

Effective leaders employ several strategies in order to lead a successful school community. These leaders must have strong core values, exercise good decision-making, and build relationships with the students, staff, and community in order to have effective communication, collaboration, and respect among stakeholders.

Effective leaders need to understand their core values and use them to communicate effectively with all of their stakeholders. Open communication fosters a learning environment for both students and teachers by providing a foundation built on honesty, trust, compassion, and courageousness. Effective principals need to understand their own core values to communicate effectively with their stakeholders in their schools and communities.

In my experience, successful administrators provide community members a say in decisions even if they are small to increase engagement, collaboration, and respect. Open lines of communication, both receiving and given, enable stakeholders to feel connected and empowered in a community school. Providing opportunities for community members, staff, students, and parents to provide feedback and insight into initiatives proves worthy of effective administrators. In order for leaders to build relationships with all stakeholders, equal, interactive, and feedback oriented communication strategies must be in place.

Effective leaders need to provide multiple means of communication to meet the necessities of all families and community stakeholders. Through building a school community, which fosters students to engage and participate with their families, two-way communication is key, and builds a better school for all. Simple methods, such as allowing students to create invitations to bring

home to their families in their own language, parent and community surveys, phone calls, translated text messages, social media posts, and knowing and meeting the needs of individuals with hearing, vision, or physical mobility challenges will enable families to be more highly engaged in their child's education.

The barriers students face on a daily basis may also influence their parents. Effective leaders must try to eliminate as many of the barriers as possible to foster parent and community engagement. Leaders may offer meet and greets, dinner and literacy opportunities, as well as other opportunities to bring in stakeholders, provide them with necessities, or the opportunities to build a better life for themselves and their families.

In my experience, I have worked with various committees in building connections with our students, their families and the community through home visits, open houses, giveaways, curriculum nights, and the parent teacher association. These opportunities strengthen student learning both in and out of the school. Students may be more motivated to succeed, as well as building collaboration between parents/guardians, students, and teachers. Improved behavior and fewer absences may be additional benefits, which optimize the student's time in learning opportunities.