

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Introduction

The [Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015](#) and the [Individuals with Disabilities Act \(IDEA\)](#) each outline requirements for effective family and community engagement strategies designed to help families support the educational success of their students. Specifically, these provisions stress shared accountability between schools and families for high student achievement, collaborative development of family engagement plans with sufficient flexibility to address local needs, and programs that build a family's capacity for using effective practices to improve their own student's academic achievement. When schools collaborate with families to help their children learn, and when families participate in school activities and decision-making about their student's education, students achieve at higher levels.

The challenge, for many schools, is getting all families to participate in opportunities for engagement that the school has planned. Why do some families choose not to participate? Are there steps that schools can take to create an environment that helps every family and student to feel genuinely welcome and to create a sense of belonging in their school?

The following tool has been designed to assist schools of all sizes, and in every community, in evaluating how welcoming, or "friendly," their school is to students, families, and visitors from the local community. The tool uses a step-by-step process to carefully examine each area of the school, including the building itself, staff members, methods of communication, and the policies and procedures that guide the daily functioning of the school and district. The process of self-evaluation should assist school and district leaders in enacting changes through building improvements, professional development, and policy updates that will result in a school where every student and family feels a sense of belonging and a desire for all students to achieve to their highest potential.

Overview

What is the Welcoming School Evaluation Tool?

This document is a comprehensive tool for helping a school to evaluate the most basic level of any family and community engagement program: whether students, families, and community members feel welcome in your buildings. This Evaluation Tool should be conducted by a team of staff and community members who are engaged in the overall school improvement process. Based on the observations of the team, the Recommendation form will be completed and shared with the larger school community, and should be used to inform your school and district level planning around family and community engagement.

What is the purpose of the Welcoming School Evaluation Tool?

The purpose of the tool is to evaluate how welcoming the school is to each of the members of its diverse community. Teams will look at areas where the school may excel and areas where it may be in need of improvement. The information that is gathered will be used to help the school to set future improvement goals, to highlight areas where professional development or staff training is needed, and to strengthen the relationship between the school and the families who entrust the school with their child's academic success.

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

What are the components of the Welcoming School Evaluation Tool?

The Welcoming School Evaluation Tool has four components:

1. The Physical Environment: This section includes all of the buildings and the grounds of the school, both outside and inside. It includes parking lots, playgrounds, sports fields, or other outdoor locations where school activities take place. It also includes classrooms, gyms, libraries, and other indoor spaces where families and students interact with educators and support staff.

2. School-Wide Practices and Policies: Practices and policies are the actual ways that schools “follow the rules” on a daily basis. This section includes how new staff members learn about the school and community, how those staff members interact with members of the community, and how the community is invited to give input on and participate in the way the school works.

3. Guest Service: This section of the evaluation will look at the quality of the service that school staff offers to families and community members who interact with the school.

4. Written Materials and Communications: This section includes the school website, any texts or apps that the school uses, and any written communication, whether online or on paper, that is shared with families and community members.

Who will complete the Welcoming School Evaluation Tool?

You should select at least four people (two staff members and two community members) for your team. Consider choosing team members who represent the diversity of your families, your staff, and your community. For example, you may want to include a school leader, administrator, a teacher, a custodian, a secretary, a bus driver, school nutrition staff, a neighbor, a community leader, a family member of a special education student, a family support organization (PTA/PAC) board member, a family member of an English Learner, a family member of a general education student, a family member of a student experiencing homelessness or who is in foster care, or others who represent the various cultures in your school community. Schools serving American Indian communities (both urban and reservation-based) should include at least one of the following people in addition to family members of American Indian students: the tribal education director, a tribal council member, or the American Indian language or culture teacher.

What is the Welcoming School Evaluation Tool procedure?

- Select evaluation team members who are representative of your school community. Schools may wish to schedule evening walk-throughs for those who cannot meet during the day or to avoid disrupting teaching and learning.
- If possible, select someone to serve as a facilitator for group discussions.
- Provide a meeting room large enough for your team members. If you are evaluating each of the four sections in smaller teams, provide adequate space for each of the four teams to meet and talk separately. Teams could meet in the same room and move to separate corners.
- Provide the name of the school leader/administrator(s) who will be interviewed.
- You will need a map of the school for each member of the team.
- You will need samples of all written material sent to school communities from your school, i.e., a student handbook, two recent newsletters, a packet of materials for new students and families, etc.

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Welcoming School Evaluation Team Members

Team members may serve on multiple break-out teams based on the size of the school community, and the total number of individuals willing to participate in the work. The key is to make sure that each aspect of the overall school environment is carefully reviewed, and that the Evaluation team has the capacity to give meaningful input to the school improvement team. Teams should consist of a minimum of two school staff members and two community members, if possible.

