

A Family-Friendly School Walkthrough Checklist

With Scoring Guide and Additional Characteristics for Residential/Boarding School Communities

Is Your School a Family Friendly School? Research shows that when a schools and parents work together to support the education of a child, not only does the student perform better in school, but all throughout life! The best way to nurture a strong relationship between school and family is to create a friendly and welcoming school environment.

What is the purpose of a Family Friendly School Walkthrough Checklist? The checklist is designed to allow schools to assess their “family friendly” practices. This tool gives school leaders the opportunity to evaluate how inviting and “customer friendly” their school is to families and the community. It can also help to point out various areas that may have been previously overlooked and can be easily addressed.

Suggested Walkthrough Guidelines:

- Select a team leader to coordinate the walkthrough.
- Choose at least three (3) people to complete the checklist preferably one school administrator, one parent, and one school faculty member (teacher, secretary, counselor, etc...) Others may include a bus driver, a cafeteria worker, a community leader, or specialist. Each team member can complete the walkthrough separately or as a team but each person must complete their own checklist.
- After all parties have completed the walkthrough, the team leader will collect the checklists and schedule a meeting to discuss the final scores and how to address areas that need improvement.

Walkthrough Components: There will be three areas or sections evaluated during the walkthrough:



A. Welcoming Environment



B. Policies & Practices to Engage Parents



C. Home-School Communication

Using the Rating Scale

- Use the “rating scale” below to score the items under each area and provide comments and suggestions in the designated section.
- Add your scores at the end of each area section and calculate the total score at the end of the checklist.
- Please return your completed checklist to your team leader and plan to attend a brief meeting to discuss and address the findings.

Rating Scale:

- 1= No Evidence**
- 2= Some Evidence, Needs Improvement**
- 3= Meets Minimum Standards, Could Enhance Area**
- 4= Exceeds Standards**

School: _____

Date: _____

Team Leader: _____

Observer's Name: _____

Parent:____ School Administrator: ____ School Staff:____ Community Member:____ Specialist:____

Other: _____



A. Welcoming Environment	Rating	Practices being used and areas for improvement:
<p>1. The school climate reflects a welcoming tone and respect for all families, regardless of culture, ethnicity, language or disability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs by the school entrance clearly guide visitors where to check in. • The school campus and entrance to the building is inviting with a sign/banner/bulletin board welcoming parents. • ADA requirements are met. • The culture and language of the community is clearly reflected. • There are designated parking areas and parents are thoroughly informed of parking arrangements when visiting the school. 		
<p>2. The school has standards of welcoming behavior that apply to all staff, including office staff, bus drivers, security, custodians, cafeteria staff, etc.</p>		
<p>3. There are staff who immediately recognize visitors with a smile, answer the phones politely and easily provide adequate information in the language(s) of the families.</p>		
<p>4. There is comfortable seating and relevant reading material in the office area for visitors who need to wait (parent handbook, parenting magazines and books, student published work, etc.)</p>		
<p>5. The school has volunteers or staff to act as parent mentors who provide tours, translations, guidance, and support to newly enrolled families.</p>		
<p>6. There are signs located outside each classroom door noting grade level/course title, and teacher's name. Student work is displayed throughout the school. The work also includes a description of the purpose.</p>		
<p>7. Positive connections with families and communities are made outside of the school walls by collaborating with chapter houses, community centers, local businesses, libraries, restaurants, etc.</p>		
<p>8. A Mission Statement and/or policy on parent involvement is posted in the languages of the families that guides them to more information about opportunities to get involved with school programs.</p>		
<p>9. A Family Center is located in an easily accessible area of the school and is designed as a gathering place where families, school staff, students, and community members are welcomed and supported.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It supports special events and features like clothing banks, lending libraries, health fairs, parenting workshops, etc. <p>The family center information matches the developmental levels of the students, e.g. high schools connect parents with other parent centers at workforce solutions centers, and institutions of higher education.</p>		
<p>Welcoming Environment Total Score: _____ Effective practices being used and ideas for improvement:</p>		



B. Policies and Practices	Rating	Practices being used and areas for improvement:
1. A Family-School Partnerships Goal Team works to ensure that programs are carefully planned, evaluated and celebrated.		
2. School has & shares a school-level parent involvement policy developed by school staff and families. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School has active school-parent compact developed by school staff, families & students (required by Federal and State programs) 		
3. The school has a Family Coordinator or Liaison that helps to connect all parents with school community as well as coordinate volunteers, an active family center, and parent information.		
4. The school offers workshops and conferences for parents to help them understand the school policies, student progress, classroom curriculum, how teachers and parents can work together to best support student success, transitions, planning for graduation and after high school, Common Core State Standards, etc.		
5. Professional development is provided for staff and includes trainings/workshops on working with diverse families and family-school partnership program practices.		
6. The school actively recruits and welcomes new parents/guardians from all backgrounds for school committees such as the PTA or PAC for Title I, Indian Education, Bilingual Education, and/or Special Education.		
7. The parent handbook with school policies, school calendar and other information are provided to the parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year in a format that is easily understood. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process of scheduling meetings with teachers or school staff is included. 		
8. School calendars are set to accommodate parent work schedules, major community events, activities, and ceremonies.		
9. The school website is current, useful, and easily accessible to parents and families.		
Policies and Practices Total Score: _____ Effective practices being used and ideas for improvement:		



