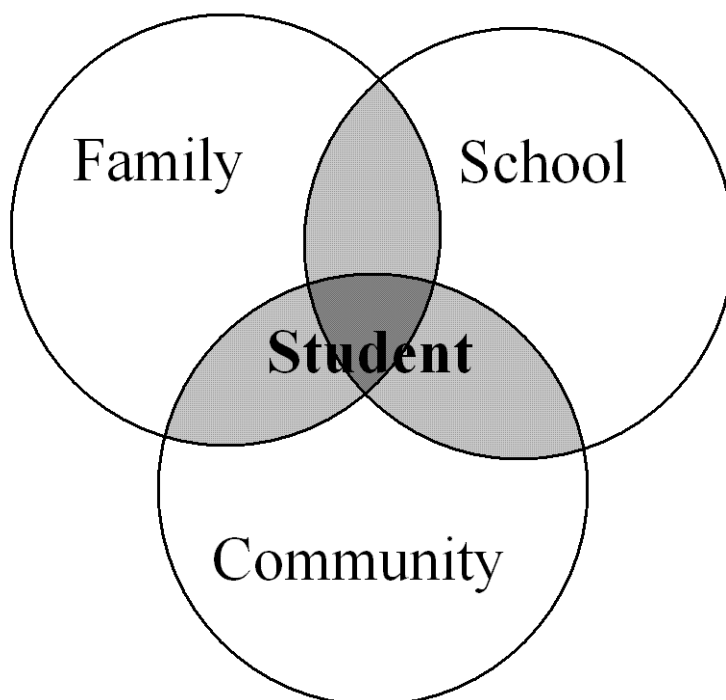


Family Connections Series







Decision Making

Action Teams for Partnerships (ATP)

*A Guide for Improving Student Success Through Partnerships
of Families, Schools and Communities*



School, Family and Community Involvement

-  1. Parenting
-  2. Communicating
-  3. Volunteering
-  4. Learning at Home
-  5. Decision Making & Action Team for Partnerships
-  6. Collaborating With the Community



Parents Reaching Out
Your One Stop Resource for a Stronger Family

Spring 2009

Successful models of family involvement honor families by validating and celebrating any level of involvement or contribution they make. These models focus on the assets that families bring to school and community groups.

Partnerships with families will have lasting results when our day to day practices and policies are built on three basic qualities:

- ***Sense of belonging:*** Everyone wants to feel that they belong and families are no different. Families who feel included and respected will then work toward the greater goal of helping others. *Welcome them!*
- ***Competence:*** Families just may have the solution you've been seeking. Recognize their competence as a partner in the teaching-learning cycle. Families learn a lot about their children's needs as they navigate complex systems. They want to learn more. *Offer opportunities for shared learning.*
- ***Usefulness:*** Families have learned countless ways they can assist others to find paths leading to success and independence for their children. *Invite them to share!*

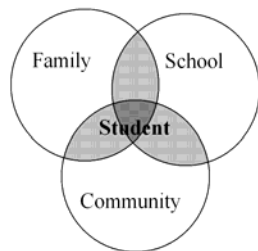
Please Note: "Parent" and "family" involvement are used as interchangeable references in this book. Both terms include all adults who play an important role in the child's life and who may have responsibility for a child's education, development, and well-being. For some children, "parents" may include grandparents, aunts, uncles, step-parents, and/or guardians.

Welcome

Parents Reaching Out is pleased to provide you with our *Family Connections* series. Each book in this collection highlights one of the Six Keys of School, Family, and Community Involvement from the model developed by Dr. Joyce L. Epstein. We hope that these books will help families, educators and Action Teams identify needs that will be used to promote and sustain parental involvement in New Mexico's schools. As partners, we can help all children and young adults succeed in school and in life!

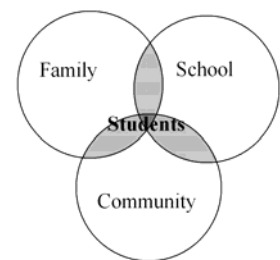
The Epstein Model is a research-based process. It offers a flexible framework for meaningful involvement that embraces families as full partners in improving outcomes for all children. This model encourages the efficient use of time, talents and resources to improve results for every student required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Families play a key role in decision making through a process called Action Teams for Partnerships (ATP). Action Teams use real facts (data) about *what we know* to carefully plan *what we do* (activities) to achieve school goals for student success.

