

Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP)

TIPSHEET #7: Engaging Families

An Inclusion Resource Sponsored by: **CVS** Charitable
CAREMARK Trust

As out-of-school-time staff, YOU are the face of school for many families. By engaging families from the very beginning of the year you already have a relationship if the time comes for a difficult conversation.

How?

Beginning on the first day, greet every parent, even if it is just eye contact and a wave from across the room. By month two, your goal is to have introduced yourself to each parent with a positive comment about their child. *It is also very important to ask families of children with disabilities about the child's likes and dislikes, communication style, goals, and skills and strategies.*



<< Quick Tip >>

Tape a blank attendance sheet to the back of your clipboard. Put a little star next to each child's name as you meet their guardian.

Invite Families to Support You

Families love to help, but often don't know how or have limited resources. Offer them manageable, concrete opportunities: bringing milk cartons and paper towel tubes for a craft project or help with homework time. For parents with limited English, invite them to read or tell a story in their first language before or after you've read the same story in English.

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Acknowledge and Celebrate Success

It's almost a given to call home about challenging behaviors, but how often do you tell a parent about a success in their child's day? A quick comment during pickup or a note jotted in a folder can share big or small achievements.

<< Quick Tip >>

Create a stack of postcards in the beginning of the year (you can even have the kids write the addresses themselves) and send 1-2 home each week with a specific, positive message of success. By the end of the semester each family will have received one.

Alerting both child and parent to small and large successes reinforces those positive behaviors so you're more likely to see more of them and fewer of the challenging ones!

Acknowledging positive behavior is a powerful tool for turning around tough behavior

- look for small changes or baby steps that are little "wins". Jenny usually hits instead of sharing? Notice when she takes turns at kickball and write home. George is usually doing something else - anything else - during homework time? Acknowledge his effort to get started on his homework, even if he didn't complete it.

----- Cut out and copy to send home -----

Dear parent/guardian,

This week, your child was a super scholar/athlete/friend. _____ followed our program rules and _____.

I'm so pleased to send home good news, so please thank your child again for me!

Sincerely,

Find additional Tip Sheets and more information about the Special Needs Inclusion Project (SNIP) at:
www.SNIPSF.org

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