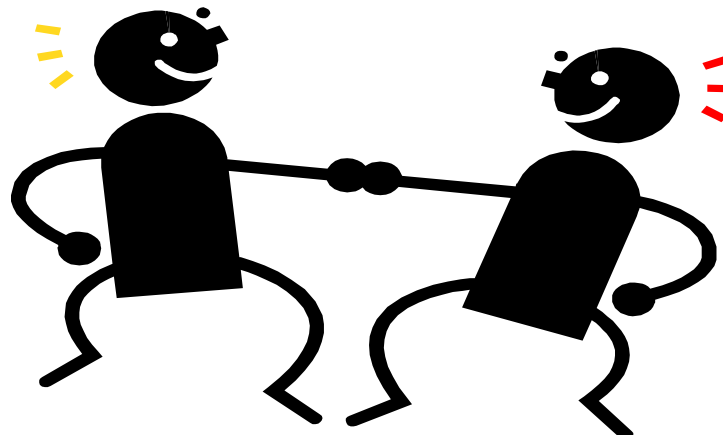


Creating and Maintaining Positive Partnerships With Parents

Mona Spells Adou



Creating and Maintaining Positive Partnerships with Parents

Partnerships are:

Mutually supportive interactions between families and professionals, focused on meeting the needs of children and families, and characterized by a sense of competence, commitment, equality, positive communication, respect, and trust.



Creating and Maintaining Positive Partnerships with Parents

It is important to focus on how families and schools can work together to improve outcomes for students.



Creating and Maintaining Positive Partnerships with Parents

There is a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students at all ages.



Importance of Family-School Partnerships

Academic benefits:

- Grades improve
- Test scores rise
- Student's attitudes toward school improve
- Students complete more homework
- Students attend school regularly



Importance of Family-School Partnerships

Behavioral benefits:

- Improved behavior at school
- Higher attendance rates
- Lower drop-out rates
- Higher self-esteem



Creating and Maintaining Positive Partnerships with Parents

To ensure that the students of today are ready for the careers of tomorrow, families and schools need to work together to promote partnerships that are systemic, sustained, and integrated into school improvement efforts.

Six Types of Involvement



Parenting

Parenting: Promote and Foster Parenting Skills to Develop Home Environments that Support Children as Students



Parenting: Promote and Foster Parenting Skills to Develop Home Environments that Support Children as Students

Basic Responsibilities of Families

- Housing, health nutrition, clothing and safety
- Parenting skills for all age levels
- Home conditions that support children as students at all grade levels
- Information and activities to help schools understand children and families
- Other

Parenting

Challenges for educators:

- Providing information to all families who want it or need it, not only to the few who are actively involved in school activities
- Enabling families to share information with schools about background, culture, and needs
- Engaging families who are working and very busy
- Providing information to families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school

Sample Practices

- Suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level.
- Workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child rearing at each age and grade level.
- Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy.)
- Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services.
- Home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school. Neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families.

Parenting: Promote and Foster Parenting Skills to Develop Home Environments that Support Children as Students

- Crowd pleasers: athletic events and celebrations. What do they have in common?
 - high attendance
 - focus on student performance
 - personal contact
 - common expectations from coaches, students, and families

Parenting: Promote and Foster Parenting Skills to Develop Home Environments that Support Children as Students

- How can we take advantage of the “teachable moments” offered by family participation in athletic and celebratory events?
- What are some other teachable moments to promote positive parenting that you see available in your school.

Parenting: Promote and Foster Parenting Skills to Develop Home Environments that Support Children as Students

From the day of their birth until their high school graduation, children will spend 15% of their time in school. The other 85% will be spent outside of school, and the greatest part will be in the home.