Dr. Epstein identifies “three spheres of influence” that directly effect student learning and development—family, school and community. When the people in each of these spheres communicate and interact with one another, the spheres have a closer connection and overlap one another. Students are better supported to do their best when these circles of influence come together. Positive and frequent interactions ensure that students receive consistent messages about the importance of school, working hard, thinking creatively, helping one another and staying in school.



Strong partnerships build trust through shared goals. As the spheres pull together, our children gain a stronger feeling of security and being cared for while they are encouraged to work hard in the role of student.

Weak partnerships limit opportunities and resources that help our children become successful adults. Each sphere sees “their job” as separate from the others. Educators might say, “If the family would just do its job, we could do our job.” Families may say, “I raised this child; now it is your job to educate my child.”



In the first part of this book, you will find information and tips for developing partnerships for shared decision making. *Sharing responsibility for making decisions isn't easy. It takes a planned effort to take a close look at issues and come up with sound ways to help our children succeed.* All relationships have their ups and downs. Our book offers ways to build the mutual respect and trust that helps partnerships grow.

In the second part of our book, you will learn how to use shared decision making in a process called *Action Team for Partnerships (ATP)*. Our step-by-step guide includes tools to help schools, families and communities improve results for our children and youth. Using the ATP process, all partners work together to identify needs, set targets for growth and implement action plans to meet goals as part of the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) required for schools and districts in New Mexico.

The Six Keys to Family Involvement

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement
Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., et. al.,



Parenting

Build on parenting strengths and help families improve parenting skills; understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. Facilitate support systems and networks to enable families to effectively nurture their children. Assist schools in understanding families.



Communicating

Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.



Volunteering

Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences school or in other locations to support students and school programs.



Learning at Home

Provide information and ideas to families about how to help their children in learning activities at home or in the community, including homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, planning and linking schoolwork to real life.



Decision Making

Equip parents and other community members with the tools they need to function as advocates, advisors, and decision-makers. Include families and community members as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees and other parent organizations.



Collaborating with the Community

Identify and coordinate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices and student learning and development. Establish and promote partnerships with individuals and organizations in the community, particularly those that provide support services for children and their families.

Dr Epstein is Director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Principal Research Scientist and Co-Director of the School, Family, and Community Partnership Program of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR). Her work provides a research framework for partnerships as schools implement the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

As the New Mexico Parent Information and Resource Center (NM PIRC), Parents Reaching Out believes that Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement and partnerships with families are keys to great schools. As such, types of involvement may also be referred to as keys in the content of this book.



Look at the BIG Picture for New Mexico Schools

New Mexico House Bill 212 (2003) Section 27: Advisory School Councils

Section 27. A new section of the Public School Code, Section 22-5-16 NMSA 1978, is enacted to read: "22-5-16. ADVISORY SCHOOL COUNCILS--CREATION--DUTIES.—

A. Each public school shall create an advisory "school council" to assist the school principal with school-based decision-making and to involve parents in their children's education.

B. A school council shall be created and its membership elected in accordance with local school board rule. School council membership shall reflect an equitable balance between school employees and parents and community members. At least one community member shall represent the business community, if such person is available. The school principal may serve as chairman. The school principal shall be an active member of the school council.

C. The school council shall:

- (1) work with the school principal and give advice, consistent with state and school district rules and policies, on policies relating to instructional issues and curricula and on the public school's proposed and actual budgets;
- (2) develop creative ways to involve parents in the schools;
- (3) where appropriate, coordinate with any existing work force development boards or vocational education advisory councils to connect students and school academic programs to business resources and opportunities; and
- (4) serve as the champion for students in building community support for schools and encouraging greater community participation in the public schools."

As the New Mexico Parent Information and Resource Center (NM PIRC) funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Parents Reaching Out encourages schools to integrate the Action Team for Partnerships process within the activities of the Advisory School Council mandated by HB 212. The diagram shows how this can work in our schools.

