



Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership Schools: Achieve Elementary

Part of the Georgia Family-Friendly Partnership School Initiative

How can the Georgia Virtual Family-Friendly Partnership Schools make a difference in the way your school looks and operates? We know schools are busy places with many responsibilities, however between all the action sometimes our families feel disconnected from the school. The following stories provide realistic scenarios of experiences when parents, families, or community volunteers have not felt welcome in their school. While these scenarios are not the norm everywhere, they occasionally happen. So take a minute to read through them and then check out the Georgia Virtual Family-Friendly Partnership Schools to see what changes you can make!

Family - Friendly Front Office?

Jonathan Brooks is a 3rd grader at Achieve Elementary School. His father, Mr. Brooks is a truck driver who spends much of his time on the road and is not able to be involved in his child's education as much as he would like. On one of his days off he decides to drop in on his child to observe him in the classroom setting. He enters the building and because of safety precautions knows he is supposed to stop by the front office. When he walks into the front office he is not greeted by the office staff because they are busy talking with one another. He decides to be patient and wait until they finish their conversation; however, there are only four chairs to sit in, all of which are occupied so he stands near the doorway. While waiting, he glances at the information board and learns about some upcoming events going on at the school. The math league is having their final competition in two weeks and since Jonathan is on the team he hopes his work schedule will allow him to attend. Near the information board he also notices some brochures that are of interest to him, however when he goes to take some he realizes that the stands are empty and the only ones left are marked "do not remove." Finally, the secretary acknowledges his presence and asks what he wants. Mr. Brooks introduces himself as Jonathan Brooks' father and explains that he was hoping to observe his child in his classroom for about a half an hour before joining him for lunch. The secretary says that is fine and asks him to sign in and provide a photo ID. Lastly, she issues him a visitor's badge that must be worn at all times and mentions that the school's resource officer will be monitoring.

After visiting the front office in Achieve Elementary, what changes can be made that still maintain school safety but also make the front office more family – friendly?



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Family - Friendly Cafeteria?

Traci Cox is a 1st grader at Achieve Elementary School. Her grandfather, Mr. Cox is excited about attending the school's annual Grandparent's Day and eating lunch with his grandchild. Mr. Cox arrives early so he can view the students' work and familiarize himself with the building since this is his first visit to the school. Once he finds the cafeteria, he is surprised that the walls are bare. On the stage he notices a podium set up for a speaker, but there is not even a sign that welcomes grandparents for today's luncheon. He looks around for someone to ask about where he should sit for lunch but the cafeteria staff is not available. As he walks around he glances at the bulletin board to see what the lunch for today will be, but all of the information is outdated. Finally, a staff person approaches him and asks if he needs any assistance. Mr. Cox introduces himself and inquires about where to sit for the luncheon as he waits for his granddaughter's class to arrive. He also inquires about what the meal will be and how much it will cost. The staff person solemnly answers his questions and then directs him to the seating area which only has low student chairs. Mr. Cox chooses to stand as he has back problems and the student chairs do not provide him with adequate back support.

After visiting the cafeteria in Achieve Elementary School, what are some changes that can be made to ensure that visitors for special events are welcomed by making the cafeteria more family – friendly?

Family - Friendly Classroom?

Abby Anderson is a 2nd grader at Achieve Elementary School. Her mother, Ms. Anderson regularly visits the school's parent resource center and is willing to volunteer wherever she is needed. Abby's teacher, Ms. Spilling, is very busy and has seen Ms. Anderson around the school on multiple occasions. Ms. Spilling does not have parent volunteers in her class and does not have a system in place to regularly communicate with parents. Recently, Ms. Anderson noticing her daughter has been struggling academically scheduled a parent- teacher meeting to request information about what Abby should be learning at her grade level and how she can help reinforce these skills at home. During the meeting she also indicated her interest in becoming more involved at the school as a classroom volunteer and requested information on upcoming school and community events. She has not received notices at home or been able to locate the upcoming events in the classroom when visiting.

After visiting the classroom in Achieve Elementary, what are some changes that Abby's teacher can implement in her classroom to make it more family - friendly?



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Family - Friendly Parent Resource Center?

Emilio Estevez and his family have recently moved to the school district from the country of Colombia in South America. This is his first year attending Achieve Elementary School and he is in the 4th grade. Emilio lives with his parents and grandparents who all speak very little English. However, Emilio's mother speaks more English than his father. Emilio's parents wanting him to succeed at his new school would like information on how to become more involved in his education both at home and at school. They learn about the parent resource center and visit it one day when they are both off from work. When they arrive at the center however, they realize that there is not any information available in Spanish. In addition, there is not a Spanish speaking person on staff or even a translator that can be called upon to assist. The parent involvement coordinator is very nice but is unable to assist them with their needs. Mrs. Estevez knows of other parents in her community that would use the school's parent resource center if they were aware of its existence and if it could offer resources understood and needed by the community. Mrs. Estevez politely expresses her thoughts to school staff as she leaves hoping that some positive changes will be made.

After visiting the parent resource center in Achieve Elementary School, how can the parent resource center improve its resources and leverage the talents of Spanish speaking families at the school and in the community to make it more family – friendly?