



NCSE | National Center for School Engagement

Family and Community Engagement in Creating Positive School Climates

**Presentation at the Blueprints Pre-Conference
March 17, 2008**

By

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National Center for School Engagement

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Family and Community Engagement in Creating Positive School Climates

Summit on School Engagement
March 17th 2008

Judith Martinez MURP, Colo. Dept. of Education,
William Porter PhD, Creating Caring Communities

Welcome!

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Agenda Topics

- Defining school engagement and identifying roles in fostering positive school climates
- School Engagement Research
- Emerging strategies and best practices that foster engagement in schools
- Characteristics of a welcoming school climate (Caring Community)

School Engagement
is the foundation of
academic success and a
positive school climate.

It is a **process** of events and **opportunities** that leads to students having the skills and confidence to cope with life's struggles and feel safe in the school environment.

- Creating Caring Communities

Family & Community Engagement

Families take an active role in nurturing and educating their children, and are connected to the school and community in meaningful ways



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Family & Community Engagement

School staff and volunteers create a welcoming environment, actively engage family members, and partner with community members.

Community members understand the primary goals of the school/district and work with schools to plan and implement effective strategies to attain goals.

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School Engagement

- Belief not a program
- Process not a product
- We all play a role, not the role of one group



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School Engagement Research

Studies show that relationships, resources and school climate play a significant role in school engagement.

Consistent Themes Cited in the Research

- Students sense of belonging
- Being part of the school
- Whether or not students like school
- Level of teacher supportiveness and caring
- Presence of a good friend in school
- Fair and effective discipline
- Participation in extracurricular activities
- Feeling safe

*Taken from Literature Review by
Heather Libby (2004)
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The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts

- Findings from focus groups/interviews with over 400 people who dropped out of school.
- Why did they dropped out of school?
 - lack of connection to the school environment
 - perception that school is boring
 - feeling unmotivated
 - academic challenges
 - weight of real world events

- Respondents also identified what could be done to improve school completion
 - Opportunities for real-world learning (internships, service learning, etc.) to make classroom more relevant
 - Better teachers who keep classes interesting
 - Smaller classes with more individual instruction
 - Better communication between parents & school. Parents make sure their children go to school every day
 - Increase supervision at school: ensure students attend classes

Taken from research by J. Bridgeland, J Dilulio Jr, and K Morison and funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2006)

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Involving Parents of At-Risk Youth

Factors that foster involvement and engagement:

- **Strong, Mutually Respectful Relationships**
 - Good relationships between school/families are critical to student success
 - If at least one person at the school is connected with the family, the parents were engaged, satisfied and felt heard
 - Good relationships are built on mutual respect, built early and are based on a caring, welcoming environments
- **Question Assumptions and Negative Labels**
 - Parents need help in letting go of past experiences that may be influencing their child's current school experience
 - Schools need to let go of the students' past and give students a second chance

Involving Parents of At-Risk Youth

- Good Communication between School and Home
 - Early communication about issues before problems escalate
 - Finding a balance between communicating “good” and “bad” news is important
 - Mutual initiation of communication through weekly reports, emails and phone calls
- Welcoming Climate for Students in Transition
 - Parents needs to know that schools care about their child’s success no matter what challenges they are facing
 - Start transition process early to cover all bases in making sure at-risk students have a positive transition
 - Connect parents and students to community resources

Involving Parents of At-Risk Youth

- Suggested Strategies and Support
 - Parents suggested parenting workshops, classes and informal self-help groups.
 - Families need community resources to help with basics and school supplies
 - Schools should have fun events that parents can coordinate or simply attend.
 - Childcare, food, translation services, weekend scheduling and assistance with transportation help engage parents in attending school events and activities

Based on interviews/focus groups with 60 parents, program staff and educators conducted by the National Center for School Engagement (2008)

