parents can be involved from home.

www.cpirc.org

My South Carolina Schools

Information on South Carolina's "Red Carpet Awards" program which recognizes outstanding Family Friendly Schools.

http://ed.sc.gov/visitors/educators/red_carpet

Small Schools Project

General information, including "Tools" section with sample surveys, data collection

General website: www.smallschoolsproject.org

Self-Assessment Survey for Family Friendly Schools:

www.smallschoolsproject.org/pdfs/gffssa.pdf

Websites for Family Friendly Schools and Parent Involvement

Continued

Family Friendly Schools Online Resources:

Family Education Network

Parent information, resources, advice, forms.

www.familyeducation.com

US Department of Education - Office of Educational Research and Improvement Family Friendly Resources

An Introduction to *Reaching All Families*

Books in the *Helping Your Child* Series and easily reproducible two-page fact sheets from the *Learning Partners* Series

www.ed.gov/pubs/ReachFam/iraf.html

US Department of Education – Office of Educational Research and Improvement Creating Family Friendly Schools

How schools can better involve all families.

www.ed.gov/pubs/ReachFam/title.html

Acknowledgements

Family Friendly Schools Committee

The WCSD Parent Involvement Council acknowledges and thanks the following parents, staff members, and community members who serve on the Council's Family Friendly Schools Committee and have contributed to the development of the Family Friendly Schools Guide.

Committee Co-Chairs Katherine Loudon and Barbara Scheible, Debi Basta, D'Lisa Crain, Fatima Rivas, Danette Kitts, and Dr. Julia Weinberg.

WCSD Parent Involvement Council

The Council thanks Council Chair Barbara Clark, other members of the Council, the WCSD staff members, principals, and other parents who contributed to this project.

Sources

The WCSD Parent Involvement Council acknowledges the following sources that have been utilized by the Committee in the development of this Guide.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Child, Family, and Community Program.
Self-Assessment Survey for Family Friendly Schools:
www.smallschoolsproject.org/pdfs/gffssa.pdf

National PTA. National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs.
www.pta.org

South Carolina Department of Education. Red Carpet Awards.
http://ed.sc.gov/visitors/educators/red_carpet

Washoe County School District Parent Involvement Initiative Strategic Plan.
<http://www.washoe.k12.nv.us/parents/parentinvolve/>