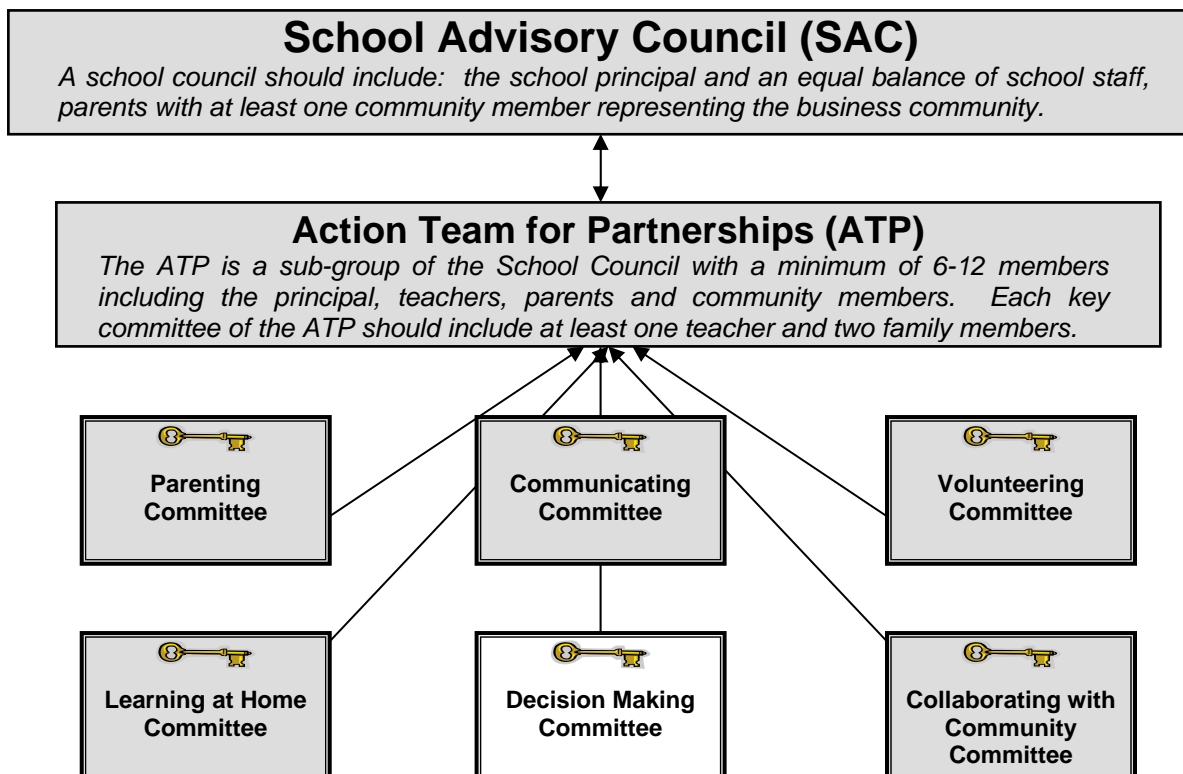


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New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) for their continued support and collaboration;

The Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations for the use of Working Together: A Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities developed by CESDP and supported by NMPED; and,

New Mexico PTA for their support and partnership as we serve communities across our state.

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*If children are loved,
they will be loveable.*

*If children are encouraged,
they will become confident.*

*If children are valued,
they will learn to value.*

*If children are praised,
they will become praiseworthy.*

*If children are respected,
they will reciprocate.*

*If children are taught,
they will learn.*



*If children are celebrated,
they will rejuvenate.*

*If children are nurtured,
they will blossom.*

*If children are healthy,
the world will survive.*



Geneva Gay, Professor of Education
University of Washington, Seattle

The Decision Making Committee of the Action Team for Partnerships

The Decision Making committee of the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) develops ways to include parents in school decisions and build parent leaders.. Practices must ensure that family voices represent the diverse membership of the school community. These activities may include:

- Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils or committees (curriculum school safety, personnel, etc.)
- Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements that benefit students and prepare them for the future
- District-level councils and committees for family and community involvement
- Information on school or local elections for school representatives
- Networks to link all families with parent representatives

Like other ATP committees, members of the Decision Making committee need to set goals and develop step by step plan for reaching these goals. The Present Practices Inventory on page 55 will help guide the work of this committee to face the challenges and rewards that shared decision making brings to their school community..

