

Individual Item Prompts

**Community Support
and Involvement**

4.1a: Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.

Carefully planning opportunities for parents to have input in school activities and school improvement plans can promote parental involvement and improved integration of parents into the functions of the school.

In what ways are parents engaged in decision-making at your school? Are those the most effective areas parents can be engaged in at the school? What opportunities are available at the school for parents to participate? Are parents aware of those opportunities?

Table Group Activity

Where possible, include an administrator in each group to have both perspectives represented.

Assign a recorder.

The following pages provide question prompts on the survey item discussed above.

Read and discuss the prompts as a group.

Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts

Use the Item Analysis tools to record important points brought up in your discussion.

4.1a: Reflections

How are parents included in school improvement plans?
* How often do parents meet with school members to discuss school improvement plans?
Are opportunities provided for parents to be included in school decision making?
* Are the opportunities available to non-English speaking parents? * Are those opportunities equitable? * What steps are in place to make parents aware of the opportunities they have to be included in decision making at the school? * Are the times allotted for parents to participate varied enough to accommodate their variations in work schedules?
What decisions do parents have in the school through the Parent-Teacher Association?
What part do parents play in athletics and extracurricular activities at the school?
* What are some of the benefits to parent participation in these areas? * What are some of the challenges to parent participation in these areas?

4.1b: This school maintains clear, two-way communication with the community.

Maintaining continuous lines of communication with parents and the community about school activities is an integral part of effective community engagement. Information needs to be consistent, easily accessible, and provided in a variety of formats to meet the different needs of parents. In addition to providing regular information to parents and the community, schools must also maintain a variety of opportunities and settings for parents to be able to communicate back to school staff. Clear steps and procedures in receiving communication from parents can help to make the process more efficient and protect the time of teachers and staff.

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4.1b: Reflections

What systems are in place to provide parents and the community ways to communicate with the school?

- * Are those systems effective?
- * Are those systems equitable?
- * What areas of these communication lines need improvement?

What steps are taken at your school to provide clear, consistent information regarding school activities?

- * How often is the information sent or updated?
- * Does the school provide ample time between its communication and the time activities and deadlines are due?
- * Is the information provided in a variety of media sources and languages?
- * Is the information being acquired by parents and the community? How do you know?

Teachers are responsible for communicating with parents about a variety of school issues. What steps are in place to help support teachers provide high quality, effective communication?

- * Are standards/expectations made of teachers regarding parent communication?
- * How are new teachers supported in learning effective parent communication skills?
- * Is the quality of communication across teachers the same? How do you know?

4.1c: This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.

There are a number of ways a school can promote the involvement of parents and guardians in their child's education. Active maintenance of a school web site can provide electronic access to school activities and events. Promotion and inclusion of PTAs in school activities can encourage parent participation. Teachers can send regular progress reports and newsletters out to keep parents informed of classroom activities.

A bigger question to consider when reflecting on this survey item centers on faculty expectations. What kind of involvement do teachers hope to receive out of parent/guardian involvement at the school? In what areas are parents currently involved at the school and can lessons be learned from these areas to promote and encourage participation in other areas?

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4.1c: Reflections

How do parents participate in school governance and decision making?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* In what capacity are parents currently involved at the school?* What are the current benefits and challenges to this level of involvement?
Are opportunities available at the school to contribute?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* What has been done to catalyze their interest?* What actions do members of the staff take to make parents feel valued at the school?
What are teachers' expectations of parental involvement?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Are expectations broad (that teaching is valued profession, that teachers have instructional expertise) about desired support?* Are expectations specific (volunteer in classroom, attend parent/teacher conferences) about desired support?* What are some of the benefits and potential challenges to having ideal parental involvement?
Is the school open to parents and the community?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* What barriers are in place for them to contribute?* Are those barriers actionable?

4.1d: Teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning.

In an effective communication stream between parents/guardians and teachers, a variety of important information is shared throughout the school year. All parents/guardians should be provided details of the content their students will be covering during the year, as well as a clear explanation of the grading policies and expectations. Throughout the school year, updates on homework assignments and expectations also need to be communicated. Parents/Guardians also want regular updates on their child's progress and how they are improving. If their child is not meeting the teacher's expectations, they want notice in a timely fashion. A clear understanding of student behavior both as a student and interacting with peers is also meaningful. Tools like a school calendar with events and meetings, information about school safety can also be useful to parents and guardians.