C. Home-School Communication	Rating	Practices being used and areas for improvement:
1. The school establishes a tone of respect for all families, regardless of culture, ethnicity, language or disability.		
2. The school has a system in place for ongoing assessment and feedback from parents regarding the school climate and practices. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school offers a variety of opportunities for teachers and parents/guardians to meet face-to-face, such as open house, parent conferences, class visits, etc. 		
3. Principal & staff invite parents to ask questions & express concerns. The school has a procedure in place for promptly responding to parents questions, concerns, or requests		
4. School informs families of policies, events, & opportunities using a variety of methods. The school publishes a Web site and/or newsletter with up-to-date information and useful parenting tips for all grade levels. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information is translated into other languages according to the school community's demographic make-up. 		
5. Parents are surveyed regarding their interests, talents, and availability to volunteer. Follow up communication and coordination is managed (background checks, volunteer policies and procedures, volunteer training, and matching skills and interest to school needs, etc.).		
6. Parent-teacher-student conferences are carefully planned and accommodate parents' schedules and transportation needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern for students is the focus of teacher-parent interaction. 		
7. Opportunities are available for families and teachers to meet, get to know each other, and build relationships such as class meetings, breakfasts, home visits, class observations and participation.		
8. Homework is carefully planned and managed to include families and ensure that the purposes and benefits of the homework are clear.		
9. A parent involvement goal team of school staff, parents and community representatives strategically look at developing issues that affect families and determine appropriate responses.		
Home-School Communication Total Score: _____ Effective practices being used and ideas for improvement:		



Total Score: (combine all 3 scores): _____

Scoring Guide for Each Section/Area:		Scoring Guide for overall Walkthrough:	
0-9	Not So Family-Friendly	0-36	Not So Family-Friendly
10-18	Somewhat Family-Friendly	37-72	Somewhat Family-Friendly
19-27	Family-Friendly	73-108	Family-Friendly
28-36	Five Star Family-Friendly	109-144	Five Star Family-Friendly

It is suggested that all areas that were scored with a 1 or 2 should be addressed promptly according to priority. Areas scored with a 3 should be discussed and plans for enhancements are encouraged.

In what sections (A, B, or C) does your school need the most improvement?

What are challenges in these areas?

What can be improved?

What steps will your school take to make the appropriate improvements?
For example: As stated in EPSS and Title I Plan, walkthrough team will discuss with the administrator, ways to support teachers in displaying student work in the hallways.

When do you plan to implement the improvements and who will be responsible for making the selected improvements?
For example: Administrative team and parent volunteers will work with teachers to display student work in designated area starting October 1.

Please Use Additional Pages if Necessary! **A Family Friendly school can mean different things because each school is unique; therefore, it is up to your community to determine what family-friendly means to your school.



Additional Characteristics for Residential/Boarding School Communities

Rating Scale:
 1= No Evidence
 2= Some Evidence, Needs Improvement
 3= Meets Minimum Standards, Could Enhance Area
 4= Exceeds Standards

Additional Characteristics for Residential/Boarding School Communities	Rating	Practices being used and areas for improvement:
1. A home-like environment is maintained that never losing sight of the child's need to stay connected with his/her family.		
2. Family visiting policies are clear. Families are welcome in living quarters and are encouraged to stay in regular contact with their children.		
3. The program provides transportation so children can spend weekend and vacation time with their families		
4. School staff work closely with caregivers to make sure the skills the children gain in a residential program are transferred to the home environment		
5. Flexible meeting and workshop times are available to accommodate families' schedules as well as in-home family visits for those who find it difficult to travel		
6. An active family center is in place with staff to promote full-time family advocacy to support and connect families to resources in their local communities as well as the academic success of their children		
7. The school shows commitment with special events focusing on topics such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce and Career Planning, Higher Education Opportunities • Common Core Standards and Student Expectations • High Interest topics based on surveys and needs • Family day/weekend celebrations bringing together children, families and staff. • Medical/health seminars for families 		

Identified Strengths and Needs:

Other uses for the Family-Friendly School Walkthrough Checklist:

- Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) Planning
- Title I, Title II, or Title VII Parent Involvement Requirements
- NM Teacher/Administrator Competencies, Professional Development Dossier (PDD), and Professional Development Plans (PDP)

