



**Indicator:** Staff development is built into the schedule for support staff (e.g., aides, clerks, custodians, cooks) as well as classroom teachers. (5644)

**Explanation:** All district and school staff members receive training in the particular requirements of their positions. This training, of course, requires its own planning and scheduling, some by the district and some by the school. In addition to providing training on specific job responsibilities, it is useful for staff to understand the goals and philosophy of the district and school, the ways they are expected to interact with students, and to value their roles as ambassadors to the community.

**Questions:** Do your district and school schedules include sufficient time for training of all staff? Does the training include both job-specific training and information on the goals and philosophy of the district and school? Does it include training on how all staff members best serve as ambassadors to families and the community? On how they are expected to interact with students and visitors?

Districts, as they are planning professional development for their schools might consider the ways in which all school staff affect the learning environment and overall impression of a school. A high-functioning, robust, learning environment is probably not populated with cold and impersonal front office staff. Students who are proud of their school and enjoy attending are not greeted by scowling lunchroom staff or grumpy custodians. Everyone in the school plays an important role in the overall atmosphere and reputation of a school.

While the focus of professional development will and should remain squarely on improving instructional quality, it is also wise to invest some time and resources in the other staff who make up the community of the school. With that in mind, here are some practical suggestions:

### **A Welcoming Place**

A part of every school staff member's job is to be a positive ambassador to the school community. Including training for staff on the school as a welcoming place is part of any staff development program.

1. The school telephones are answered by staff who are pleasant, cheerful, and helpful.
2. All staff—including teachers, teachers' aides, clerks, custodians, cooks, and others—greet visitors in the hallway in a pleasant and helpful manner, to solicit their needs, and to direct them to the office.
3. Office staff greet visitors promptly, cheerfully, and helpfully.
4. We have a written policy regarding visits by parents to their children's classrooms. Our policy includes:
  - a provision that advance permission is requested,
  - procedures to notify the teacher.
  - a friendly hand-out for visiting parents to explain their role in the classroom—where they should sit and

what the teacher will expect them to do, and

- guidelines for teachers to greet parents warmly and explain to them what is going on in the classroom.
5. The signs that greet visitors outside our doors and in our hallways are friendly while also being clear about our expectation that visitors register in the office. Helpful signs pointing to the office are placed on hallway walls.
  6. Our school provides special attention to welcome families that are new to the school.
  7. Our school has clear expectations of all school staff that they address students and parents respectfully.
  8. Our school makes every effort to minimize interruptions in the classrooms, including the frequency of announcements.

**Source:** Academic Development Institute, *Solid Foundation School Community Council Planning Guide*. Also see *Handbook on Family and Community Engagement*.

### References and Resources

- Redding, S., Murphy, M., & Sheley, P. (2011). *Handbook on family and community engagement*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from [www.adi.org](http://www.adi.org). See Download ADI Publications.
- Walberg, H. (Ed.) (2007). *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement. Retrieved from [www.adi.org](http://www.adi.org). See Download ADI Publications.

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