



Parent Liaison Program Development

Every parent is his or her child's first teacher. Building a relationship between home and school - between parent, teacher, student, and the school community - creates a network of caring adults to ensure that the needs of each student are met and that he/she has the supports and services needed for academic success. Parent liaisons help build a strong home to school partnership.

It can be challenging for parents to visit school during the workday and to know what educational support and family resources are available to them. Additionally, there are linguistic and cultural barriers that prevent parents from being fully engaged. Our families would be well served with a dedicated parent liaison actively reaching out to families in each school. A few models for implementation are being considered, and the input of parents and families will help us implement a successful Parent Liaison Program.

Background:

Only a few schools in our district currently have parent liaisons who work at the school site. With funding provided through the Berkeley Schools Excellence Program (BSEP) - Berkeley's Education Parcel Tax - dedicated resources for parent outreach can be shared to improve each school's ability to serve families. The Office of Community and Family Partnerships (OFCF) currently serves families across the district by providing parent education workshops and access to information and services. Community input collected for the 2020 Vision, the 2011 Communications Study, and parent surveys, as well as the review of successful parent liaison programs and research, suggest that this outreach and support for families would have a greater impact on student success with parent liaisons working in each school.

Join Us - We want to share our program ideas with you and hear how we can improve!

On Tuesday, **December 13th at 6:00 p.m.** a joint meeting of the District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC) and the District Advisory Committee (DAC) will hear a presentation and offer feedback on the Parent Liaison Program in the Longfellow Library (1500 Derby Street). All are welcome. (Spanish interpretation will be provided.)

On Monday, **January 9th at 6:30 p.m.**, a Community Presentation and Feedback session on the Parent Liaison Program will be held at Berkeley Technology Academy in the Multipurpose Room (2701 Martin Luther King Jr. Way). (Spanish interpretation will be provided.)

Additional school and community meeting presentations are being made to collect feedback. Contact Maya Hernandez at 644-8991 or via email mayahernandez@berkeley.net to find out about other meetings.

What is a parent liaison?

A parent liaison is a dedicated school staff member who works at schools specifically to help parents get the information and assistance they need to support their children at home and to ensure their children's success in school. A parent liaison's primary responsibility is to build bridges of communication and work to remove cultural or linguistic barriers or other obstacles that can impede the home and school from working together.

How do parent liaisons help parents?

Parent liaisons help parents/guardians to navigate the complexities of the school system, be advocates for their children, and access community resources and supports.

Parent liaisons support parents by:

- Facilitating communication between home and school
- Broadening teacher and staff understanding of each student, each student's interests and needs
- Sharing strategies to use in the home that support school success
- Connecting parents with the school by providing information about the school and its programs
- Arranging meetings between parents and school staff members, including arranging for an interpreter when necessary
- Organizing parent forums that build upon parents' strengths in supporting their children's learning
- Working with "focus families" identified by a student's academic performance and/or perceived needs.

How will the Parent Liaison Program be coordinated?

The Office of Family and Community Partnerships (OFCP) will provide on-going professional development for parent liaisons on family engagement and leadership strategies, community building, and district and community resources to support the work with families.

How will we know if the Parent Liaison Program is working?

We will know that the program is working when more students experience academic success because parents and schools are working together. This can be observed and measured by monitoring test scores, attendance, homework completion, class participation, and reduced discipline referrals for students whose parents are successfully engaged by the outreach of a parent liaison. Parent liaisons will track the number of contacts they make, record logs of home visits, phone calls, parent meetings and other interventions and services. We will capture feedback and opinions from parents and students about their experience with the Parent Liaison Program via surveys that will measure satisfaction in several key areas, including academic achievement, communication and engagement.

What does the research say about parent liaisons?

Program evaluations of liaison programs have reported positive results for students including:

- 1.) Improved educational outcomes (Vulliamy & Webb, 2003),
- 2.) Reduced dropout rates among Latino adolescents (Phelan and Gibson, 1986),
- 3.) Increased involvement of families with limited English proficiency (Aparicio-Clark and Dorris, 2006),
- 4.) Increased involvement of families with special need students (Smiley and Abbott, 2006).
- 5.) Improved awareness about families' circumstances and challenged assumptions about race and class that negatively affect home-school relations (M. Sanders, 2008).

What will the Parent Liaison Program look like and what schools will it serve?

While a Parent Liaison Program has been developed in a few of our schools, the goal is to have all schools staffed to effectively build a strong home-school relationship and improve educational attainment for students. Community presentations and meetings are being held to present possible models of implementation and to ask families to provide feedback. Current staffing is being reviewed, and school site needs are being assessed to determine how best to use the BSEP resources to assign parent liaisons.

Based on the collection of feedback and analysis of our schools' needs, the Superintendent and his staff will make recommendations on the implementation of the Parent Liaison Program to the School Board (planned for January 25, 2012).

More information:

- Visit the webpage dedicated to this work: www.berkeleyschools.net/departments/family-community-partnerships/parent-liaison-program/
- Attend one of the various community or school meetings to hear more about model programs and give your input
- Contact Maya Hernandez, Office of Family and Community Partnerships via email mayahernandez@berkeley.net or at 644-8991.