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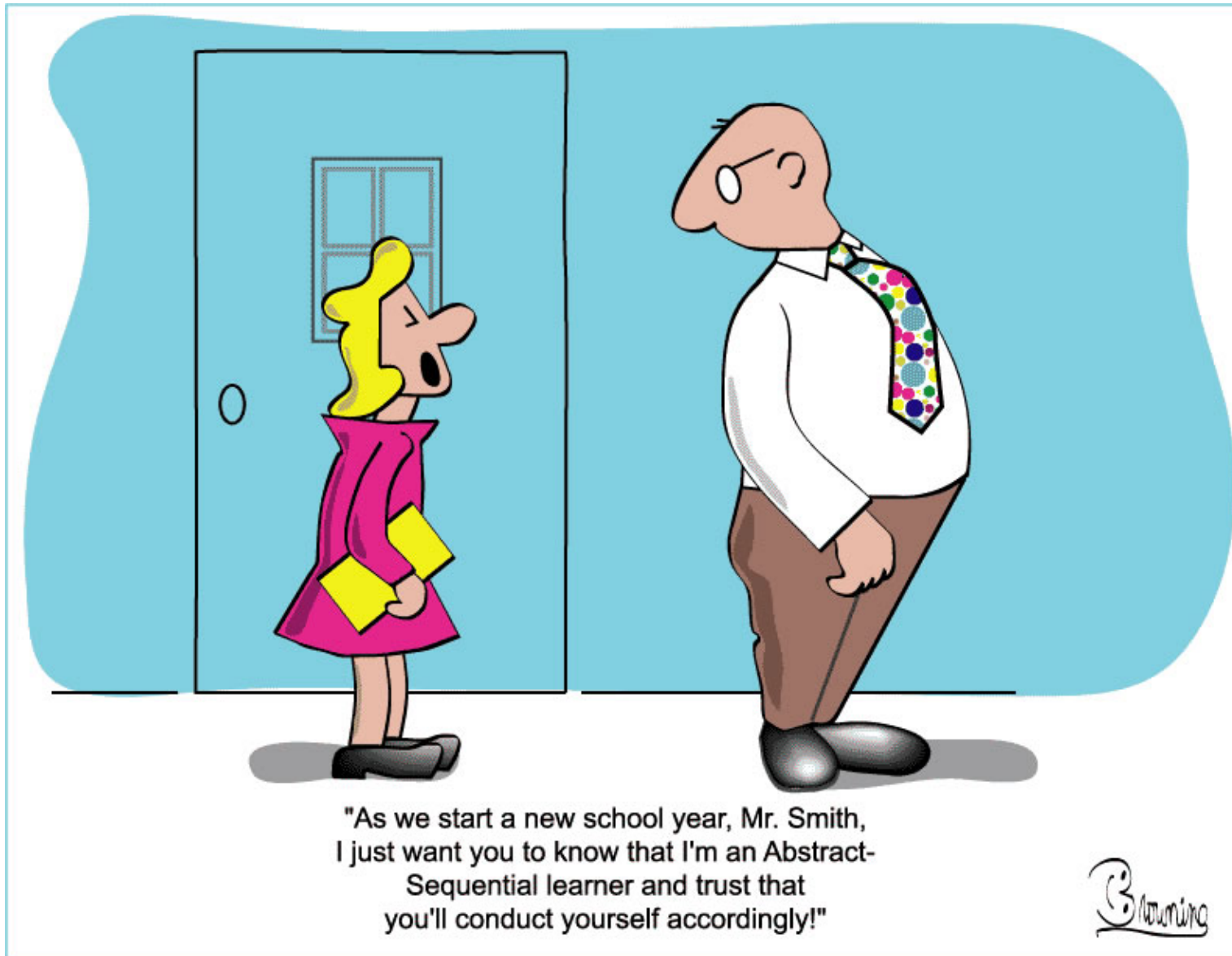
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Emerging Strategies and Practices that Facilitate School Engagement

- Mission Statement:
 - Clear Expectations
 - Everyone on Board
 - Explore personal values and beliefs
 - Students
 - Staff
 - Community

Operating Principles

- Teaching vs. Punishing
- Empowering vs. Controlling
- Proactive vs. Reactive
- Student Centered vs. Adult/teacher centered
- Respect/responsibility vs. Fear/punishment



"As we start a new school year, Mr. Smith,
I just want you to know that I'm an Abstract-
Sequential learner and trust that
you'll conduct yourself accordingly!"

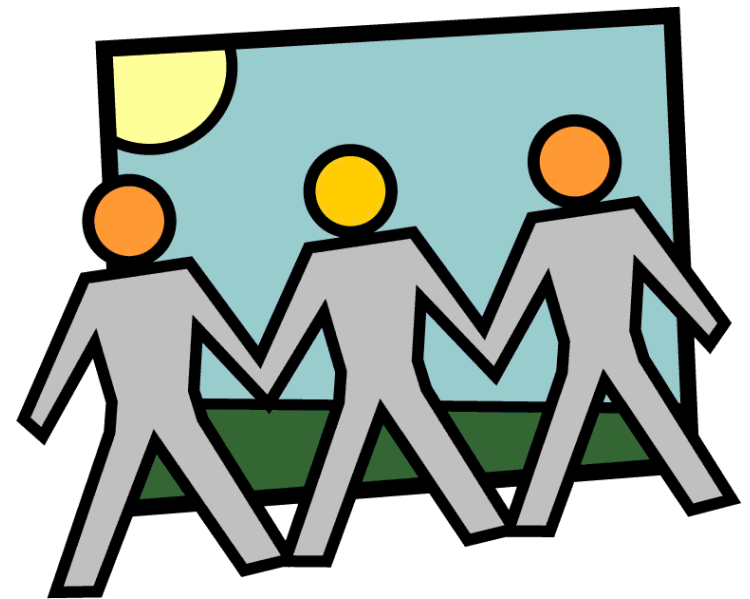
Browning

Creating a Welcoming School Climate

- Educate staff, students and community about goals
- Use data to monitor progress
- Acknowledge individuals as part of the community
- Celebrate progress made toward goals

Opportunities for School Engagement

- Admissions
- Parents
- New students
- Activities and Athletics
- Arts
- Academics



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Opportunities for School Engagement (Cont.)

- Attendance
- Transitions- Elementary to middle to high School
- Discipline-Driven by Mission
- Peer Relations/student Engagement/
Developing Caring communities

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The extent to which schools and communities create stable, caring, engaging and welcoming environments is the extent to which all our children will thrive.

- *School Connectedness: Improving the Lives of Students*, Dr. Robert Blum

- Blum, Robert. *School Connectedness: Improving Student Lives*. John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Baltimore, MD, 2005.
- Libby, Heather. *Measuring Students' Relationships to School: Attachment, Bonding, Connectedness, and Engagement*. *Journal of School Health* 2004, Vol 74, No. 7, pp 274 283.
- Bridgeland, J., Dilulio Jr, J. and Morison, K. *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts*. Report by Civic Enterprise in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2006.
- H. MacGilivray and G. Mann. *Involving Parents of At-Risk Youth in School*. Study by the National Center for School Engagement for the Colorado Dept. of Education, 2008.