What are the challenges of shared decision making?

- Include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school.
- Offer training to enable parent leaders to serve as representatives of other families, with input from and return of information to all parents.
- Include students (along with parents) in decision making groups.

What are the results of shared decisions in school communities?

For Students

- Awareness of the representation of families in school decisions.
- Understanding that student rights are protected.
- Specific benefits linked to policies enacted by parent organizations and experienced by students.

For Parents

- Input into policies that affect their child's education.
- Feeling of ownership of school.
- Awareness of parents' voices in school decisions.
- Shared experiences and connections with other families.
- Awareness of school, district, and state policies.

For Administrators, Teachers and Other School Staff

- Increased awareness of family perspectives as an important factor in school policy development and decisions.
- View of the equal status of family representatives on school committees and in leadership roles.

Adapted from Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., et. al.

Shared Decisions – New Opportunities

*“Juntos podemos hacer lo que uno solo piensa.”
“A team can accomplish more than only one member.”*

-Spanish Dicho

Our children thrive academically and socially when schools families and communities agree that they are stronger together than apart. Sharing resources, goals, information, and the hard work of helping every child learn and develop gives our children the stability and encouragement they need for academic success. Family involvement is a requirement for all public schools. Our schools are expected to give families access to information and skills to support their children's education, and recognize the rights of parents and their competence to share in decisions.

Effective relationships develop when each partner is respected and empowered to fully participate in the decision making process. We need to move beyond a blame game—it's your job or it's not my job—to focus on how can we share tasks to reach our goal. If this is our goal, how do we make family involvement a natural part of the way schools work to build student success? We need to think:

This is our school.

What can we do, together, to make sure our children succeed?”

Some schools and communities may already be thinking and doing things this way. That is great! In other schools, shared decision making will mean change and shifting away from our comfort zones. Shared decision making is a journey. It may be a little scary, at first. Our journey will take work and patience as we begin to understand different perspectives and see the value of the resources that others bring to the table.

We need to redefine how we think about decision making. Let's take a fresh view about our roles and responsibilities in the decision making process. It will be helpful to keep the definitions below in mind as you read this book.

“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.

“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.”

“Schools with parents who are involved in decision making and advocacy have higher levels of student achievement and greater public support”.

National PTA (2004)

Where Do We Begin

First of all, everyone who is involved in the lives of our children needs to think of themselves as an advocate for children and young adults. Family members, educators, school support staff, business partners and community agencies will make a difference in the big picture for our children and young adults. As advocates, we can work together to plan and provide opportunities that will not only benefit our students today, but also have a positive impact on the future for our the community as a whole.

Involving families in decision making and advocacy works best when districts and schools develop a **Family Involvement Policy**. *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires all schools receiving Title I dollars to have a written parental involvement policy. The Six Elements of a Family Involvement Policy required by NCLB are provided on the following page.* In New Mexico, House Bill 212 describes requirements for *all schools* to involve parents in decision making and their child's education (page iv). Involving parents and community members as partners to develop a Family Involvement Policy lays the foundation for all schools to meet these requirements.

Family Involvement is not just about the requirements of the law ...it's the right thing to do!

Families are resources for schools that are often ignored or left untapped. As partners, families bring many different experiences and perspectives to the table. If we are truly looking for new solutions to the achievement gap, drop out rates and improving the future for our children—we need to tap every resource and consider each possibility.

It is important that school communities create an *open* and *accepting* environment for all students and their families. Professional development opportunities for staff and families are an essential part of designing a school climate that welcomes families as partners. Keep these things in mind to create a “welcoming” spirit in your school.

- Value diversity as an opportunity to explore new ideas.
- Listen to and respect all parents.
- Provide information in a variety of ways.
- Respectfully negotiate conflicts when they occur.
- Create welcoming classrooms that invite learning and reflect the languages and cultures of your students.
- Encourage families to share ideas about school projects or curriculum activities.