List the members of each team below. The “title” of each person should be included; they may be a classroom teacher, family member, local business owner, tribal elder, or use another title that explains their role in the evaluation process.

The group facilitator works with each team to decide which recommendations should be sent to the school leader/administrator for corrective action or implementation. The facilitator helps the teams keep discussions on track and may assist with the final draft of a recommendation report. The facilitator may also be asked to serve as the overall team representative to the school leader/administrator, the school board, or at community events.

Physical Environment Team:

Team Member Name	Title
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Practices and Policies Team:

Team Member Name	Title
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Guest Service Team:

Team Member Name	Title
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Written Materials and Communications Team:

Team Member Name	Title
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Evaluation Team Facilitator Name	Title

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Meeting With Your Teams

Thank you for being a part of the school's Welcoming School Evaluation Team. Your input will be helpful in making our students, families, and community members feel that they are a welcomed part of the school. It is important to our school that all our families and guests feel welcome regardless of age, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or family structure. As you participate in the walk-through today, please think about the things that say "Welcome!" to you when you enter our school.

Pretend that you are a visitor who is new to the school. Look at your school from any or all of the following perspectives:

1. You are a family member of a child who will go to kindergarten next fall.
2. You are thinking about moving into the area.
3. You are the family member of a student currently attending this school.
4. You are a first-time volunteer.
5. You just moved here from another state.
6. You just moved from another part of Montana.
7. You are not comfortable speaking English.
8. You are a father.
9. You just moved to the United States.
10. You have difficulty walking.
11. You have difficulty seeing.
12. You are a neighbor of the school.
13. You did not complete high school.
14. You obtained a GED/HiSet.
15. Your school experience was not very good.

During the evaluation, you will become a member of one of four Welcoming School Evaluation Teams. These teams will examine the following elements:

- The physical environment
- School-wide practices and policies
- Guest service
- Written materials and communications

In order to remember your thoughts during the walk-through process, please put your name at the top of your individual Welcoming School Evaluation Commendations and Recommendations Form, and the school map, and make notes about the following:

- What is the school doing well?
- What could the school do to make the school more welcoming for our students, families and visitors?

At the conclusion of the evaluation time period, each team will discuss its observations and complete the Prioritizing Recommendations Form that has been provided for the team. The teams will then gather to share each of their findings. When all teams have shared their observations, the full team will rank the recommendations and create an action plan for determining the improvement goals and implementation plans for the school year.

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

If one team conducts all four parts of the evaluation, then the team should wait until all four sections are complete to decide the final recommendations and create an action plan for determining improvement goals and implementation plans for the school year.

Facilitator

A facilitator is someone who can help the team members to understand the goals of the evaluation, to keep them on task, and to help guide the discussions about which items to recommend to the district administrator for further action. A facilitator should be someone who is “neutral” and does not offer a personal opinion about the topics that are discussed in each meeting.

The facilitator should make sure that each team member has a copy of the evaluation tool and the forms for the section of the evaluation that they have been asked to complete. Each team member should also have a copy of the school map, including a map of any outdoor playgrounds, sports fields, or other facilities that will be included in the evaluation.

Team members should also be provided with a clip board to facilitate note-taking and any needed pens, highlighters, or other materials.

If the evaluation will be conducted during the school day, then team members who are not school employees should be provided with an appropriate badge.

Per district policies, team members may need to have a completed background check on file with the school prior to entering classrooms or other areas where students may be present. Check your district’s policies prior to beginning the evaluation process.

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

The sample agenda below was created for a larger school that has the capacity to fully staff four teams on the same day, at the same time. This agenda can be altered to meet the needs of your school and community. The evaluation can be conducted by one team that moves through each section of the tool on a different day. Ideally, the evaluation should be completed in a month so that the team members can review all of the recommendations while the information is still fresh in their minds.

[School Name] Welcoming School Evaluation Agenda (Large school)

10 minutes Welcome: School Leader/Administrator

20 minutes Introduction: Facilitator of the Evaluation

- History
- Purpose and Objectives
- Guidelines
- Form four teams with at least two staff members and two family members and/or community members on each team.
 - Team 1: Physical Environment
 - Team 2: School-Wide Practices and Policies
 - Team 3: Guest Service
 - Team 4: Review of Written Materials and School Website
- Each team member will complete their own checklist.