Communicating

Communicating: Establish
Regular and Meaningful Two-Way
Communication Between Home
and School



Communicating: Establish Regular and Meaningful Two-Way Communication Between Home and School

School-to-Home Communications

- Memos, notices, report cards, conferences, newsletters, phone calls, computerized messages
- Information on school programs, tests, and children's progress
- Information to choose or change schools, courses, programs, or activities

Communicating: Establish Regular and Meaningful Two-Way Communication Between Home and School

Sample Practices:

- Conferences with every parent at least once a year with follow-ups as needed
- Language translators to assist families as needed
- Folders of student work sent home weekly or monthly for parent review and comments
- Parent and student pickup of report cards
- Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, and other communications

Communicating: Establish Regular and Meaningful Two-Way Communication Between Home and School

Sample Practices:

- Effective newsletters including information about questions, reactions, and suggestions
- Clear information about choosing schools, and selecting courses, programs, and activities within schools
- Clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, assessments, and transitions
- Annual survey of families on students' needs and families' suggestions and reactions to school programs

Communicating: Establish Regular and Meaningful Two-Way Communication Between Home and School

- Make all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications clear and understandable for ALL families.
- Obtain ideas from families to improve the design and content of communications such as newsletters, report cards, and conference schedules.

Communicating: Establish Regular and Meaningful Two-Way Communication Between Home and School

- **Make it Positive:** Teachers most often communicate with parents when the student misbehaves, yet parents also want to know when their child is doing well. This helps parents be more responsive when extra effort or modifications need to be made.
- **Make it Practical:** By helping parents understand the curriculum, they will be better able to support their child's academic achievement. Make specific suggestions about what parents can do to help their child manage difficulties they are having with schoolwork and help them build their child's strengths.

Communicating: Establish Regular and Meaningful Two-Way Communication Between Home and School

- **Make it Personal:** Collaboration between parents and teachers is enhanced when parents read or hear something personal about their child. Include specific examples and be as detailed as possible.
- **Make it Accessible:** By meeting families in their own natural environment, rather than only at the school, educators are seen as reaching out to families and acknowledging them as partners.

Enhance Student Learning

Enhancing Student Learning: Families Play an Integral Role in Assisting Student Learning



Enhancing Student Learning: Families Play an Integral Role in Assisting Student Learning

Involve families with their children in learning activities and enrichment at home by building on family strengths, demystifying ways to create a home learning environment, and offering specific ways to support children as more powerful learners.

Enhancing Student Learning: Families Play an Integral Role in Assisting Student Learning

- How to help at home with homework
- Required skills to pass each subject
- Curriculum-related decisions
- Other skills and talents

Enhancing Student Learning: Families Play an Integral Role in Assisting Student Learning

- Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade.
- Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.
- Information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments.
- Regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class.

Enhancing Student Learning: Families Play an Integral Role in Assisting Student Learning

- Calendars with activities for parents and students at home.
- Family math, science, and reading activities at school.
- Summer learning packets or activities.
- Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.

Enhancing Student Learning: Families Play an Integral Role in Assisting Student Learning

- Design and organize a regular schedule of interactive homework (e.g., weekly or bimonthly) that gives students responsibility for discussing important things they are learning and helps families stay aware of the content of their children's classwork.
- Coordinate family linked homework activities, if students have several teachers.
- Involve families and their children in all-important curriculum-related decisions.

Enhancing Student Learning: Families Play an Integral Role in Assisting Student Learning

Redefinitions of familiar terms

- “Homework” can mean not only work done alone, but also interactive activities shared with others at home or in the community, linking schoolwork to real life.
- “Help” at home can include encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing as well as helping with homework activities.

Enhancing Student Learning: Families Play an Integral Role in Assisting Student Learning

What families say about homework:

- 50% of parents report having major fights with yelling and crying over homework
- 49% of families have walked away and let their children deal with the consequences of unfinished homework
- 22% have done part of their child's homework because it was too difficult or the child was too tired

True or False?

10% more families involved in their child's education has more effect on student learning than 10% more teachers in the classroom.

Best Practices that Create Meaningful Partnerships

Volunteering: Welcome, Value and Recruit Parental Support and Assistance in School Activities



Volunteering: Welcome, Value and Recruit Parental Support and Assistance in School Activities

Enabling families to build on their own strengths and capacities promotes the healthy development of children.

Source: Family Support America, 2000

“Volunteer “ not only means those who come during the school day, but also those who support school goals and children’s learning anyway, any time.

Source: Epstein, 2002

Volunteering: Welcome, Value and Recruit Parental Support and Assistance in School Activities

How do students benefit from increased volunteerism?