"The time is always right to do what is right."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Six Elements of a Parental Involvement Policy

Each **school district** that receives Title I, Part A funds must develop a written **parental involvement policy**. The policy must be developed jointly with, and agreed upon with, the parents of children participating in Title I, Part A programs and distributed to parents of all children participating in Title I, Part A programs. [Section 1118(a)(2)] If the district already has a district-level parental involvement policy that applies to all parents, it may amend that existing policy, if necessary, to meet the requirements of section 1118. [Section 1118(b)(3)]

A school district's written parental involvement policy must establish the district's expectations for parental involvement, and describe how the district will —

1. Involve parents in jointly developing the district's local plan under section 1112 and in the process of school review and improvement under section 1116;
2. Provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist Title I, Part A schools in planning and implementing effective parental involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance;
3. Build the schools and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement;
4. Coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies under Title I, Part A with parental involvement strategies under other programs, such as Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, Parents as Teachers, Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), state-run preschool programs, and Title III language instructional program;
5. Conduct, with the involvement of parents, an **annual evaluation** of the content and effectiveness of the parental involvement policy in improving the academic quality of the schools served with Title I, Part A funds, including—
 - a. Identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in parental involvement activities with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background;
 - b. Using the findings of the evaluation to design strategies for more effective parental involvement; and
 - c. Revising, if necessary, the district's parental involvement policies; and
6. Involve parents in the activities of schools served under Title I, Part A [Section 1118(a)(2)]

Question: *Is there a form that can be used to fill in the blanks for our policy?*

No. The policy must be developed jointly with parents and must address the specific circumstances of the community and district. States can not issue a policy that can be adopted "as is" by districts. States provide information to guide the process or may have developed a Family Involvement Policy for their state to serve as a model. We encourage schools and districts to review policies that have been developed in other areas as a starting point for joint decision making in their own community. We have included a sample policy on page 75.

How do families become involved?

If we are going to build relationships with families, we need to remember that they need to be kept informed in order to be involved as partners. An invitation to participate is just a starting place. Family leadership really begins as families learn about things that are important to them.

Maria's Story

Maria dropped off her son at school and noticed that students were darting in between moving cars in the student pick-up/drop-off zone. The duty teacher had her hands full trying to keep the children safe. Maria thought about talking to the Principal.. She didn't want to get the duty teacher or students in trouble, but she was concerned about safety. She shared her feelings with a few other parents and they made an appointment to visit with the Principal.

The meeting with the Principal opened new doors! As the concerns were discussed, the Principal shared the school EPPS goal about safety. One of the planned activities to reach the goal focused on communication about safety rules through newsletters and student assemblies. One mom offered to write a safety tips section for the next newsletter. The group discussed signs about parking lot safety as a daily reminder for everyone. A dad in the group offered to work with the school staff on parking lot signs and said he'd contact the local lumber store to donate materials.

The Principal was amazed by their resourcefulness and ideas. He invited the parents to share their ideas during the safety meeting later in the week. He told the group that he would revisit the duty schedule to provide better coverage in the student drop-off/pick-up areas. What began as an informal meeting with a few parents to address a concern actually provided a spark to ignite a series of school activities focused on safety in the rest of the year.

What can we learn from this story? It's okay to speak up to share ideas or concerns. Be prepared to be part of the solution. Listen with an open mind. Look at all options! Never underestimate the power of partnerships.

Those who become involved in shaping systems generally begin their learning process because of a personal need for service. Families become involved in the "bigger picture" as they attend trainings, gather information and make connections. Involvement grows over time with each learning opportunity that is offered to families.

What are some effective ways that teachers and administrators can use to support family involvement in school decisions? The Action Team for Partnerships and other types of school improvement teams provide opportunities to encourage parent leadership and decision making. The second part of this book provides a step by step guide for the Action Team process. Many teachers and administrators already recognize that involved parents and families are part of the solution to improving student achievement. Some schools include parents on advisory committees; classroom or grade level committees; school task forces; curriculum and book adoption advisory groups; and in some cases parents serve on job search committees.

