

Keys for Engaging Parents in the Student Learning Process



Allison Ruhl, Ed. S, NBCT



What is Parent Engagement?

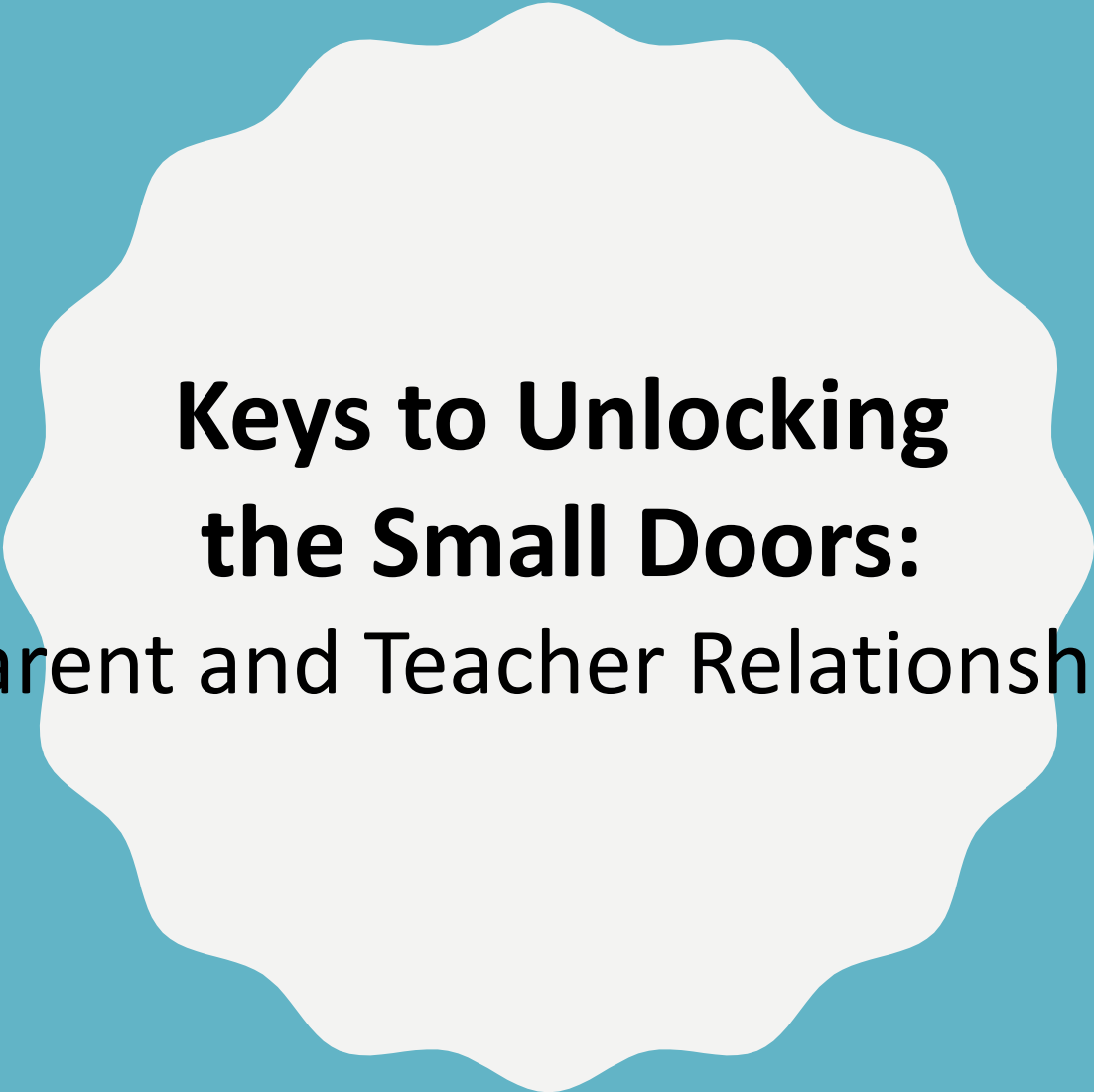
Parent Engagement and its roots

- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 includes a large focus on parent engagement, especially for Title 1 schools.¹
- School districts must offer programs and activities to involve parents and family members.
- Title 1 schools must:
 - Develop a written policy with parents that outlines how the school will meet its required family engagement activities.
 - Hold a meeting to explain the program and the rights of the parents.
 - Involve parents in the planning.