- Receive more individualized help
- Learn to work with others that may have differing skills, knowledge and talents
- Benefit from someone who speaks their native language and understands cultural influences
- Receive the message that school and education are important to family

Volunteering: Welcome, Value and Recruit Parental Support and Assistance in School Activities

Volunteers can:

- Increase understanding of what children's school life is like
- Share knowledge or areas of expertise
- Provide a message to children of the importance of school and of volunteering in the community
- Realize that there are varied choices as to how one might volunteer

Volunteering: Welcome, Value and Recruit Parental Support and Assistance in School Activities

The school and community can:

- develop partnerships between home and school
- support a positive learning environment that says the community cares about its students
- save financially from services provided by volunteers

Volunteering: Welcome, Value and Recruit Parental Support and Assistance in School Activities

Common Misconceptions

- Families who don't visit school, don't care about their child's education
- Good family involvement "looks" a certain way
- All families respond to the same strategies
- Families who are busy and/or struggling financially can't support the school

Volunteering: Welcome, Value and Recruit Parental Support and Assistance in School Activities

- Offer volunteering opportunities, both in and outside of school
- Establish volunteer procedures and school protocol
- Match family strengths with school needs
- Educate and assist teachers to effectively use volunteers as resources
- Show appreciation for volunteer participation and contributions

Volunteering: Welcome, Value and Recruit Parental Support and Assistance in School Activities

- Let all families know that their time and talents are welcomed and valued
- Survey families regularly to identify interests, talents and availability
- Organize volunteer work by providing training and matching time and talents with school, teacher, and student needs
- Recognize efforts of volunteers

Best Practices that Create Meaningful Partnerships

School Decision Making: Include Parents in School Decisions and Develop Parent Leaders and Representatives



School Decision Making: Include Parents in School Decisions and Develop Parent Leaders and Representatives

- Studies indicate that four roles played by parents can contribute to children's learning:
 1. Parents as Teachers
 2. Supporters
 3. Advocates
 4. Decision Makers
- School, home, and community partnerships that are committed to shared decision making lead to a high level of parent involvement. Empowering families to help solve problems, discuss fiscal priorities and develop policies that are more child/parent friendly sends a powerful message about collaboration, equity and access.

School Decision Making: Include Parents in School Decisions and Develop Parent Leaders and Representatives

Results for Students:

- Awareness that families are represented in school decisions
- Understanding that student rights are protected
- Benefits linked to policies enacted by parent organizations

School Decision Making: Include Parents in School Decisions and Develop Parent Leaders and Representatives

Results for Parents:

- Input into policies that affect their child's education
- Feeling ownership of the school
- Shared experiences and connections with other families
- Awareness of school, district, and State policies

School Decision Making: Include Parents in School Decisions and Develop Parent Leaders and Representatives

- Awareness of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions
- View of equal status of family representatives on committees and in leadership roles

School Decision Making: Include Parents in School Decisions and Develop Parent Leaders and Representatives

- “Decision making” means a process of partnership of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not a power struggle between conflicting ideas.
- “Parent leader” means a real representative with opportunities and support to hear from and communicate with other families.

Adapted from Epstein et al., (2004)

School Decision Making: Include Parents in School Decisions and Develop Parent Leaders and Representatives

“Advocacy means to speak up, to plead the case of another, or to champion a cause. Usually advocacy involves bringing influence to bear to win change.”

“It is something most of us do routinely on behalf of ourselves, our families, our neighbors, and our friends.”

Advocates Needed Today, Inc., ANTS (2004.)

School Decision Making: Include Parents in School Decisions and Develop Parent Leaders and Representatives

Parents can also serve on:

- Site-based management teams
- Parental advisory committees for reading, special education, and/or bilingual programs
- Classroom committees
- School task force
- Job search committees
- Book adoption advisory groups
- School improvement planning teams

School Decision Making: Include Parents in School Decisions and Develop Parent Leaders and Representatives

- Value diversity
- Listen to and respect all parents
- Provide information in a variety of ways
- Respectfully negotiate conflicts when they occur
- Create a classroom that is welcoming, family-friendly, and reflects the languages and cultures of your students
- Solicit ideas from parents about school projects or curriculum activities

School Decision Making: Include Parents in School Decisions and Develop Parent Leaders and Representatives

How Parents Become Advocates:

- Know the rules
- Get to know the people who make decisions about your child's education
- Keep records (e.g. grades, assessments, notes from meetings, contact information, and examples of your child's progress)
- Gather information (read books, attend conferences, learn educational acronyms, and most importantly, ask questions)
- Communicate effectively
- Emphasize solutions

School Decision Making: Include Parents in School Decisions and Develop Parent Leaders and Representatives

- Support decision making activities that enable families to influence decisions, raise issues or concerns, and resolve problems
- Encourage the formation of parent groups that respond to the issues of interest to parents
- Treat parent concerns with respect and consideration of linguistic and cultural factors
- Develop a comprehensive Family Involvement Policy that reflects the goals and mission of the school

Best Practices that Create Meaningful Partnerships

Collaborating with the community: identify and Use community resources and services to strengthen schools, families, and student learning and development

Collaborating with the Community: Identify and Use Community Resources and Services to Strengthen Schools, Families, and Student Learning and Development

Engaging community members, businesses, and organizations as partners in children's education can improve learning communities through benefits such as expanded learning opportunities, broad-based support for increased school funding, and quality after-school programs.

Collaborating with the Community: Identify and Use Community Resources and Services to Strengthen Schools, Families, and Student Learning and Development

Results for Students:

- Increased skills and talents through enriched curricular and extracurricular activities
- Awareness of careers and options for future education and work
- Service learning opportunities that connect students to organizations and individuals in meaningful ways

Collaborating with the Community: Identify and Use Community Resources and Services to Strengthen Schools, Families, and Student Learning and Development

Results for parents:

- Improved knowledge of local resources and services
- Interactions with other families in community activities
- Awareness of the reciprocal relationship between the school and community

Collaborating with the Community: Identify and Use Community Resources and Services to Strengthen Schools, Families, and Student Learning and Development

Results for teachers:

- Expanded awareness of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction;
- Openness to and skills in using mentors, business partners, and volunteers to assist students and augment teaching practice; and
- Helpful referrals of families to needed services.

Why Partner with the Community

- The task of educating children is complex and is the shared responsibility of the whole community
- Community resources can enrich curriculum and instruction
- Children and families need to be connected to social services
- Federal mandates require partnerships

How to Form School-Community Partnerships

- Directly link school achievement to community development and community wellness in staff discussions, action planning, and grants
- Seek school/community collaborations that are appropriate and unique to your respective community and school
- Partnerships don't just happen. Structure and monitor school/community collaborations through careful planning and evaluation

Stages for Partnership Collaborations

- **Planning and Development:** Take time. Nurture partnerships through discussions and relationship-building. Define how the collaboration benefits the community *and* the school.
- **Implementation and Management:** Address immediate and doable concerns. Be clear about the goals, objectives, and management responsibilities of the partnership.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Use locally relevant assessment criteria and participatory evaluation strategies. Partners should all understand and support desired outcomes.

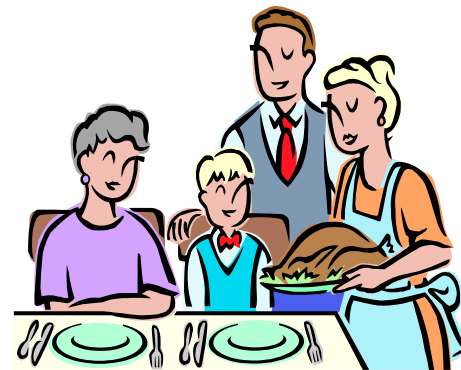
Creating and Maintaining Positive Partnerships with Parents

Forming effective partnerships is not a one-time effort or the choice of a good school, but rather a set of day-to-day practices, attitudes, beliefs and interactions that support learning at home, at school, afterschool, and during the summer.



Creating and Maintaining Positive Partnerships with Parents

When programs and initiatives focus on building trusting and respectful relationships among school staff, families, and community members, these programs are effective in creating and sustaining meaningful partnerships.



Creating and Maintaining Positive Partnerships with Parents

To ensure that the students of today are ready for the careers of tomorrow, families and schools need to work together to promote partnerships that are systemic, sustained, and integrated into school improvement efforts.



Creating and Maintaining Positive Partnerships With Parents

No one is more important than parents in sending the signal that reading and education matter and that school work is not a form of drudgery but a ticket to a better life . . . By giving their word to read to their children, to assist on homework, to engage the process of learning, parents can set an example for their children that is powerful and positive.

Governor Gray Davis, California, State of the State, January 7, 1999

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