1-2 hours Evaluation Time (time needed for this agenda item is dependent on the size of the school being reviewed)

- Each team member should first read over their checklist.
- Check “YES” or “NO” to answer questions on the checklist.
 - Team 1 will walk through the school using the *Team 1 Checklist: Physical Environment*
 - Team 2 will interview the School Leader/Administrator using the *Team 2 Checklist: School-Wide Practices and Policies*
 - Team 3 will walk through the school using the *Team 3 Checklist: Guest Service*
 - Team 4 will review the school website, forms, and written communication using the *Team 4 Checklist: Written Materials and Communications*
- Each team member should mark items on the map if they wish to refer to something in a particular location in the school. (Ex. – Signs, bulletin boards, entryways, classroom displays, etc.)

1-2 hours Individual Team Discussions and Completion of Forms

- Choose a Note-Taker; one master checklist should be submitted to the Facilitator as well as all participants’ notes.
- Teams should discuss each item and agree upon the final answer or recommendation that will be given.

30 minutes Summary Report Out from Each Team

- Other Comments from all Team Members

Next Steps:

- Evaluation Team Members review findings with School Leader/Administrator
- Create Action Plan for school campus
- Reserve future dates to meet with School Leader/Administrator for plan implementation

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

[School Name] Welcoming School Evaluation Agenda (Small school)

10 minutes Welcome: School Leader/Administrator

20 minutes Introduction: Facilitator of the Evaluation

- History
- Purpose and Objectives
- Guidelines
- Form four teams with at least two staff members and two family members and/or community members on each team.
 - Team 1: Physical Environment
 - Team 2: School-Wide Practices and Policies
 - Team 3: Guest Service
 - Team 4: Review of Written Materials and School Website
- Each team member will complete their own checklist.
- Discuss the dates for completing each section of the evaluation

1 hour Evaluation Time for each checklist

- Each team member should first read over their checklist.
- Check “YES” or “NO” to answer questions on the checklist.
 - Meeting #1 - team will walk through the school using the *Team 1 Checklist: Physical Environment*
 - Meeting #2 - team will interview the School Leader/Administrator using the *Team 2 Checklist: School-Wide Practices and Policies*
 - Meeting #3 - team will walk through the school using the *Team 3 Checklist: Guest Service*
 - Meeting #4 - team will review the school website, forms, and written communication using the *Team 4 Checklist: Written Materials and Communications*
- Each team member should mark items on the map if they wish to refer to something in a particular location in the school. (Ex. – Signs, bulletin boards, entryways, classroom displays, etc.)

1 hour Team Discussion and Completion of Forms

- Choose a Note-Taker; one master checklist should be submitted to the Facilitator as well as all participants' notes.
- The team should discuss each item and agree upon the final answer or recommendation that will be given.

10 minutes Other Comments from Team Members

Next Steps:

- Evaluation Team Members review findings with School Leader/Administrator
- Create Action Plan for school campus
- Reserve future dates to meet with School Leader/Administrator for plan implementation

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 1 Checklist: Physical Environment

The physical appearance of the facility is an essential element in creating a welcoming environment. Your team will tour the school's front entrance, offices, hallways, cafeteria, gym, library, and a sampling of classrooms. While you and your teammates tour the building, consider the items listed below. Be sure to check "YES" or "NO" according to your observations.

Parking Lots, Front Entry, and Front Office	Yes	No
1. Are there signs in the community directing people to the school?		
2. Is there a sign at the entrance to the parking lot with the name of the school?		
3. Are there designated parking spaces for visitors with visible signs?		
4. Is the parking lot clean and is the pavement well maintained?		
5. Is the exterior of the building in good repair?		
6. Is the landscaping attractive and well-maintained?		
7. Is the playground equipment well maintained?		
8. Are the playground areas clean?		
9. Are the sports fields well maintained?		
10. Is there signage to direct visitors from parking lots to the main entrance in each of the languages spoken in the community?		
11. Is the main entrance clearly marked?		
12. Is the name of the school clearly visible?		
13. Are the school mascot and motto displayed near the front entrance?		
14. Is a welcome sign displayed near the entrance?		
15. Does the sign say welcome in each of the languages spoken in the community?		
16. Are there easily visible signs giving clear directions from the main entrance to the front office?		
17. Are these signs friendly and welcoming, or do they sound threatening?		
18. Is there a school directory and map posted near the main entrance that highlights important locations? (Office, Counselor's office, gym, cafeteria, library, restrooms, etc.)		
19. Are the school-day hours and office hours clearly noted near the main entrance?		
20. Does the front office appear welcoming?		
21. Are there friendly, easy-to-understand instructions for all visitors to sign in at the office and obtain a building badge/pass?		
22. When entering the school, are visitors directed to pick up a badge that says, "Family Member," "Volunteer," or "Visitor," indicating that the school considers them to be especially important?		
23. Is a guest book kept in the main office for guests/visitors to sign when they come into the school?		
24. Does the conference room feel inviting and non-threatening? (artwork, plants, etc.)		
25. Is there a seating area/waiting area for visitors that is separate from the waiting area for students visiting the office for discipline reasons?		
26. Is there a place where families can use a computer to access the online gradebook, the school website, or other online sources of information?		

