



# New Jersey State PIRC Family Friendly School Walkthrough Checklist



## Is your school a Family Friendly School?

Research shows that when a schools and parents work together to support the education of a child, not only does the student perform better in school, but all throughout life! The best way to nurture a strong relationship between school and family is to create a friendly and welcoming school environment for the families of the students. This is the primary method of improving parental involvement!

## What is the purpose of the NJPIRC Family Friendly School Walkthrough Checklist?

The New Jersey State Parent Information Resource Center (NJPIRC) has adopted this Family Friendly Walkthrough Checklist to allow schools to assess their "Family Friendly" Practices. This tool gives school leaders the opportunity to evaluate how inviting their school appears to the parents and community of the school. It can also help to point out various areas that may have been previously overlooked and can be easily addressed.

## Suggested Walkthrough Guidelines:

- Select a team leader to coordinate the walkthrough.
- At least three (3) people are to complete the checklist preferably one school administrator, one parent, and one school faculty member (teacher, secretary, counselor, etc...) Others may include a bus driver, a cafeteria worker, a community leader, or an NJPIRC staff member. Each team member can complete the walkthrough separately or as a team but each person must complete their own checklist.
- After all parties have completed the walkthrough, the team leader will collect the checklists and schedule a meeting to discuss the final scores and how to address areas that need improvement.

**Walkthrough Components:** There will be three areas or sections evaluated during the walkthrough:

- A. Welcoming Environment
- B. Policies & Practices to Engage Parents
- C. Home-School Communication

**\*Please complete all areas as if you were totally new to the school, new to the area or even new to the country! How welcoming is your school to all parents? In order to remember your thoughts during the walkthrough, take notes on what your school is doing well and how some areas can be improved.**

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Walkthrough: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Community Member \_\_\_\_\_

School Administrator \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency Staff \_\_\_\_\_

School Faculty \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

1. Use the “rating scale” below to score the items under each area and provide comments and suggestions in the designated section.
2. Add your scores at the end of each area section and calculate the total score at the end of the checklist.
3. Please return your completed checklist to your team leader and plan to attend a brief meeting to discuss and address the findings.

Rating Scale:    1= No Evidence                      2= Some Evidence/  
Needs Improvement                      3= Meets Minimum Standards/  
Could enhance area                      4= Exceeds Standards

Area being rated:	Your Score	Comments/Suggestions
<b>A. Welcoming environment</b>		
1) Parents are thoroughly informed of parking arrangements when visiting the school.		
2) The entrance to the building is inviting with a sign/banner/bulletin board welcoming parents.		
3) There are signs by school entrance that clearly guide or show visitors to the main office.		
4) The office staff immediately recognizes visitors with a smile, answers the phones politely and easily provides adequate information.		
5) There is a parent resource room or comfortable area available where parents have access to books, educational materials and resources.		
6) There is a sofa or comfortable chairs available in the office area for visitors who need to wait.		
7) The school has volunteers or designated staff to act as parent mentors who provide tours, guidance and support to newly enrolled families.		
8) There are signs located outside each classroom door noting grade level/course title, and teacher’s name.		
9) The school creates displays that reflect diversity and the families in the school community.		
<b>Total Score for Welcoming Environment:</b>		<b>Area Comments/Suggestions:</b>

Observer’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Community Member \_\_\_\_\_

School Administrator \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency Staff \_\_\_\_\_

School Faculty \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

Rating Scale: 1= No Evidence

2= Some Evidence/  
Needs Improvement

3= Meets Minimum Standards/  
Could enhance area

4= Exceeds Standards

Area being rated:	Your Score	Comments/Suggestions
<b>B. Policies &amp; Practices to Engage Parents in Student Achievement</b>		
1) School has a school-parent compact tailored to your school & community. (required by Title I)		
2) School has & shares a <u>school-level</u> parent involvement policy. Parents helped create the document.		
3) Professional development for staff includes trainings/workshops on working with diverse families and parental involvement.		
4) The school has a Parent Coordinator or home-school liaison that helps to connect all parents from all backgrounds and the school.		
5) Student work is displayed throughout the school. The work also includes a description of the purpose of the work and the standard that it meets.		
6) The school offers workshops for parents to help them understand the classroom curriculum and how they can help their children learn at home.		
7) The school actively recruits and welcomes new parents/guardians from all backgrounds for school committees such as the PTA/PTO.		
8) The parent handbook with school policies, school calendar and other information are provided to the parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year in a format that is easily understood.		
9) Parents are informed of the process of scheduling meetings with teachers or school staff.		
<b>Total Score for Policies &amp; Practices to Engage Parents in Student Achievement:</b>		<b>Area Comments/Suggestions:</b>

Observer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Community Member \_\_\_\_\_

School Administrator \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency Staff \_\_\_\_\_

School Faculty \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

Rating Scale: 1= No Evidence

2= Some Evidence/  
Needs Improvement

3= Meets Minimum Standards/  
Could enhance area

4= Exceeds Standards

Area being rated:	Your Score	Comments/Suggestions
<b>C. Home-School Communication –</b>		
1) The school has a system in place for ongoing assessment and feedback from parents regarding the school climate.		
2) Principal & staff invite parents to ask questions & express concerns. They respond to such communications in a two-way fashion.		
3) School informs families of policies, events, & opportunities using a variety of media – e.g., newsletter, flyers, website, meetings, and volunteer phone tree.		
4) Written materials are translated into other languages according to the school community's demographic make-up.		
5) Parents are surveyed regarding their interests, talents, and availability to volunteer.		
6) School & teachers inform families on how they respond to family concerns and how to access help.		
7) School has user friendly website that is updated regularly to keep parents informed.		
8) The school establishes a tone of respect for all families, regardless of culture, ethnicity, language or disability.		
9) The school offers a variety of opportunities for teachers and parents/guardians to meet face-to-face, such as open house, parent conferences, class visits, etc.		
<b>Total Score for Home-School Communication:</b>		<b>Area Comments/Suggestions:</b>

Observer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Community Member \_\_\_\_\_

School Administrator \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency Staff \_\_\_\_\_

School Faculty \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_



**Total Family Friendly School Walkthrough Checklist Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Scoring Guide for each Area:**

0-9 Not Family Friendly Yet  
10-18 Slightly Family Friendly  
19-27 Family Friendly  
28-36 **Five Star Family Friendly!**

**Scoring Guide for Overall Walkthrough:**

0-36 Not Family Friendly Yet  
37-72 Slightly Family Friendly  
73-108 Family Friendly  
108-144 **Five Star Family Friendly School!!!** ★★★★★

**It is suggested that all areas that were scored with a 1 or 2 should be addressed promptly according to priority. Areas scored with a 3 should be discussed and plans for enhancements are encouraged.**

**In what sections (A, B, or C) and sub-sections (1-9) does your school need the most improvement (scores of 1 or 2)? What steps will your school take to make the appropriate improvements?**

(Ex. B-5: Score-1. Walkthrough team will prompt administrator to encourage teachers to display student work in the hallway.)

**When do you plan to implement the improvements and who will be responsible for making the selected improvements?**

(Ex. B-5: Administrative team will be responsible for prompting teachers to display student work in designated areas starting October 1st.)

**Please Use Additional Pages if Necessary!**

**\*\*A Family Friendly school can mean different things because each school is unique; therefore it is up to your community to determine what family friendly means to your school.**

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**Observer's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Community Member** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Administrator** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Agency Staff** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Faculty** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Other** \_\_\_\_\_