

Research Brief

School-Home Partnerships

Question: What are components of successful home-school partnerships that involve parents?

Summary of Findings: Does parent involvement in school affect student achievement? Synthesis of data collected from schools that have been involved in the National Network of Partnership Schools appeared to indicate that regardless of the student's socioeconomic and/or ethnic background, when parents are involved at home and in school, there is a positive effect on the student's grades, attendance, and behavior. The most dominant and comprehensive model for parent involvement seemed to come from Joyce Epstein out of Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland.

Major Findings and Conclusions:

1. There are 6 distinct types of parent involvement in the Epstein model (more detail to follow).
2. Administration should meet with faculty and staff to obtain feedback on ways in which parents can effectively be utilized and engaged in the school and its programs. Faculty and staff will need on-going training, support, and guidance.
3. Leadership from the faculty, parents, and students should be solicited. They will be responsible for the initial recruiting efforts. One parent or perhaps with a co-chair, should be the coordinator of the overall program.
4. For each type of involvement, an action team should be established. They will design, implement, and evaluate a short term, 1 year, and long-term, 3-5 years, action plans. These plans should be developed around the needs of the students and the school's goals.
5. Funding for the program should be in place.
6. As much as is realistic and feasible, all communication should be in the dominant language(s) of the school's population.
7. Allow time for the program to grow and take hold. It usually takes three to five years for a program to become an integral part of the culture.

Epstein Model:

Type 1: Parenting: How can parents be effectively and actively engaged with their student at home and school? This can be done through a frequent newsletter. Notes, emails, and/or voice mail can be sent by specific teachers regarding assignments, due dates, and suggestions for parents in ways they can provide

assistance. Workshops based on parent interests can be held at places throughout the community, not just at the school.

- Type 2: Communicating: How is the school communicating with parents to inform them about its schedule, its activities, and programs? Some suggestions: newsletters mailed home through US mail; prerecording at the school; parent conferences; report card pick up night; brochures in different businesses and medical offices throughout the district; translating any communication into the parents' home language(s); and assignment books with descriptions of activities and dates listed.
- Type 3: Volunteering: How can parents support the school through volunteering? Many parents work during the time that school is in session and want to help; how is the school inviting them to assist? Some ideas include: chaperoning a trip, dance, or other special activity; recording books on tape; participating in special school beautification projects such as gardening or painting; donating materials and/or supplies; supporting teachers through completing tasks at home such as preparing bulletin board, art, and/or science materials; establishing a volunteer room that is well supplied with materials so that parents can support teachers' needs, and brochures about the school, community services, adult education classes, to work with a student or small group of students; to speak with a class about a specific career and/or; and to arrange for a group of students to visit a particular business or place of interest.
- Type 4: Learning at home: Given the complexity of some of the content that students take, what can parents do to help and support their student at home? Some ideas are: teachers send home information through a note, email, and/or voice mail on expectations, due dates, and some specific suggestions and ideas on the concept; mini-guidelines can be designed and made available for parents; workshops on a specific topic can be offered at different locations in the community; and general information can be sent home in a newsletter.
- Type 5: Decision making: How are parents involved in the actual decision making of the programs that directly affect their child? Some suggestions are: inviting parents' input through surveys mailed home and/or emailed; meeting with parents in small groups, off site, to solicit ideas, suggestions, opinions and support; inviting parent representatives to become part of the school's leadership team; and having a parent be part of interview panels.
- Type 6: Collaborating with the community: How is the community a vital part of the school community? How is the school contributing to the community? Some avenues to explore are: making personal contacts with local businesses and community agencies and services; establishing mutually beneficial partnerships where students are making valuable contributions to the organization; and utilizing parent resources to gain entrée into businesses and community agencies.

Online Resources:

- Building Partnerships to Welcome Middle and High School Families
Descriptions of successful ice cream socials and report card pick up events for secondary parents where they were given information about the school, its programs, tutoring information, and volunteering opportunities, where parents were able to participate in theme related workshops is presented.
http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/Middle_and_High/type2school-reports/MHreport_no12.htm
- Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships
A description of this association and how to get more information about it.
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm>
- Family-Education Partnerships
This provides links to numerous sites that have different components of parent involvement in education.
<http://www.thefamilyworks.org/Resources/Links.htm>
- Family Partnerships with high schools: The parents' perspective
This abstract describes an analysis done on 6 schools from rural to urban to suburban. The findings were consistent that when schools provide opportunities for meaningful partnership programs, regardless of socioeconomic backgrounds, there is a better chance to ascertain support and involvement from parents at home and school.
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techReports/Report32.pdf>
- High School Partnership Programs Increase Family Involvement and Student Success
Using Epstein's six types of involvement, how parent partnerships affect student success are examined. Several ideas for reaching out to parents are included.
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/type2/issue10/ttype2j4.htm>
- National Association of Partners in Education
A description of this association and how to get more information about it.
<http://www.napehq.org/>
- National Network of Partnership Schools
A description of this association and how to get more information about it.
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/>
- Network Members Report Low Costs for Quality Partnership Programs

Where funding for partnerships is built into budgets, these seemed to be more solid quality partnerships. A brief description of the types of funds that have been used to support partnerships is provided.

http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/partnership_awards/2003/Research/type2_research_briefs/ttype2g8.htm

- Partnership for Family Involvement in Education
This site provides the access to sign up to receive information on family involvement. This is also a gateway to other sites for articles and information.
<http://www.thefamilyworks.org/Partners/PartFaIn.old.htm>
- Technology as a Tool for Increasing Communication
This article briefly describes the use of technology to open up more and varied forms of communication with families.
<http://www.thefamilyworks.org/Partners/techcomm.htm>
- Type 2 National Network of Partnership Schools
This newsletter is full of outstanding ideas for partnership programs. As a valuable reference list, it includes a list of schools around the nation that are members of this organization.
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/type2.htm>

Journals/Periodicals

- Dodd, A. W. (1999, February). *How parents and students can enrich the work of a community of learners*. *NASSP Bulletin*, V. 83, N. 604, p. 18-26.
The importance of working closely with parents and students when making program decisions is explored in this article.
- Walker, K. (2003, Fall). *Putting the pieces together: Parent involvement, is it P.I.E. in the Sky?* *Ohio Middle School Journal*, V. 28, N. 1, p. 15-21.
This article describes a parent involvement program following Epstein's model at a middle school in Ohio. It provides an overview of the parent involvement program prior to implementation and ideas for various activities to engage parents and community in the school.

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