As you consider communication with parents/guardians, reflect on what systems are in place to disseminate information. Are those systems provided in formats that all parents can interpret and what content is being included in them?

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4.1d: Reflections

How are parents/guardians included in thought processes for developing the tools and resources to inform them?
Are the expectations for sharing information with parents/guardians the same across all teachers? Should they be?
* What systems are in place to support beginning teachers in developing tools and resources for informing parents/guardians?
What communication tools and resources are in place for providing parents/guardians information about student learning?
* Is that information provided in a manner that all parents/guardians can interpret? In what ways is it differentiated? * What sorts of feedback structures are in place to assess the quality and usefulness of outgoing information? * How timely are those sources of information? * How regularly are those resources going out to parents/guardians?

4.1e: Parents/guardians know what is going on in this school.

Parent/teacher communication is essential for the success of all students. For parents to be effectively involved in their child's education, they need to be continuously informed of student achievement, classroom activities, expectations, and any concerns a teacher has in their child's educational development. The more informed a parent is about the educational activities of their child, the better chance they have of playing an active role in supporting their child's educational development. At the same time, it is important to remain sensitive to the fact that this process is also time consuming on teachers.

As you reflect on this item, consider what standards and expectations are in place to assure parents are receiving adequate and timely information about their child's educational development. How are those expectations monitored? Are the results consistent across the entire faculty?

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4.1e: Reflections

What steps or systems do you have in place to support the promotion of this communication with teachers?

- * What is the frequency of communication? Through what medium?
- * Are those systems effective? How do you know?
- * What effect are these systems having on teachers' available time?
- * How are new teachers supported in learning this process?
- * How is guidance included in this process?

How do you define what information is useful for parents about student learning?

- * How do you know this information is getting out across all of the faculty consistently and timely?
- * What feedback are parents giving teachers and the administration about the information they are receiving?

4.1f: Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students.

Highly effective schools are well integrated into their local community. Schools provide quality education for the children of the neighborhood, and community outreach through its extracurricular activities. Community members and organizations can support the school through volunteer work, donations, proctoring, translating, chaperoning, etc. Together, the school and community work symbiotically to improve the learning opportunities and well-being of all children. A healthy community relationship can benefit the working conditions of teachers.

When reflecting on community support, there are different levels to consider. In addition to parents, local businesses can play an active part in school support. Universities and/or community colleges as well as professional organizations like rotary club, churches and other faith-based organizations, or the local chamber of commerce can help to support teachers and schools.

How do these different levels of community support participate in the activities of your school?

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4.1f: Reflections

In what ways are higher education institutions actively engaged in school support?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Is there research being conducted?* Are pre-service teachers conducting internships on-site?* Are afterschool activities enhanced by college students and faculty?
In what ways are parents actively engaged in school support?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* How active is the PTA? What do they do to support teachers? How do teachers work with the PTA to shape their efforts?* What role do parents play in school support outside of their own child (children)?
In what ways are local businesses actively engaged in school support?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Does business promote student engagement back into the community?* How are businesses engaged in promoting school activities?
How are professional organizations integrated into school activities?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* How are they enhancing cultural experiences for children?* Are they promoting civic responsibility?
What are the expectations for community support?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* What are some of the benefits and challenges to this level of community support?

4.1g: Community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students.

Highly effective schools are well integrated into their local community. Schools provide quality education for the children of the neighborhood, and community outreach through its extracurricular activities. Community members and organizations can support the school through volunteer work, donations, proctoring, translating, chaperoning, etc. Together, the school and community work symbiotically to improve the learning opportunities and well-being of all children. A healthy community relationship can benefit the working conditions of teachers.

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4.1g: Reflections

What are the expectations for community support?
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In what ways are higher education institutions actively engaged in school support?
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* Does business promote student engagement back into the community? * How are businesses engaged in promoting school activities?

4.1h: The community we serve is supportive of this school.

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