¹<https://www.esc16.net/upload/page/0463/docs/Stafford%201%20Over%20view%20of%20Parental%20Involvement%20Under%20ESEA%2005262016.pdf>

Parent Engagement vs. Parent Involvement

- **Parent involvement**= doing to; telling what the school wants them to know; one way communication; sending information home without knowing if it got there or if someone saw it
- **Parent engagement**= doing with; listening to what parents want to know and providing that information; two way communication even when there isn't a problem with the student



**Keys to Unlocking
the Small Doors:**
Parent and Teacher Relationships

Parent-Teacher relationship keys

- Build a relationship
- Organize contact information so you can access it easily
- Make contact consistently. Set a calendar remind, or write it on your paper calendar to make it a priority.

Sample contact form

--The Pumpkin Patch Press

What goals do you have for your child this year?

What are your child's interests?

What concerns do you have about the year? What concerns does your child have?

For snack purposes, please list any food allergies:

Do you have a skill, talent or hobby that you would want to share with the class? Do you work in a place or have connections with a business that might make an appropriate field trip for children? If so, please feel free to explain.

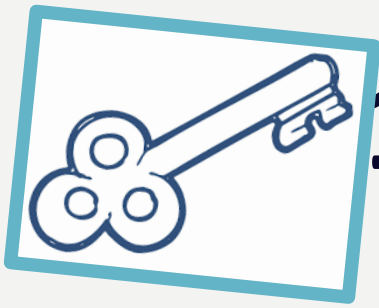
Please feel free to use this space to share any other information you believe may impact your child's school performance or adjustment to our class.

Thank you and I look forward to working with you and your student this year!

**I HAVE A SPECIAL
SET OF SKILLS.**

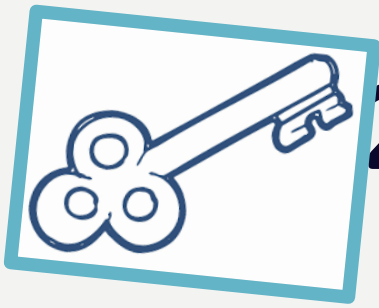
**I CAN FIND YOUR PARENTS'
NUMBER. I WILL CALL.**

imgflip.com



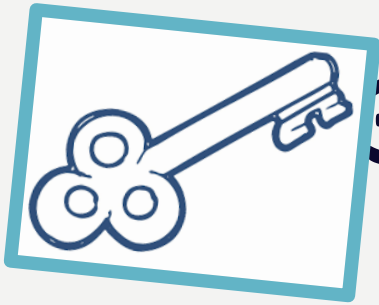
1: THE PHONE

- Call parents within the first two weeks of school before there is an issue.
- Always start with a positive.
- Tell parents how excited you are to work with them and ask about their expectations for the year.
- Leave a message if no one answers.



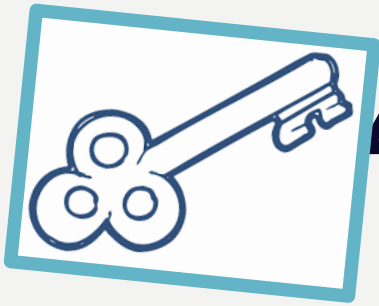
2: E-MAIL

- Set up an email group through your school's email system.
- Any announcements, hand-outs, forms, etc. can be sent electronically once you have this email chain established.
- Weekly newsletters can be emailed this way as well. Be sure to send a PDF version through email. Try to follow up if possible.



3: Your website

- Keep it updated, and KEEP IT SIMPLE.
- Schedule a weekly time to update your newsletter, photos, or homework blog.
- Have students create artwork, projects, or articles to attach to your website. Parents are more likely to visit if they know their child is featured.
- Send the parents a message to let them know their child's work is included.



4: Papers home

- Add a column to behavior calendars, reading logs, etc. for parental signature and feedback.
- Offer incentives for students to return anything you want back.
- Call the parents if there's something you want them to see.