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

27. Does the visitor waiting area have a display of information on local community resources, such as the local public library, public health department, office of public assistance, or other locations a family might go to seek assistance?		
28. Does the visitor waiting area have information about upcoming events in the district/school on display?		

Hallways and Signage	Yes	No
1. Are hallways clean and well lit?		
2. Are there bulletin boards near the front entrance to thank volunteers, the family support organization, booster clubs, and community members for their contributions?		
3. Are bulletin boards and displays throughout the building student-oriented?		
4. Are bulletin boards attractive, colorful, and well maintained?		
5. Do bulletin boards contain information that is useful to families and visitors?		
6. Do bulletin boards outside of classrooms display current work by all students in the class?		
7. Do pictures, bulletin boards, showcases, and displays reflect the faces of the school's children and their families, including cultural, racial, and linguistic diversity and varied family structures?		
8. Are there clearly visible signs directing visitors to the location of a restroom for adults to use?		
9. Do restroom signs include pictures for people who may not read?		
10. Are the restrooms (including all toilets/urinals, sinks, soap dispensers, and paper towel dispensers or hand dryers) in working order?		
11. Are restrooms clean and orderly?		
12. Are drinking fountains in working order?		
13. Are drinking fountains clean and clearly marked?		
14. Are lockers clean and well maintained?		

Common Areas (Cafeteria, Gym, Library)	Yes	No
1. Are there easily visible signs directing people to the location of the cafeteria, gym, and library?		
2. Are these areas clean and well maintained?		
3. Are they decorated with attractive and colorful artwork?		
4. Does the artwork reflect the school mascot or motto?		
5. Does the artwork reflect the diversity of the community?		
6. Are there signs in languages other than English that are spoken in the community?		
7. Does the cafeteria offer meals or food choices that reflect the cultures of the students and families in the community?		
8. Does the school explain to families how to pay for their children's school meals?		
9. Does the gym display banners, trophies, or other awards for student athletes and athletic teams?		
10. Does the gym have signs pointing to bathrooms and locker rooms for both the home team and visitors?		
11. Does the gym have adequate seating for the families of both the home and visiting teams?		
12. Does the library have extended hours before and after school?		

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

13. Does the librarian assist families in supporting their child's reading through book recommendations?		
14. Does the librarian publish a summer reading list by reading level?		
15. Does the library offer options for students to check out books over the summer break?		
16. Does the library contain books that reflect the diversity of students and their families?		

Classrooms	Yes	No
1. Are classrooms clearly marked with both the room number and the name of the teacher?		
2. Is student artwork or classwork displayed in the hallway outside of the classroom?		
3. Are classrooms organized and well maintained?		
4. Is classroom furniture, light fixtures, cabinets, etc. in working order?		
5. Do classroom displays reflect the subject matter being taught in the room? (Ex. Does the science room have displays of cells or animals? Does the math room have posters with triangles or formulas?)		
6. Do classroom displays reflect the diversity of the students and families in the community?		
7. Do classrooms contain posters or documents in languages other than English if they are spoken by students or families?		

Individuals with Disabilities	Yes	No
1. Are there clearly marked parking spaces for vehicles with a handicapped sticker?		
2. Are handicapped parking spaces paved and in good repair?		
3. Is there a well-maintained pathway from the parking lot to the school entrance that can be navigated by someone in a wheelchair or with another physical limitation?		
4. Are there signs in the parking lot directing people to a door that is accessible for people with a disability?		
5. Is there a ramp to assist people in accessing the front entrance of the school?		
6. Does the front entrance have doors that can be opened by an individual with a disability?		
7. Is the front entrance marked with signs for individuals with impaired vision or who are color blind?		
8. Is all signage in the building ADA compliant? Including signage for people with impaired vision?		
9. Are all areas of the building accessible to people with physical limitations? Are there elevators or ramps?		
10. Are there clearly visible signs directing people to restrooms that are ADA compliant?		
11. Are there drinking fountains that are accessible to visitors with a disability?		
12. Are there seating areas in the gym and the sports field that are accessible to family members with disabilities?		
13. Is there appropriate playground equipment for children with disabilities?		

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 1 Note-Taking: Physical Environment

Use this sheet to take notes as you conduct the Welcoming Walk-Through. You can also take notes on the school map.

Commendations – What are our strengths?
Recommendations – What are the gaps?
Additional Questions – What else would I like to know about?

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 1 Prioritized Recommendations: Physical Environment

Use this sheet to prioritize the recommendations your group has selected to address the physical environment. List each of the recommendations. Decide if the school has the power to make the changes that are needed. If the answer is “yes,” next determine if the recommendation needs to be addressed immediately or if it can wait. If the answer is “no,” who can make the changes that are needed? Finally, for those items that should be addressed immediately, rank the recommendations in the order that they should be addressed.

Recommendations			
Suggestions to make our school more welcoming to families and community members.	Does the school have the resources to make the needed changes?	Fix it: 1 – Now 2 – Soon 3 – In the Summer	Rank Order
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Additional Notes:

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 2 Checklist: School-Wide Practices and Policies

School-wide practices and policies can enhance or undermine a welcoming atmosphere. Your team will interview the school's leader/chief administrator. Use the list of questions on this page to conduct the interview. The school leader/chief administrator should provide additional information, documents, or data to support his/her answers. Please take notes so that you will be able to discuss the answers with your teammates at the conclusion of the interview.

(Recommendation: Choose 10-15 questions for the school leader/administrator)

1. What is the procedure for providing enrollment documents and information about the school/district to new families?
2. What is the procedure for providing information to families as students transition from local preschools to kindergarten, from elementary to middle school, and from middle school to high school?
3. What is the procedure for providing information to families of students who are preparing to graduate as they transition from high school to opportunities in college, a career field, or in the community? (High school only.)
4. What is the procedure for providing information to families of students who are choosing to participate in the HiSet program or who are dropping out of school? (High school only.)
5. What are the barriers that prevent families from participating, and what is the school doing to overcome these barriers?
6. How does the district engage families in the decision-making and planning process regarding which family engagement opportunities will be offered?
7. Describe your annual back-to-school event, and how families are invited to participate.
8. How is the student handbook provided and explained to families at the beginning of each year, including school emergency procedures, expectations from the student code of conduct, and any updates or changes to school policies?
9. Is there a procedure for students and families to communicate concerns, including sex, gender, racial, or cultural issues?
10. How does the school assist families in choosing appropriate educational programs for their children?
11. Are parent-teacher conferences offered at convenient times for families?
12. How does the school determine if conferences are meeting the needs of families and teachers?
13. How does the school leader/administrator ensure that office hours are convenient for families, particularly with the working schedules of families in the community?
14. How often do teachers call each student's family during the school year to invite them to an event or report something positive?
15. What actions has leadership taken to model good family engagement for the teachers and staff?
16. What professional development opportunities have been offered to all staff members to help them better engage families?
17. What professional development opportunities are offered to all staff members to help them learn about culturally responsive approaches to teaching and engaging all students?
18. What professional development opportunities are offered to all staff members to help them learn about the local culture(s) of the community and families? (For schools located on a reservation, or with a significant population of refugees, immigrants, or people with cultural practices that may differ from those of the staff and administration.)
19. Describe the professional development opportunities offered to all staff members regarding the identification of, and services provided for, students experiencing homelessness, or who are in the foster care system.

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

20. How does the school leader/administrator involve all families in making meaningful decisions about what happens in the school?
21. How do you promote meaningful, two-way communication between families and school staff?
22. What types of volunteer opportunities at the school are available to families and community members?
23. How are families and community members made aware of volunteer opportunities or school needs that they can fulfill?
24. How are all staff members encouraged to engage with families at unstructured events, such as sports events, festivals, or other community activities?
25. How are families and others in the school community invited to use the school for events?
26. How are family engagement activities linked to learning and school improvement goals?
27. How often do school faculty and staff go out into the community to interact with families at planned Meet & Greet type events?
28. Describe communication methods used with families who are more comfortable communicating in a language other than English in order for them to understand the curriculum and participate in activities.
29. How is information about school and classroom policies, school expectations, parent-teacher conferences, and bus and lunch schedules available to families who do not speak English as their primary language? How is this information provided?
30. How/when does the school provide bilingual speakers who can be called upon to translate if needed?
31. Describe communication methods used with families needing alternative methods of communication, such as American Sign Language, in order for them to understand the curriculum and participate in activities.
32. Describe the written policy for how the school district handles unpaid meal charges. Does the school provide a reimbursable meal to all children who want one in order to prevent singling out children with unpaid meal charges?
33. Describe the school's wellness policy, including goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, and other school based-activities that promote student wellness.
34. Who is involved in developing, implementing, reviewing, and updating the school wellness policy and what is the process for completing those activities (parents, students, food service staff, physical education teachers, school health professionals, school board members, school administrators, general public)?
35. How does the school ensure that children have adequate time to eat lunch?
36. How does the school inform and update the public (including parents, students, and others in the community) about the content and implementation of the wellness policy?
37. Describe how the school incorporates a positive, comfortable eating environment (recess before lunch, appropriate meal time scheduling, adequate time to eat, smarter lunchroom techniques, "division of responsibility" mealtime philosophy, staff training on the school's mealtime philosophy, prioritizing access to food, including alternative breakfast models).

