Podcast Script – Families

Welcome listeners! My name is Dave, an Education Technology Specialist on the U.S. Department of Education's You for Youth Technical Assistance Team. In this podcast series, we investigate how to build a positive organizational culture while sharing best practices for living out your organization's vision and mission. In this podcast, we discuss how the culture and climate of a program can and should impact not just your students, but also your families.

Often programs spend a great deal of time defining and developing their culture and climate with a focus on staff and students. And that is great…they should be our focus! But we don't want to forget about our families. In 21st CCLC programs, we serve students AND their families. However, your families experience your culture and climate differently than students. Let's explore how to ensure your families are being positively impacted by your culture and climate.

If you asked your families what your program vision and mission were, would they know? Were any family members engaged in the creation of those statements? If you are just getting started with creating your program's vision and mission statement, be sure to include family members on your program team. This will ensure their buy-in from the start. However, some of you may have already created your vision and mission…so how can you get family buy-in now? First, how you disseminate that information to families. Make it readily accessible in your registration packet, on your website, on your sign out table, and on your social media. Now take it a step further…where and how can you discuss it? Think about upcoming family events where you could take a few minutes to share your vision and mission. Don't just read them off the page. Explain how they came to be, how they drive your program, and what that means for their own family…make it personal.

Once you have increased awareness, you should focus on getting families connected. Think about the culture and climate statements that you created. Did you address families? Many times they are not included or only casually. Take time to sit down with your program team and discuss exactly how you want families to experience your culture. Look at each culture statement and write climate statements that specifically pertain to families. For example, if your culture statement was "Build respectful relationships with everyone", what would that look like in action with families? It could include behaviors or actions such as, "We greet family members every day" and "We ensure each student gets at least one positive phone call home each month." Notice that some still benefit students; that is fine, there will often be overlap between what is positive for students and families. You're only further strengthening your culture and climate.

Next, think about how you can ensure that your staff are effectively implementing your program culture with families to create a positive climate. Just as you would train your staff on how you expect them to interact with students, you will need to train your staff on how you would expect them to carry out your family-oriented culture and climate statements. This is a great opportunity for professional development. Think back to our example culture statement regarding building respectful relationships…what professional development could assist staff in effectively building respectful relationships with families?

Training on culturally competent communication could be beneficial for program with diverse populations. Or maybe, you host training on how to conduct monthly positive phone call for each student. Fully equipping your staff will help ensure your culture and climate are implemented

Podcast Script – Families

with fidelity. There are many great resources on Y4Y to help you train your staff to communicate and engage your families.

It is also important to review your family engagement opportunities through the eyes of your families. Have you surveyed or gauged their interests and needs regarding family programming or were assumptions made based on limited knowledge? Conducting a semiannual family survey (in their native language) will provide valuable information about what your families want from your program, what they feel they currently receive from your program, things they are interested in, and the needs they have. This will contribute toward building respectful relationships with families…they will feel their opinion and knowledge are valued and important. It's voice and choice for adults!

Finally, how will you assess whether you have built a program culture and climate that families feel a part of and experience positively. You can use your family surveys or conduct a focus group to ask a few questions about what your program feels like for adult family members, how welcome families feel at the program, or whether they feel they have a positive relationship with program staff. Remember to align your questions with your culture and climate statements that way you know exactly which areas are particularly strong and which could benefit from further development. You can also informally assess your progress through conversations with families and your program team throughout the year.

Explore the other parts of this Click and Go to learn more about organizational culture and gain tools, resources, and insight into how to build a strong culture and climate in your program. Remember strong program culture and climate can change parents from ambivalent consumers of your program to raving fans and supporters of your program!

Good luck in your work and thank you for allowing You 4 Youth to be your professional learning partner.