**Name of student to be written on line at top of log.*

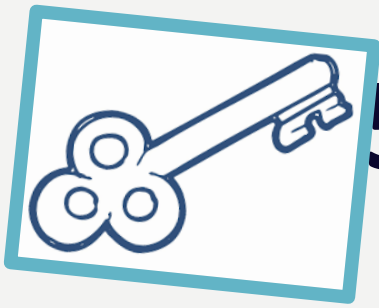
_____ **'s Reading Log**

Book Title	Number of Pages	Adult Signature	Too hard, too easy or just right?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			



**FROM OUR 8TH
GRADE
COUNSELOR**

*This was going down I-20
on Sunday. I figured it
was on its way to your
classroom.*



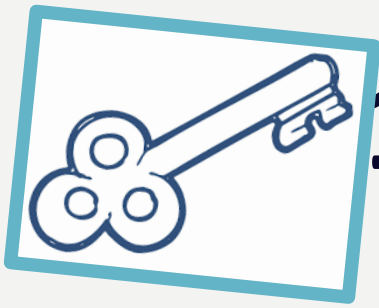
5: Communication apps

- Remind 101
 - Text @ 2ea2ch to 81010
- Bloomz
- [Class Dojo](#)

**Keys to Unlocking
the Medium-sized**

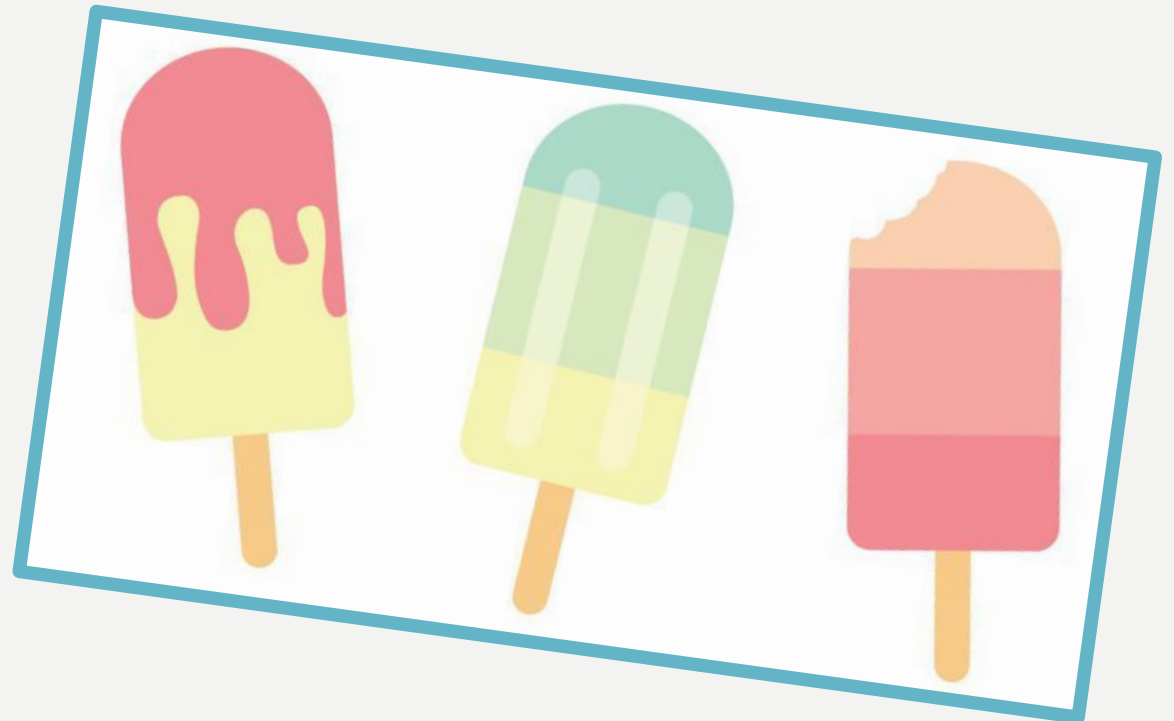
Doors:

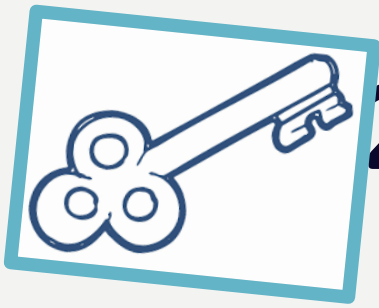
Parent and Classroom
Relationships



1: MEET & GREET

- Host a gathering before school begins or within the first month outside of school hours. (Popsicle party, picnic dinner, etc.)





2: MYSTERY READER

- Invite parents to sign up to read in your classroom.
- Send home a list of clues for the parent to complete, and have students guess who the mystery reader of the week will be.



