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Activity 1.1: Survey School Environment

Time: 45 minutes

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Purpose

To review sample school surveys in order to develop an appropriate one by which to gather perceptions of the school's environment from families and community members.

Materials Needed

- Sample school survey (available at the end of this document)
    - The Family/School Partnership Checklist, adapted by Karen Bogenschneider, Carol Johnson and Brandon Covalt, with permissions.
- Planning sheet (see below)

Roles

1. Facilitator: Elicit responses from participants
2. Participants: Review provided survey and offer suggestions for the development of a suitable school survey

Activity

1. The Facilitator should provide context for this activity: *Consider identifying or developing a tool, in partnership with staff and families to assess the extent to which the school is a welcoming environment for family and community members. This survey could be given to staff and families, with the results discussed by the same development team. In turn, the survey data can be collected, analyzed, and used for action planning purposes to further the development of your strategies supporting a welcoming school environment for all families.*
2. As a group, review the sample survey provided. If appropriate, conduct a web search for additional examples.
3. Identify a survey the group favors and/or identify a team that will develop a survey that assesses the extent to which the school presents a welcoming environment.
4. Complete the action steps of the planning guide (below) which will address the development, distribution, and analysis of the school survey.

School Survey Planning Guide

Planning Prompts	Notes/Person(s) Responsible
1. Establish a team of school stakeholders (e.g. school staff, families, community members) to engage in the activity 1.6/Survey School Environment, schedule and convene team meetings.	
2. Determine target audience for the School Environment Survey.	
3. Review sample school surveys enclosed as part of this activity's set of materials. Determine: a) whether one of the sample surveys will be sufficient to administer to school stakeholders or b) whether a customized survey will be developed.	
4. Research and review other types of school environment survey tools for consideration to inform the development of the team's customized tool.	
5. Identify pre-existing survey items from the sample surveys that will be used as-is or modified for the customized School Environment Survey.	
6. Develop new (unique) survey items as needed.	
7. Determine methods for survey development (e.g. paper-based, web-based), distribution, collection and analysis.	
8. Pilot School Environment Survey and refine tool based on participant feedback.	
9. Administer School Environment Survey Tool.	
10. Analyze results of the School Environment Survey Tool.	

11. Develop an action plan for improvement based on survey results. Determine: a) What action steps are required to address focus areas as made evident from the survey. b) Define timeline associate with and personnel responsible for implementation of each action step. c) Consider when to re-administer the School Environment Survey Tool, comparing results with the baseline from step #10 to address impact/change.	

Family/School Partnership Checklist*

The purpose of the inventory is to identify how family-friendly your school is, as well as how your school could improve. Each item has been selected because scientific studies have found it to be related to family/school partnerships. While no school has all the family-friendly supports listed, it is often possible to develop such supports when citizens like you think they are important.

Directions:

(1) Carefully examine the rating scale below before completing this checklist. As you review each item, please circle the response that comes closest to describing your school. A score of 4 or 5 indicates that the activity or approach is strong and prominent. A score of 1, 2, or 3 indicates that the activity is not yet part of the school's program, or needs improvement. A score of 0 is for those items you are unsure of or do not have information about. You are encouraged to answer as many items as you can to the best of your ability – your opinions count!

(2) We are asking you to rate whether each item exists in your school, not its "quality". For example, when the question reads "Hosts regular social occasions or events where parents and school staff can get to know each other", the answer you give should be based upon whether or not this occurs at your school, and how often – NOT whether those events are fun, well attended, etc.

(3) Prior to each section of the checklist, you will see a section for school-specific data. When data is available, these items are completed based on surveys of parents and teachers from middle schools that are participating in the Families, Schools, and Communities United for Students (US) Project at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. If this data is unavailable for your school, the items will be left blank and you should answer the questions as best you can without this information.

Rating	Description:
0 – Don't Know:	Unsure whether this occurs at our school; don't have enough information about this.
1 – Never:	Strategy doesn't happen at our school.
2 – Rarely:	Occurs in only one or two classes. Receives isolated use or little time. Clearly not emphasized in our school's parental involvement plan.
3 – Sometimes:	Occurs in some classes. Receives minimal or modest time or emphasis across grades. Not a major component of our school's parental involvement plan.
4 – Often:	Occurs in many but not all classes/grade levels. Receives significant time and emphasis. A fairly major component of our school's parental involvement plan.
5 – Frequently:	Occurs in most or all classes/grade levels (i.e., school – wide). Receives significant time and emphasis. A highly major component of our school's parental involvement plan.

VII. Physical Characteristics of our school: Provide a convenient, welcoming, and user friendly environment for parents and other visitors.

Our School	Rating					
	Don't Know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
59. Has office personnel who greet parents (in person or on the phone) in a friendly, courteous way. b	0	1	2	3	4	5
60. Has signs clearly posted which warmly welcome parents and visitors. b	0	1	2	3	4	5
61. Makes directions available for parents and visitors to find their way around the school. b	0	1	2	3	4	5
62. Hosts regular social occasions or events where parents and school staff can get to know each other. b	0	1	2	3	4	5
63. Welcomes parent observers in classrooms. b	0	1	2	3	4	5
64. Has a library that is accessible for parents. b	0	1	2	3	4	5
65. Has ample and convenient parking available for parents when they visit the school. B	0	1	2	3	4	5

Additional Important School Characteristics: