



Establishing positive communication with families can often be a challenge, and this is even truer when working with families who may not speak English as their first language. However, these challenges can be addressed with intentional work with families, as evidenced by the English as a Second Language (ESL) Parent Information Nights held by Academy School District 20.

These information nights are held by the district once per quarter and are open to all families K-12 who have children in the ESL program. They are designed to improve communication and parent collaboration not only through providing information to parents, but also by developing relationships. The information that is presented is intended to help empower families to be able to support the learning of their children. These information nights also encourage relationship building between families, creating an even stronger and larger community of support.

There are many different informational sessions that are provided at the information night, and the topics are determined by feedback from families, or are topics that would impact students. Examples of topics include what to expect in parent-teacher conferences, academic expectations of the district, English Language Proficiency plans for students, the grading scale, State testing, and stimulations of elementary and high school classes. The information sessions are varied, and provide insight and guidance to families on district policy as well as student learning. All of the information is provided to parents in their native languages and interpreters are also present.

Having these sessions provided information on school programs and services that families could use to help them support their students, both academically and socially. The safe and friendly environment ensured that families felt comfortable enough to engage in communication and partnering, and to become an integral part of their student's school community.

Evaluation of the information nights showed that parents greatly value them, especially the sessions that were determined by parent feedback. Changes were made based on suggestions from parents and educators for information nights going forward. Academy 20 sees including parent feedback as vitally important to this process, and will continue to do so in the future.