Mystery Readers



Clue Sheet

Your Name: _____

1. Are you a man or a woman? _____
2. How many kids do you have? _____
3. Is your student a boy or a girl? _____
4. What is your job? _____
5. What color hair do you have? _____

Each day we will reveal a clue, and let the kids practice inferencing to guess who you are. When you arrive on Friday, we'll get to check our guesses. Thanks for helping us out!

Mystery Readers

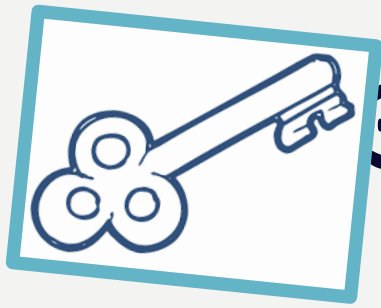
Fridays at 10:30 a.m.



Please sign up to read to us, and let us guess who you are!

I'll e-mail you a clue sheet for you to send back to us in your child's folder.
(Be sure to keep it a surprise!!!)

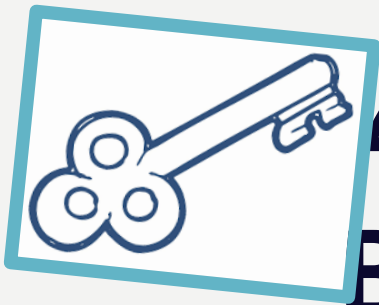
	Name	e-mail
Sept. 7		
Sept. 14		
Sept. 21		
Sept. 28		
Oct. 5		
Oct. 12		
Oct. 19		
Oct. 26		



3: CURRICULUM CAFE

- Invite parents to tell about their jobs in your classroom, and have a curriculum cafe meeting in your classroom at a set time.
- Ask volunteers to donate hot chocolate mix, paper cups, and marshmallows.





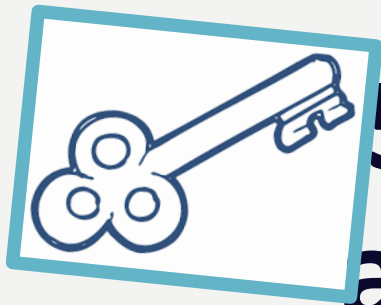
4: Mother/Daughter Book Club

- Invite mothers and daughters (or fathers and sons, etc.) to join a monthly book club.
- Parents and students read the same book together.
- At the monthly gathering, the group discusses the book and completes a service project or a learning extension.
- Ex: Esperanza Rising and cook a Hispanic meal together
or Secret Life of Girls and put together toiletry kits
for a woman's shelter
- Great for upper elementary and middle school



Book Club websites

- <https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/mother-daughter-book-club>
- <https://www.commonsemmedia.org/lists/sure-fire-picks-for-your-mother-daughter-book-club>
- <https://www.goodreads.com/genres/father-son-book-club>
- <https://www.fountasandpinnell.com/fpc/bookclubs/>



5: Mornings, Muffins, and Math

- Invite parents and students to attend a weekly math session in the mornings before school.
- Depending on interest and need, parents could either learn the strategy being taught or assist other students.
- Draw them in with food.!



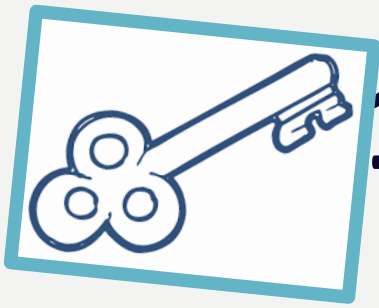
On a teacher's salary? Yes.

- Ask parents for donations. Even in schools with little parental support, parents will often donate things when asked directly.
- Grants
 - Donors Choose
 - Adopt a Classroom
 - Nissan
- Use community partners.
 - Kroger
 - Wendy's
 - Domino's
 - Local restaurants
 - Banks, churches, fitness centers



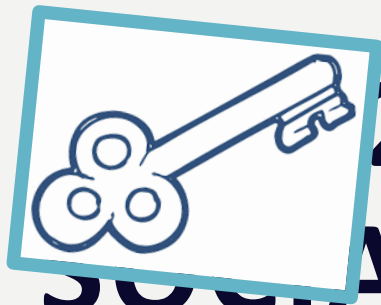
**Keys to Unlocking
the Big
Doors:**

Parent and School Relationships



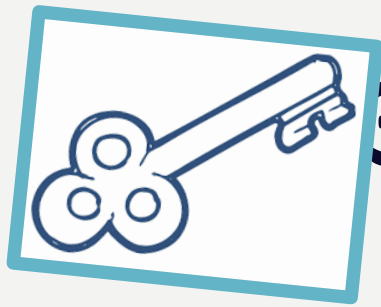
1: PARENT COMMITTEE

- Recruit teachers, parents, administrators and community stakeholders to participate in a parent/family engagement committee
- Send surveys to parents to determine what they want from the school
- Establish regular meetings and stick to them.
- Develop a plan of action and a realistic timeline to meet the needs of the school.



