



New Jersey State PIRC Family Friendly Walkthrough Checklist (For Early Childhood Centers)



How Family Friendly is your Early Childhood Center?

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 Walkthrough Checklist?

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

Suggested Walkthrough Guidelines:

- At least three (3) people are to complete the checklist, preferably one center administrator, one parent, and one center faculty member (family worker, teacher, secretary, counselor, etc...) Others may include a bus driver, a cafeteria worker, a community leader, or an NJPIRC staff member.
- Select a team leader to coordinate the walkthrough. 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, ask team members to calculate to their own scores, and schedule a brief meeting to discuss the final score and how to address areas that need improvement.

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

Welcoming Environment
Policies & Practices to Engage Parents
Home-School Communication

***Please complete all areas as if you were totally new to the center, 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 _____

Center Administrator _____
Agency Staff _____

Center Faculty _____
Other _____

Area being rated:	Your Score	Comments/Suggestions
A. Welcoming environment	If you answer Yes , please give yourself 4 points If you answer No , please give yourself 0 points	
1) Teachers and Family Workers have easy access to telephones to communicate with parents.		
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.		
Total Score for Welcoming Environment: 0-8: Not Family Friendly Yet 9-16: Slightly Family Friendly 17-24: Approaching Family Friendly 25-32: Family Friendly for Welcoming Environment		Area Comments/Suggestions:

Observer's Name: _____

Parent _____
 Community Member _____

Center Administrator _____
 Agency Staff _____

Center Faculty _____
 Other _____

Area being rated:	Your Score				Comments/Suggestions
B. Policies & Practices to Engage Parents in Student Achievement	If you answer Yes , please give yourself 4 points If you answer No , please give yourself 0 points				
1) Center has a school-level family involvement policy.					
2) Parents helped create the family involvement policy.					
3) 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.					
4) The school has a Family Worker that helps to connect all parents from all backgrounds.					
5) Student work is displayed throughout the school.					
6) Center invites parents to observe their children's classroom.					
7) The school offers workshops for parents to help them understand the classroom curriculum and how they can help their children learn at home.					
8) Professional development for staff includes trainings/workshops on working with diverse families and parental involvement.					
9) Center sponsors parent education workshops and other courses or training for parents.					
10) Workshops are offered: monthly, every other month, twice a year, never.	Monthly (4 points)	Every Other Month (3 points)	Twice a year (2 points)	Never (0 points)	
12) Workshops are offered at different times of the day or evening.					
13) Parents are informed of the process of scheduling meetings with teachers or school staff.					
14) Center offers parent/child activities at different times of the day or evening.					
15) Center provides a parent-teacher conference for every parent once a year.					
16) Center holds an open house at least once a year.					
17) Center/FW actively encourages the community to be involved at the school.					
20) Center has a center based parent council/advisory/committee.					
Total Score for Policies & Practices to Engage Parents in Student Achievement: 0-20: Not Family Friendly Yet 20-40: Slightly Family Friendly 40-60: Approaching Family Friendly 60-80: Family Friendly in Policies & Practices to Engage Parents in Student Achievement					Area Comments/Suggestions:

Observer's Name: _____

Parent _____
Community Member _____

Center Administrator _____
Agency Staff _____

Center Faculty _____
Other _____

Area being rated:	Your Score	Comments/Suggestions
C. Home-School Communication –	If you answer Yes , please give yourself 4 points If you answer No , please give yourself 0 points	
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) Center provides translation services to assist families as needed.		
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.		
10) Center has a newsletter for parents		
11) Families are contacted if an academic or behavioral concern is detected		
12) Center/FW provides parents with information on how to support learning in the home.		
13) Center/FW conducts personal visits in the home or at the center.		
15) Parents are provided with telephone numbers and/or e-mail addresses of the school, director, teacher and family worker		
16) Center asks parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child		

Observer's Name: _____

Parent _____
 Community Member _____

Center Administrator _____
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Center Faculty _____
 Other _____

17) Center has a lending library on parenting issues for families to provide books/tapes/etc.			
18) Family Worker collects information about family's goals, strengths, and talents			
19) Center sends home positive messages about the child's progress on a regular basis			
20) Center/FW provides resource materials for parents and students with information on community agencies, programs, and services			
21) Center/Board of Education holds a community resource fair annually to connect families with resources			
22) Center/FW actively encourages families to be involved at the school			
Total Score for Home-School Communication: 0-22: Not Family Friendly Yet 22-44: Slightly Family Friendly 44-66: Approaching Family Friendly 66-88: Family Friendly for Home-School Communication			Area Comments/Suggestions:

OVERALL Total Family Friendly Walkthrough Checklist Score: _____

(To find OVERALL total score, add together total scores from all three sub-sections: A, B, and C)

Scoring Guide for Overall Walkthrough:

- 0-50 Not Family Friendly Yet
- 50-100 Slightly Family Friendly
- 100-150 Approaching Family Friendly
- 150-200 Family Friendly Early Childhood Center!!**

Observer's Name: _____

Parent _____
 Community Member _____

Center Administrator _____
 Agency Staff _____

Center Faculty _____
 Other _____

It is suggested that all areas that marked as, “No” (or “Never” in the case of #12- Frequency of a workshop offered) should be addressed promptly according to school’s priority.

In what sections (A, B, or C) and sub-sections does your school need the most improvement?

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 _____

Center Administrator _____
Agency Staff _____

Center Faculty _____
Other _____