

PLT Title

Breaking Down Barriers to Family Engagement

Blurb for PLT Conference Brochure

Based on data, we strategized ways to increase family involvement, specifically for less engaged families. Barriers to engagement include financial, comfort level, awareness of events, transportation, and time.

Contact Information (Write * next to facilitator's name.)

Name	School	Grade Level or Subject
Devin Mailloux	Wellington	Special Education 3 rd and 4 th
Michele Markley*	Wellington	Special Education 3 rd and 4 th
Stephanie McLaughlin	Wellington	Reading Specialist 3 rd and 4 th
Sheila Walsh	Wellington	Guidance Counselor

PLT SMART Goal

During this year, we will create sustainable processes to increase engagement for families for whom barriers currently exist to fully participating in the Wellington community and in their child's education.

Key Actions

- 1) Brainstormed data sources and gathered names of families who had limited school involvement based on the data.
- 2) We identified factors which impact family engagement.
- 3) Met with PTO presidents to share our goals and talk about partnering with them to increase family engagement, focusing on the limitations of transportation, financial, and internet accessibility.
- 4) Recommended having a family engagement liaison on the PTO to ensure consideration of these barriers while planning and executing all events.
- 5) Retooled processes for Wellington After School Enrichment to address these barriers and followed up with the PTO on these.
- 6) Compiled a handout with ideas to increase family engagement, especially during conference time. We shared with staff during a staff meeting, facilitated a conversation, and collected additional ideas from staff.
- 7) Began brainstorming ideas for an off-site event to engage target population.
- 8) After a number of conversations with principal, determined that we would host a pilot neighborhood outreach event, targeting only one neighborhood, rather than the whole school.
- 9) Planned event, making purposeful choices in activities, location, staff invitees, and timing, all stemming from our goal of increasing family engagement.
- 10) Executed event (May 3)
- 11) Debriefed event to plan for future neighborhood events, gathering feedback from participants.

Findings

- 1) There are many limitations to what we can do
 - a. Financial (scholarship is limited)
 - b. Many events are run by volunteer PTO and there is only so much they can take on
 - c. This is very time consuming and hard for full time teachers to take responsibility for
 - d. District-wide procedures and systems are not always accessible for people without a computer or who are not familiar with their options or opportunities
 - e. Transportation assistance is limited
- 2) With effort and attention to these families, the impact is very positive.
 - a. Kids and thus families feel more connected to the school
 - b. More inclusive
- 3) Families in outreach neighborhood appreciated being included
- 4) Teachers were excited to participate
- 5) Teacher awareness of and sensitivity to barriers has increased
- 6) Having administrative support has made a huge difference in being able to affect change

Recommendations / Next Steps

- 1) Continue working with the PTO to have increased awareness of and sensitivity to these barriers
- 2) Engage with staff on a regular basis around these topics (not a one-time discussion)
- 3) Plan neighborhood outreach events in other neighborhoods
- 4) Consider other times and locations to accommodate families (e.g. having a dinner for after care families at pick up time)
- 5) Family literacy initiative
- 6) Begin family outreach before the kids come to kindergarten