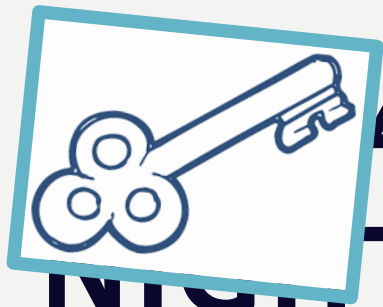
2: GET SOCIAL WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

- Establish a social media coordinator within the school.
- Post updates through FaceBook, Twitter, and Instagram
- Take pictures throughout the year of the great things happening during the day
 - First Day of School, Last Day of First Grade
 - Science experiments
 - Lunch table
 - Service projects



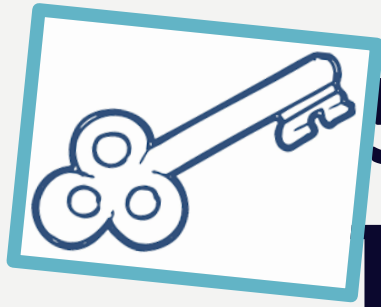
3: PARENT ACADEMIES

- Host parent nights with topics such as math instruction strategies, understanding IEPs, parenting strategies, etc.
 - [Duval County Schools Parent Academy](#)
 - [Montgomery County, Rockville, MD](#)



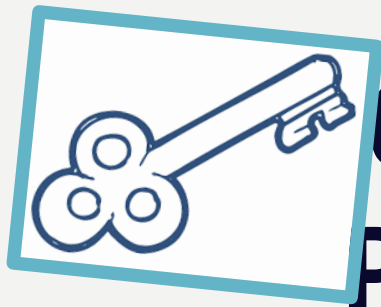
4: FAMILY DINNER NIGHTS

- Teachers host interactive workshops with parents on topics such as how to counter bullying by teaching good manners, active listening, gestures and eye contact, listening with understanding and empathy, etc.
- Students attend similar sessions led by older students, community stakeholders or teachers.
- The school provides a meal afterwards.
- Teachers could pass out meal tickets at the end of each session to ensure participation if necessary..



5: BREAKFAST WITH THE BOSSES

- Invite parents to breakfast with the principals.
- Administrators present PowerPoints on topics such as the teacher shortage, curriculum, testing, technology concerns, resources, teaching strategies, scholarship opportunities, etc.
- Parents have the opportunity to learn more about what's happening in education and to have face to face time with administrators.



6: STAR PARENT PROGRAM

- Each quarter, parents are given five tasks of which they chose at least 3 to do with their child. Ideas include things like planning, shopping and cooking a meal together; making a treat to take to someone in need or a nursing home; make a holiday craft; read a chapter book together; plan a family activity; attend the PTO event planned for that quarter; attend math night, etc. The options can change quarterly with some of them remaining consistent if you want.
- When the parent has completed 3 of the 5 with their child they simply send in a form stating that they have. Then the child is provided a gift to award to their parent.
- Usually the first quarter they were a star parent the parent got a Star Parent notepad. The second quarter they received an ink pen with Star Parent on it. The third quarter it was something else. The children were instructed to “present” these to their parents for being so great to them. They were very proud to do this.
- For the fourth quarter we had a Star Parent award ceremony where 3 or 4 quarter star parents were honored with a certificate and a final item that said Star Parent on it (maybe a lapel pin one year). We had refreshments and as we called the parent forward their child presented them with the award.

--Dr. Angie Besendorfer, WGU Missouri

Allison Ruhl, Ed. S., NBCT

aruhl@madison-schools.com



- B.A., Duke University, 1996
- M. Ed., Mississippi College, 2001
- Ed. S., William Carey University, 2018
- Ed. D. , William Carey University, graduating May 2020

- Milken Educator, 2017
- Metro Area Teacher of the Year, 2016
- Madison Station Teacher of the Year, 2015

- Mom, kid chauffeur, reader, dog walker