

Hi everyone,

As we are wrapping this year, I want to share a few thoughts with our PTA's. Family engagement, the piece we all had struggled to place in our PTA. This year while being virtual, we need more support than ever. We need people to join our teams and advocates for children in their own special way.

What are the TOP barriers that effects Family Engagement?

The first step to increasing engagement with families is to understand the attitudes and obstacles that currently inhibit greater partnership and collaboration with families. Build understanding with your parent community, and find out what are the reasons that caveat them from being an active PTA member. Data from Harvard University Research indicates that over 18,000 parents and guardians from diverse school communities across the country, have surveyed to determine the most common barriers to engagement nationwide.

Here are some key takeaways from their research:

- Lack of time presents the biggest barrier for parents becoming involved with their children's schools. Over half (54%) of parents and guardians responded that their busy schedule is a medium to this very large problem.
- Language Barriers: It is a common issue in multicultural communities that people hesitate to be in an environment where no one understands their language, or if they can't communicate in a language the majority is speaking. This problem can be solved by inviting cultural liaisons to your meeting/activities. Liaisons can provide a bridge to build strong communication with your parent community. Advertising their availability will help in involving a multicultural audience.
- Opportunities: PTA in a virtual world is a challenge for many of us, and as well for parents who want to get involved but don't know HOW, organize coffee chats, game nights, Poem or essay writing, and feature that activity in your monthly/weekly newsletter to encourage people. This will help in making strong connections virtually. Greet your audience, acknowledge their presence, and value their opinion to bring them back on the table.

By: Beenish Iqbal