

HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

PART

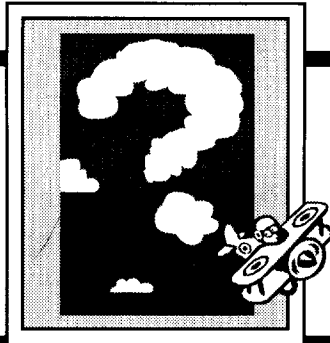
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Building Staff Capacity: Preparing Staff for Involving Families



*"Nothing is more important to
success in schools than the quality of
relationships between and among
students, staff and parents."*

Dr. James P. Comer
Director, School Development Program



WHY PARENT INVOLVEMENT ?

Schools make the difference in reaching parents who have not typically been actively involved in their children's education. Parents who themselves are well educated tend to engage in many activities that support student achievement regardless of school actions. However, school attitudes, policies, and actions are very important for many lower socioeconomic status parents who want to be involved but are less sure what to do to help their children be successful in school.

WHAT DOES RESEARCH SHOW?

- ▶ Involving parents in the education of their children has a **POSITIVE** effect on **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**.
- ▶ Parent involvement is an **UNDERUTILIZED** resource for the enhancement of student achievement.
- ▶ Parent involvement is most beneficial when it is **WELL-PLANNED, SYSTEMATIC, LONG-LASTING**, and when parents play many roles.
- ▶ Schools can, through **POLICIES** and **ACTIONS**, reach out to parents to help them be involved in the education of their children.
- ▶ Parents whose involvement is actively sought by teachers have more **POSITIVE** attitudes about their children's schools and teachers.
- ▶ **TEACHER'S INITIATIVE** and willingness to reach out to parents are key factors for effective parent involvement.
- ▶ While all forms of parent involvement are desirable, **HOME-BASED PARENT INVOLVEMENT** (doing home-learning activities coordinated with children's classwork and providing enrichment activities) appears to be the most valuable in regard to student achievement.
- ▶ Socioeconomic status and lack of education have **NO EFFECT** on the willingness of parents to help their own children.

Research (Henderson, 1987) confirms that a comprehensive approach to parent involvement increases the amount and quality of parent involvement. It also shows that parent involvement is important at all levels of schooling — elementary, middle/junior high and high school.

"The Evidence Continues to Grow: An Annotated Bibliography," by Anne Henderson, National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1987.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF INVOLVING PARENTS?

Sharing the research on parent involvement is an important first step in building staff capacity for parent involvement.

One of the most important findings for teachers is that their initiative to reach parents makes a difference in terms of student achievement.

Research by Joyce Epstein and Henry Becker showed that reading achievement improved when teachers treated all parents as if they wanted to be involved (even when all parents did not or could not respond), when they focused on positive communication with parents, and when they gave parents suggestions on how they could help with reading or other language activities at home.

Benefits for students:

- ✓ *increased student achievement*
- ✓ fewer behavior problems
- ✓ more positive attitudes about homework
- ✓ more homework completed, especially on weekends
- ✓ more positive attitudes toward school
- ✓ less absenteeism
- ✓ more connection between home and school

Benefits to parents:

- ✓ *increased student achievement*
- ✓ appreciation of teacher's efforts to inform them about the instructional program
- ✓ ideas from teachers on how to help their children
- ✓ a feeling they should help their children
- ✓ greater understanding of the instructional program
- ✓ increased ability to help their children
- ✓ confidence in the teacher's interpersonal skills and overall teaching ability

Benefits for teachers:

- ✓ *increased student achievement*
- ✓ more homework completed and returned
- ✓ happier students and less behavior problems
- ✓ more support from parents both at school and at home

When teachers communicated selectively and only about problems and student failures, none of these positive benefits were realized. In contrast, when teachers reached out to all parents — students, parents, and teachers were clearly the winners.

HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK DEFINING THE THREE LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

Research has shown that systematic, ongoing and comprehensive involvement of parents in the education of their children has a positive outcome for children. Likewise, systematic, ongoing and comprehensive involvement of parents in the educational process can enhance that process and increase the likelihood of establishing a strong home-school partnership.

We know that developing a home-school partnership is a PROCESS that differs from school to school. However there are several key elements that are common to effective schools whether they are rural or urban, large or small. Effective home school partnerships include all six types of parent involvement (see Part 2, page 5) and reflect three basic types of school and community participation as follows:

Type 1 • Parenting

Type 4 • Learning at Home

Type 2 • Communicating

Type 5 • Decision Making & Advocacy

Type 3 • Volunteering

Type 6 • Collaborating with Community

► **Level I: Broad Participation and General Support (60%)**

This level includes parents who attend traditional school events such as open houses, parent teacher conferences, student fairs and performances. It also includes parents who support school homework and discipline policies, communicate with the school and make sure students arrive at school on time and ready to learn. It also includes the many different ways in which parents can support student learning at home. This level of participation is directly related to improving student achievement.

► **Level II: Active Daily Participation in Schools (30%)**

This level includes parent and community members involved in volunteer activities such as student supervision, fund raising, tutoring, assembling school materials, community outreach, parent center activities, assisting on field trips, etc. This kind of participation guarantees visible parent and community presence on campus and, although it can affect student achievement, it is most directly related to improving school climate.

► **Level III: Participation in School Management (10% - 15%)**

This level includes parent and community members willing to advocate for children, take leadership roles and help make decisions affecting how the school is operated. It includes volunteers who sit on governance teams, action teams, committees, and any other advisory or decision making body at the school site. This kind of participation ensures that the school will be responsive to all stakeholders in the educational process and is most directly related to improving school effectiveness.

To understand how the three levels of participation and the six types of involvement can be integrated, see diagram on previous page.

KEY POINTS

The following key points summarize the factors essential to organizing and maintaining an effective and dynamic home-school partnership.

AN EFFECTIVE HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP:



Includes all six types of involvement:

- 1) Parenting
- 2) Communicating
- 3) Volunteering
- 4) Learning at Home
- 5) Decision Making & Advocacy
- 6) Collaborating with Community



Reflects three levels of participation:

Level I: Broad Participation and General Support

Level II: Active Daily Participation in Schools

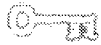
Level III: Participation in School Management



Is guided by a shared vision built upon policy.



Is well-planned, comprehensive and long-lasting.



Is more than a series of events.



Provides activities that build upon each other to foster increasing degrees of involvement over time; activities are not one-time events.



Provides opportunities for all parents regardless of their literacy level or native language.



Is tailored to the specific school site population.



Fosters relationships between parents and children; changes in the nature and amount of parent-child interaction have been linked to changes in child behavior and achievement.



Offers families strategies for connecting what happens at school to what happens at home in order to convey value for learning and support for student achievement.



Encourages partnerships among schools, families and community.



Enhances a successful program, does not substitute for good teaching.