Developing a Survey to Elicit Parental Involvement

Why is parental involvement important to school counselors?

According to Ann Duncan, Ed.D, in an article in ASCA School Counselor, the academic success of any student hinges on parental involvement at home and in the school.

- **Improved student performance in the classroom**
  Specifically, studies show parental involvement to be positively related to high school students’ academic achievement, time spent on homework, favorable attitudes toward school, likelihood of staying in school, educational aspirations beyond the high school level, and increased motivation (Gonzales, 2002).

- **Fewer students psychologically gating while teachers are trying to teach**

- **Decline in disruptive behavior on the part of students**

- **Improved teacher morale**

- **Increased accountability for educators**
  Student academic performance is at an all-time low at the same time that school system accountability is increasing under President Bush’s education program. Parental involvement can help us to determine the efficacy of our program.

- **Bridges discontinuity between the home culture and school culture**
  This is especially helpful for low-income and minority students.

What kind of parental involvement led to these gains?

- Helping students with homework
- Attending school programs
- Watching students participate in sports or other extracurricular activities
- Helping students select courses
- Remaining informed of students progress
- An authoritative parenting style (acceptance, warmth, some democracy etc.)
First steps toward parental involvement

There are many methods of eliciting feedback from parents. The important thing is to be curious, and to let parents know that you value their opinions! We decided to survey parents to solicit their opinions.

❖ The Survey
When developing a survey, attempt to keep it brief, easy to understand and complete, worth parents’ time, and accessible. We decided to use QuestionPro.com, which is a website that helps professionals build surveys, collect data, and analyze results. There are some limitations to using this survey format. First, it limits access to only those parents who have access to a computer, have an Internet service provider, and are computer literate. Secondly, it limits access to those parents who are proficient in English. There are also some limitations of surveys in general. For example, respondents often answer in a response set, or fail to read questions thoroughly before answering. Also, especially in school settings, data are not generalizable when a biased sample has been gathered.

❖ Meet with administrators, fellow counselors, teachers, and parent volunteers
Ask them to read the survey and critique it. Solicit feedback and suggestions for improvement.

❖ Get approval from administration to use the survey

❖ Determine how to maximize the number of responses
How will parents respond to the survey? There are limitations associated with most attempts to reach parents. For example, the cost of mailing surveys is often prohibitive, and parents do not always return surveys by mail. Surveys can be passed out at parent-teacher conferences, which limits the responses to those that are already somewhat involved in the school. Finally, the survey can be accessed via the Internet, with limitations previously discussed. Therefore, it is important to get creative; use several methods concurrently. We decided to get the kids involved. An incentive was offered for those students who brought home and returned a paper copy of the survey. We also announced the survey in the school bulletin. Another idea is to pass out surveys at welcome meetings or orientations at the beginning of the school year.

❖ Resources
Here are some websites that we found useful in researching and developing our survey:

http://www.questionpro.com

This book was also helpful:


References:
