

*Family and Parent Involvement—Curriculum Enhancement Initiative*

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The Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC)

## **Executive Summary**

Submitted by Shirley Lefever-Davis and Norma Bricker, Wichita State University

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Name of course: Urban Teacher Preparation Program Seminar

The focus for this parental involvement grant was the development and implementation of a university course for pre-service teachers, titled the Urban Teacher Preparation Program (UTPP) seminar. This course was designed to pre-service teachers' skills in working with parents and families and included goals from the National Standards for Family School Partnerships. Specifically, the curriculum included an emphasis on:

- Standard I: Welcoming all families into the school community
- Standard II: Communicating effectively
- Standard III: Supporting Student Success

In order to provide a context for the pre-service teachers regarding the current level of parental involvement in the schools where they were completing their field experiences, they were provided copies of a parental involvement survey administered in the district. The survey was discussed using a carousel activity to engage candidates in summarizing their perception of the level of parental participation in the schools and district and the importance of such involvement. Following this, course instructors engaged the pre-service teachers in the following activities to promote the identified instructional goals for each standard.

### **Standard I: Welcoming all families into the school community**

Instructional Goal: UTPP candidates (pre-service teachers) will appreciate the importance of building partnerships with parents and will create and collect a variety of tools that will extend invitations to parents to inspire meaningful, continuous involvement in their student's academic success.

Instructional activities:

- Each UTPP candidate wrote mock letters of introduction to parents explaining the classroom expectations and discipline plans as well as major curriculum topics to be taught during the year.

- Three classroom sets of “welcoming” postcards used by the district were distributed to candidates for use during their first year of teaching. Discussion regarding the purpose and effectiveness of this form of communication instilled the importance of establishing a welcoming and positive working environment with parents.
- Another technique for welcoming families to the school and district that was discussed were “porch visits” and how those differ for families new to the district from those for families returning to a school. Implications for the date of admission were also discussed. For example, if a family moves to the district in February, the information/approach to welcome them would differ from the information/approach to welcome a family arriving at the beginning of the school year.

### **Standard II: Communicating Effectively**

Instructional Goal: UTPP candidates will appreciate the importance of regular, two way communication with parents, and will collect and create effective communication tools. The candidates will understand the Danielson Framework for Teaching as it applies to communicating with parents. (This tool is used in USD 259 for observing new teachers.) UTPP candidates will be aware of resources from KPIRC, such as the “A-B-C Book of Terms”.

- UTPP candidates received sample newsletters from teachers in the district and participated in a group activity where they identified and listed components of newsletters that were examples of effective communication promoting parent involvement. The key point to be made from this activity was to convey to pre-service candidates the importance of inviting a response whenever communication with parents is initiated, thus soliciting a two-way communication system.
- Candidates engaged in a role-play activity where they practiced their skill in communicating effectively and positively via telephone. Special emphasis was placed on how to communicate difficult topics with parents such as behavior issues. A template was provided that outlined elements of effective telephone conversations.
- UTPP candidates were also made familiar with Domain Four: Professionalism of Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching. Each component of that particular domain was discussed in terms of the importance and impact of parental communication.

### **Standard III: Supporting Student Success**

Instructional Goal: Students will appreciate the value of empowering parents to support their student’s academic success. Students will create tools, which will assist parents in providing academic support.

- Resource boxes were created for each candidate containing materials that will promote effective parental involvement in their student's academic achievement. Contents of the resource box included:
  - Beyond the Bake sale by Anne Hendrson, Karen Mapp, Vivian Johnson and Don Davies
  - Recognition/rewards stickers
  - 2 Decks of playing cards and a booklet of strategies for using playing cards for promoting math skills.
  - Number generators (dice) and a booklet of strategies for using number generators for promoting math skills.
  - Dominoes a booklet of strategies for using dominoes for promoting math skills.
  - Open ended game boards and puzzles that can be used to reinforce a variety of concepts and topics. (It is important to emphasize these were discussed as reinforcement activities that would follow instruction in school).
  - Site words and high frequency word cards
  - Mats designed for parents to use with their children to promote literacy.

Additional materials provided to each UTPP candidate included the book, *Every Teacher's Guide to Working With Parents* by Gwen Rudney.

### **Continued development of pre-service knowledge and skill**

In order to sustain this information flow of effective parental involvement with future pre-service teachers, a resource library was created to be used by pre-service teachers. This library, housed at the Learning Services office in Wichita Public Schools, includes numerous duplicates and activities for reinforcing various concepts and skills and is available for check out for all pre-service teachers.

A partnership with WSU faculty was initiated as one strand of this grant as well in an effort to sustain the goals of this grant. Specifically, the faculty members were kept informed of these efforts to promote the skills of the candidates. The resources used with the candidates were shared with faculty and each elementary education faculty member was provided a copy of the book, *Beyond the Bake sale* with an insert indicating the role of the KPIRC in providing that resource.

Finally, it is being requested to use the remaining budget funds to support the UTPP liaison, Norma Bricker to attend the National Association of Professional Development School (NAPDS) Conference this spring. This conference focuses on the same type of partnership with school districts that is being developed with the UTPP program supported with this grant. The NAPDS conference not only focuses on establishing and maintaining effective school-university partnerships but also engages participants in sessions regarding effective collaboration and involvement of education stakeholders such as parents and families.