Additional Notes:

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 2 Note-Taking: School-Wide Practices and Policies

Take notes on another sheet of paper as you conduct the interview with the school leader/administrator. Use this sheet to organize your thoughts after the interview is completed.

Commendations – What are our strengths?
Recommendations – What are the gaps?
Additional Questions – What else would I like to know about?

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 2 Prioritized Recommendations: School-Wide Practices and Policies

Use this sheet to prioritize the recommendations your group has selected to address the school-wide practices and policies. List the recommendations, and then first decide if the school has the power to implement new tactics. If the answer is "Yes," next determine if the recommendation needs to be addressed immediately or if it can wait. Finally, for those items that should be addressed immediately, rank the recommendations in the order that they should be addressed.

Recommendations			
Suggestions to make our school more welcoming to families and community members.	Does the school have the resources to make the needed changes?	Fix it: 1 – Now 2 – Soon 3 – In the Summer	Rank Order
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Additional Notes:



Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 3 Checklist: Guest Service

The interaction between school staff members and the public is an essential element of a welcoming atmosphere. Your team should quietly observe the school staff and visitors, watch their behavior, and listen to interactions between staff and adults who call or visit the building. This assessment is not intended to be an evaluation tool for individual staff members, but rather is intended to evaluate the climate and culture of the building.

While you and your teammates are touring the building, please check “YES” or “NO” next to the items listed below. Be sure to take notes so you will be able to discuss your observations with your teammates at the conclusion of your tour. You should have multiple team members call the school to gather some of this data.

You may want to use tally marks to indicate the number of staff members observed and the number of times you observed a particular behavior. For example, when six staff members passed a guest in the hall, two asked if the guest could be helped, three did not acknowledge the guest at all, and one looked at the guest and smiled.

Front Office Staff	Yes	No
1. Does the front office staff greet visitors quickly with a smile and in a friendly, courteous way?		
2. Do they provide visitors/families with helpful information upon request?		
3. Do people who answer the telephone do so in a friendly, professional way?		
4. Do telephone calls and messages receive a quick response?		
5. How does the person answering the phone invite two-way communication?		
6. Do front office staff know the duties of each staff member in order to pass callers on to the right person? (administrators, counselors, deans, teachers, etc.)		
7. Do front office staff have a knowledge of basic community resources so that they can refer families to assistance with basic needs, after school programs, etc.?		
8. When a person with limited English proficiency calls (if possible, simulated by a phone call from a team member who fluently speaks another language), does the staff member answering the phone demonstrate patience and attempt to find someone who can speak the caller's language or refer the caller to a phone number or person who can help?		
9. When a dissatisfied person calls (if possible, simulated by a phone call from a team member), does the staff member answering the phone remain calm, listen attentively and attempt to solve the problem or find someone who can?		
10. Do front office staff know the procedure for handling callers who remain unhappy and need further assistance?		
11. Is the front office staff careful to discuss confidential or personal information quietly so that it cannot be overheard by visitors waiting at the front desk?		
12. Do all staff members greet each other in a friendly manner (smile, nod, or hello) when passing each other in the building?		
13. Is there a location or a procedure for families to offer suggestions or ideas?		

Administrators, Deans, etc.	Yes	No
1. Do telephone calls or messages receive a quick response?		
2. Do emails from families receive a quick response?		
3. Do administrators treat all families with courtesy and respect?		

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

4. Do administrators work respectfully with families when there is an issue or disagreement with a staff member?		
5. Do administrators provide information to the community in a timely manner in the event of an emergency or incident at the school?		

Counseling Staff, Social Workers, etc.	Yes	No
1. Is there a full-time school counselor at the school?		
2. Does the counseling staff return phone calls from families quickly?		
3. Does the counseling staff respond to emails from families quickly?		
4. Do they provide families with helpful referrals to community resources?		
5. Is there a procedure for contacting families when a student is in distress?		
6. Is there a procedure, in compliance with state law as outlined in the Montana Code Annotated, for contacting families when a student is referred for participation in a counseling group or activity for dealing with anger, grief, trauma, etc.?		
7. Does the counseling staff offer activities or trainings for families regarding family engagement, child development, trauma, suicide, substance use, or other important topics?		
8. Does the counseling staff offer information or activities for families regarding study skills or test preparation?		
9. Does the counseling staff offer information or activities for families regarding financial aid, college applications, or college readiness?		
10. Does the counseling staff refer families and students to the homeless liaison or foster care point of contact when appropriate?		

Homeless Liaison, Foster Care Point of Contact	Yes	No
1. Are front office staff aware of the staff member who has been selected to serve in these positions?		
2. Does this staff member respond to phone messages quickly?		
3. Does this staff member respond to emails quickly?		
4. Does this staff member have a voice mail message that identifies them as the homeless liaison or foster care point of contact? (Staff member may use another name for these programs.)		
5. Does this staff member treat families requesting assistance with dignity and respect, and in a trauma-informed manner?		
6. Does this person assist families in advocating for the educational rights of their children?		
7. Does this person assist the caretakers of unaccompanied homeless youths in understanding their rights?		
8. Does this staff member assist families in completing the necessary forms or paperwork to request evaluations, services, or other assistance from the school/district?		
9. Does this staff member refer families to helpful resources in the community?		

Teachers, Paraprofessionals, or other Instructional Staff	Yes	No
1. Do teachers return phone calls and messages quickly?		
2. Do teachers respond to emails quickly?		
3. Do teachers provide families with a copy of the classroom procedures and expectations?		

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

4. Do teachers provide students with classwork when they are absent at the request of the family?		
5. Do teachers communicate with family members when students have been given a project that they must complete at home?		
6. Do teachers contact families in writing/email or on the phone about positive things their student has done in the classroom?		
7. Do teachers make families aware of the best method for communicating with them? (email, phone call, text)		
8. Do teachers provide families with information and guidance when a student has been referred for classroom interventions or accommodations?		

Custodians, School Nutrition, Bus Drivers, and Other Support Staff	Yes	No
1. Do support staff members return phone calls and messages quickly?		
2. Do support staff members greet families when they see them in the hallways or the lunch room?		
3. Does the school nutrition staff provide up-to-date information on school meals in a manner that is easily accessible by families?		
4. Does the school nutrition staff work with families in a positive manner to meet the dietary needs of students with allergies, medical issues, or religious restrictions?		
5. Does the school nutrition staff assist families in applying for free/reduced price meals, or refer them to the homeless liaison or foster care point of contact when appropriate?		
6. Are all frontline staff involved with school nutrition programs (cooks, lunchroom supervisors such as para-professionals, clerks, and administrators) trained on civil rights to ensure equitable treatment of students?		

Volunteers	Yes	No
1. Are there family or community members volunteering in the building?		
2. Do volunteers wear a name badge to identify them as a volunteer instead of a staff member?		
3. Have all volunteers received training on how to interact with visitors to the building?		
4. Have all volunteers received basic instruction in how to interact with families and students in a trauma-informed manner?		
5. Do volunteers greet guests in a helpful and friendly manner?		
6. If volunteers are answering phones, are they doing so in a friendly and professional manner?		

Additional Notes:

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 3 Note-Taking: Guest Service

Use this sheet to take notes as you complete the Guest Service Checklist.

Commendations – What are our strengths?
Recommendations – What are the gaps?
Additional Questions – What else would I like to know about?

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 3 Prioritized Recommendations: Guest Service

Use this sheet to prioritize the recommendations your group has selected to address guest service. List the recommendations, and then first decide if the school has the power to implement new behaviors. If the answer is "Yes," next determine if the recommendation needs to be addressed immediately or if it can wait. Finally, for those items that should be addressed immediately, rank the recommendations in the order that they should be addressed.

Recommendations			
Suggestions to make our school more welcoming to families and community members.	Does the school have the resources to make the needed changes?	Fix it: 1 – Now 2 – Soon 3 – In the Summer	Rank Order
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Additional Notes:

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 4 Checklist: Written Materials and Communications

A more welcoming environment is created when the written materials and communications sent from the school are clear, understandable, and meaningful to families and others reading them. While you and your teammates review the school's website, handbooks, newsletters, fliers, and other printed materials, check "YES" or "NO" next to the items listed below. Some questions require a written sentence or phrase. Be sure to take notes so you will be able to discuss your observations with your teammates at the conclusion of your review.

