

Leadership for Family-School Partnerships

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- The Module:
 - Covers what is known about creating family-school relationships to enhance children's learning success.
 - Encourages/challenges school personnel to apply this content to children's reading success.
 - Focuses on school-wide efforts.
 - Is filled with information and 14 study group activities from which to select.
- Consider me a resource for your context specific issues/concerns



Goal of the Presentation

- Using the 4 A's, to provide an overview of family-school collaboration because we know the benefits of a school-wide shared responsibility approach across home *and* school for children's learning:
 - Levels of parent participation associated with gains in achievement invariably find that the more extensive the involvement, the higher the student achievement (Henderson & Berla, 1994).
 - Programs and practices are stronger where teachers and parents feel strongly about the importance of parent involvement (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).



Goal and Evidence, continued. . .

- Reduces parental discontinuity.
- Children who are the farthest behind make the greatest gains (Henderson & Berla, 1994).
- In programs that are designed to be full partnerships, where the programs are comprehensive and address attitudes, philosophy, structure, and day to day practices, student achievement not only improves, it reaches levels that are standard for middle-class children (Comer, 1995).

Goal and Evidence, continued. . .

- Findings from the School Development Program:
 - School level aggregated data showed that a greater percentage of students were achieving instructional objectives and performing better on standardized tests, exceeding gains for the district as a whole.
 - SDP students experienced significantly greater positive changes in attendance, teacher ratings of classroom behavior, attitude toward authority, perceived self competence, and self-concept when compared to non-SDP students. (Comer et al., 1996)

Definitions of Collaborative Partnerships

- Common effort toward a shared goal
- Shared goals + Shared contributions + Shared accountability
- “The product of education – learning – is not produced by schools, but by students with the help of parents, educators, peers, and community professionals who support learners” (Seeley, 1985).
 - Proportion of teachers who agree with this statement
 - To what degree are teacher/school practices, consistent with this statement?

Seven-P's Philosophy

- School-Family Partnership Project at UIC has developed seven ingredients to partnership building:
 - Partnership as a priority
 - Planned effort
 - Proactive and persistent communication
 - Positive
 - Personalized
 - Practical suggestions
 - Program monitoring (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 1999)

Approach: The Framework for Interaction with Parents

- Defining family-school relationships for children's learning as essential
 - Represents a shift toward thinking systemically
 - Means a change in the way schools do business
- Not uncommon to see this school philosophy:
 - We know students perform best when both parents and teachers participate actively in children's learning to read. There are many ways you can support your child as a reader. What works best for you to encourage your child to read? What resources do you need to participate?



School Practices articulated in terms of Co-Roles

- Epstein's Framework:
 - Parenting
 - Communicating
 - Volunteering
 - Enhancing learning at home
 - Decision making
 - Collaborating with the community
- National Standards for Family Involvement Programs from the PTA



Co-roles for Families and Educators

- U.S. Department of Education described five roles for changes in urban education (Moles, 1993):
 - Co-decision makers, advocates, and advisors
 - Co-teachers
 - Co-learners
 - Co-supporters
 - Co-communicators

Attitudes: The Values and Perceptions Held about Family-School Relationships

- Identification of attitudes that produce barriers
- Understanding barriers for parents, teachers, and the partnership
 - Promotes perspective taking
 - Promotes understanding of constraints of each system
- Systematically working to remove barriers



Categorization of Barriers

- ✓ School Personnel:
 - Use of stereotypes
 - Fear of conflict with families
- ✓ Parents:
 - Lack of role models, information, and knowledge about resources
 - Feelings of inadequacy
- ✓ Partnership:
 - Communication during crises
 - Limited time and contact for building trust (Liontos, 1992)

Barriers as Challenges

- Two important questions:
 - Has our school examined systematically school practices that “fail” families?
 - Does our outreach to families represent thinking about the impact of home *and* school on children’s learning?

Atmosphere: The Climate in Schools for Families and Educators

- What is consistently advocated is that schools must be welcoming, “family friendly” communities.
- True collaboration occurs with CORE - when these ingredients are present:
 - Connection
 - Optimism
 - Respect
 - Empowerment

CORE

□ Connection:

- Trust building
- Shared goals
- Common vision
- Conflict resolution

□ Optimism:

- Problems are systems, not individual, problems. (interface)
- No one person is to blame. (nonblaming, solution-oriented)
- All concerned parties are doing the best they can. (nonjudgmental, perspective taking)

CORE

□ Respect:

- Each person brings different, but equally valid expertise to the problem-solving process.
- Respect requires acceptance of differences, especially perceptions about child's performance.

□ Empowerment:

- Both parties have strengths and competencies.
- Parents believe they can help.
- Parents know a role for which they feel comfortable.
- Parents see that their efforts make a difference in achievement.

Actions: Strategies for Building Shared Responsibility

As a member of the leadership team, ask yourself:

- ✓ What message does your school provide to all parents about reading and student learning?
- ✓ How is this message reinforced?
- ✓ How is the message delivered across school years?
- ✓ What kinds of supports are provided to parents so they can act on the message (be engaged)?



Five Actions

- Establishing a family-school partnering policy
- Implementing family-school teams
- Creating a planning process
- Building shared responsibility for educational outcomes
- Handling unique situations:
 - Need to use thorough and persistent efforts to reach families
 - Need to resolve conflict with families



Policy Framed as a Media Campaign

Students' Reading Success: Parents are important!

Parents + Teachers + Students = Success



Involving the Uninvolved

- Newer school practices include:
 - Identifying families who are not responding to current outreach and making a personal contact.
 - Keeping interaction focused on genuine interest in improving the child's school success.
 - Understanding parents' goals for their children's education.
 - Being persistent about the importance of a family learning environment.



Invitations and information, but also:

If the parent chooses not to participate, school personnel explain that they will do their part at school; however, they make it clear that this is only part of the equation for school success. We know children perform better if the school and home work together to achieve a shared goal for the child's learning. Without in- and out-of-school time devoted to reading, the probability the child will perform less well on school tasks is increased.



Additional Information and Support

- 68 page module on the web
- Contact information:

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