



How to Work with Schools: Ten Tips for Success

- 1 **Keep the best interests of children** as your top priority.
- 2 **Building administrators, especially principals, hold the greatest power** to create a healthy school environment, so it's important not only to get their support from the very beginning but also to understand their vision, philosophy, and priorities.
- 3 **Take time to get to know the teachers and principal.** Give positive feedback and ask what you can do to support the classroom. This opens dialogue and builds a trusting relationship. Both will be important as you move forward.
- 4 **Engage the parent community.** If you can show that a majority of parents and families are supportive of your efforts, school leaders will be more likely to get on board. Align your team's project with the principal's and the school's priorities.
- 5 **Join groups in your school and in your community or volunteer at school in other ways.** Ask questions and build relationships. Consider joining a parent group, a school improvement team or accountability committee, a wellness committee or advocacy group.
- 6 **Familiarize yourself with requirements that relate to your interests.** Showing up with research on your topic can also help you make your case.
- 7 **Take a positive and constructive approach.** Always be professional. Ask for feedback. School staff will likely have insight that will make your work more successful.
- 8 **Be sensitive when discussing any changes that involve food.** Food is personal — for those who consume it and those who prepare it!
- 9 **Consider the school calendar.** Certain times of year are better than others for making headway.
- 10 **Compromise does not mean defeat.** View compromise as a partial victory that lays the foundation for future efforts. Start small and put practices in place that will ensure sustainability over time.

Key players and decision makers in your school and district:



School Board

Sets the vision, goals and policies for the school district, hires the school superintendent, monitors district performance and student achievement. The school board is elected by the public.



Superintendent

Oversees and enhances educational programs, implements rules, regulations, policies, and procedures, and increases student achievement.



District Administrators

Oversee specific areas such as curriculum and instruction development, student services, special needs, English Language Learners, athletics, transportation, federal programs, testing and assessment, finances, etc.



District Advisory Teams

Formal committees composed of community members, school or district leaders, and family members who advise the school district on policy and practices in specific focus areas and/or create improvement plans, e.g., District Wellness Committee, District Accountability Committee, Financial Oversight Committee, Strategic Planning Committee.



District Nutrition Services

Operates and oversees school meal programs and school nutrition staff.



School Improvement Teams

Formal committees composed of community members, school staff and family members who create school-level improvement plans to increase student success. Also called school accountability committees.



Parent Groups and Committees

Formal or informal groups organized to fulfill any of the following objectives: address a specific problem or issue, support teachers and staff, enrich the educational experiences of students, raise funds, support school/family social interaction, provide information and resources to families, increase family involvement, work on overall school improvement, e.g., PTO, PTA, Parent Advisory Council, Parent Action Committee. Some groups include teachers, students, and other community members.



Principals and School Leaders

Oversee school operations, provide staff with necessary skills to fulfill educational goals and ensure that rules, regulations, policies and procedures are followed.



Teachers

Interact with students daily and assist them in gaining the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in life.



School Support Staff

Provide support services, e.g., counseling, scheduling, communications, nursing, cafeteria service, etc.



Students and Families

The school system exists to serve students and families whose needs and concerns influence a wide range of policies and practices. Research shows meaningful family engagement is important to student success. Having parents, family members, and caregivers included in the decision-making process will make the biggest difference.



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