Website, Emails, Texts, or other Electronic Communication	Yes	No
1. Does the district have a regularly updated website?		
2. Is the website compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act?		
3. Is the website smartphone adapted?		
4. Does the website contain information in other languages that are spoken in the community?		
5. Is the website free of educational jargon and are acronyms explained?		
6. Is the district mailing address, physical address, and phone number(s) listed on the front page of the website?		
7. Is the website attractive, inviting, and easy to navigate?		
8. Is someone unfamiliar with the website able to find school documents and forms necessary to enroll a student in school and apply for free/reduced price meals without difficulty?		
9. Does the website contain a separate webpage for each school in the district?		
10. Is it easy to find the pages for the school counselor, student services, Title I, English Learners, homeless liaison, and other federal programs?		
11. Are teachers listed in a staff directory with their name, subject area, and contact information?		
12. Are there links to webpages or homework sites for individual teachers?		
13. Are sports team coaches and club sponsors identified in the directory?		
14. Is an updated school calendar located on the website?		
15. Does the website contain a calendar of upcoming sporting events?		
16. Does the website contain a calendar of extra-curricular activities?		
17. Does the school website have a way for families or community members to contact the school?		
18. Does the website contain information about the family support group? (PTO/PAC)		
19. Does the district send automated messages to families through email, text, or app?		
20. Are messages written in language that is easy to understand?		
21. Do the messages tell families who to contact to get more information?		
22. In the event of an emergency, do the messages contain information for next steps that families will need to take?		
23. When emergencies are over, does the district notify families in a timely fashion?		
24. Does the district have a link to an electronic gradebook that families can access?		
25. Does the gradebook provide families with information about their child's attendance?		
26. Do teachers regularly update grades in the electronic gradebook?		
27. Is there a location in each school building where families can access a computer to view their student's grades or attendance?		

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Handbook	Yes	No
1. Is the handbook clear and understandable to someone who is new to the school?		
2. Is the handbook free of educational jargon and are acronyms explained?		
3. Does the handbook explain all available programs and how families can access the services offered by those programs for their student?		
4. Does the handbook clearly explain all procedures and expectations?		
5. Does the handbook list the homeless liaison, foster care point of contact, and other support staff who assist students and families in crisis?		

Newsletters, Fliers, and Other Printed Materials	Yes	No
1. Does the school provide a regular newsletter with information for families? How often?		
2. Do printed materials use a font that is easy to read and is considered compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act?		
3. Are materials available in languages other than English that are spoken in the community?		
4. Does the school send home information about community events that are of interest to families and students?		
5. Does the school send out information that reflects the diversity of the student body and school community?		
6. Are family and community volunteers recognized?		
7. Do articles about staff members, students, and families appear in district newsletters and fliers?		
8. Is student work (art, photographs, writing, etc.) highlighted in any materials printed and distributed by the district?		

Additional Questions:

1. How does the district let families know about the school website's address?
2. How does the district let families know about the school's presence on social media or about apps that the school uses to communicate with families?
3. How does the school make resources available to families on parenting and becoming involved in their child's education?
4. How are the school's educational and extra-curricular programs explained?
5. How does the school communicate regularly with non-custodial parents?
6. What types of outreach does the school provide to parents who are incarcerated?

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 4 Note Taking: Written Materials and Communications

Use this sheet to take notes as you conduct the Welcoming Walk-Through.

Commendations – What are our strengths?
Recommendations – What are the gaps?
Additional Questions – What else would I like to know about?

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Team 4 Prioritized Recommendations: Written Materials and Communications

Use this sheet to prioritize the recommendations your group has selected to address regarding written material and communication. List the recommendations, and then first decide if the school has the power to implement new tactics. If the answer is “Yes,” next determine if the recommendation needs to be addressed immediately or if it can wait. Finally, for those items that should be addressed immediately, rank the recommendations in the order that they should be addressed.

Recommendations			
Suggestions to make our school more welcoming to families and community members.	Does the school have the resources to make the needed changes?	Fix it: 1 – Now 2 – Soon 3 – In the Summer	Rank Order
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Additional Notes:

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Welcoming School Team Recommendations

After reviewing Evaluation components with your team, use the charts below to list action items for the school leader/administrator. Select the five most important issues that need to be addressed in each component of the Evaluation. Determine the action needed to address the issue. Suggest a deadline for when this item should be completed. Be aware that any changes to school/district policies may need to go before the school board for three public readings before being approved. The School Improvement Team and the school leader/administrator will determine which staff member will be responsible for leading efforts to complete the suggested actions.

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Physical Environment			
Issue	Action Needed	Deadline	Person Responsible
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Practices and Policies			
Issue	Action Needed	Deadline	Person Responsible
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Guest Service			
Issue	Action Needed	Deadline	Person Responsible
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Welcoming School Evaluation Tool

Written Materials and Communication			
Issue	Action Needed	Deadline	Person Responsible
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			