Families as Partners in Decision Making

In order for families to become strong advocates for their children and equal partners in the decision making process, they need to know how they can help. KSA-Plus Communications offers some guiding tips. We've added references to publications or key areas that apply to New Mexico schools. *Great information for school newsletters!*

12 Things Families Should Know About and Expect from Their Schools

1. **Your involvement matters a lot.**
 - When you are involved, your child is more likely to: earn higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher level programs, be promoted/earn credits, attend school regularly, have better social skills, graduate and go to college.
2. **You can be involved in many ways.**
 - By establishing a learning environment at home for the whole family.
 - By volunteering at school or other school activities that promote education.
 - By being an advocate for your child and others by urging state and local leaders to establish stronger programs and higher achievement standards.
 - By being a decision-maker through taking part in decisions about programs, staffing and policies.
3. **The children need you.**
 - The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that American students are not doing as well in school as they should. Less than one-third of our students are achieving at grade level in reading, writing, math, science and other subjects.
 - Skills needed for success in the 21st century demand that we hold higher expectations for our students.
4. **The schools need you.**
 - One major challenge facing schools today is the lack of parent involvement.
 - Parent involvement is needed in a variety of areas.
5. **You should be told clearly what the learning standards are in each grade.**
 - Parents and students need to know, at the start of the school year, what is being taught in all subjects.
 - Parents need to know how learning will be assessed so they can understand how to help their children.
 - Parents should have access to New Mexico Content Standards just as teachers and administrators do.
6. **You should be told about the school's safety standards and discipline.**
 - Students need to feel safe in order to learn.
 - Parents should know what the school's safety and discipline standards are, how problems are handled, and what the school is doing to ensure safety standards are upheld.

Adapted from KSA Plus Communications <http://www.parents.ksaplus.com>

7. **You should be informed on a regular basis how your child and your child's school are doing.**
 - School districts are required to publish parent-friendly report cards every year that show both how students are performing, as well as how the school is performing as a whole.
 - For school district report cards in New Mexico, visit the New Mexico Public Education Department web site: <http://www.sde.state.nm.us/>

8. **Middle and high school parents should be told what steps should be taken for your child to apply for college.**
 - Middle school is not too early to begin thinking about what kind of courses your child should be taking if he or she wants to go to college.
 - All students in New Mexico (grades 8-12) must complete a Next Step Plan to insure that students are on track to meet graduation requirements. The plan is developed, updated yearly with the student and his/her family. It is signed by the parent/guardian, the student and all relevant staff and on file in the principal's office (Section 22-13-1.1 NMSA 1978). The IEP/transition plan substitutes as the next-step plan for students receiving special education services.

9. **You should know your options.**
 - The No Child Left Behind Act has many requirements that schools must meet in order to be in compliance. Ask for this information. Ask questions.
 - Call Parents Reaching Out (1-800-524-5176) for information about No Child Left Behind. Our Did You Know Fact Sheets (page 82) are good tools. Download them from our web site: www.parentsreachingout.org

10. **You should be able to get answers to your important questions.**
 - How do I know my child is safe?
 - What is my child expected to know and be able to do in reading, writing, math and other subjects? How is learning measured?
 - What will the school do to help if my child is behind?
 - What can I do to help?



Adapted from KSA Plus Communications <http://www.parents.ksaplus.com>

How Does Your School Measure Up?

Think about your school. Think about how decisions are made and how information is shared. Do all partners (educators, families, students and community members) have access to information and share a voice in the decision making process? This survey is a tool used by the Action Team for Partnerships to gather feedback from your “school community” that can be use to develop plans for shared decision making.

	Yes	No	Somewhat
Does Our School Share Power? Our School:			
• opens up the decision making process so that families have a voice			
• gives parents a role in selecting administrators, including the principal			
• respectfully acknowledges and recognizes all parents - including elected parent leaders, not just parents hand-picked by the school administration			
• makes an effort to learn about the concerns of different groups of families in the school community and reaches out to diverse families			
Is our school ACCESSIBLE? Our School:			
• sets a regular schedule for classroom observation;			
• gives families full access to the school building			
• makes sure that administration and teachers set regular office hours to meet with families			
• holds frequent and open meetings that support parent schedules			
Does Our School Offer Continuous Training? Our School:			
• provides workshops to help parents understand the data on school performance			
• provides training for teachers and other school staff about how to communicate more effectively with parents and families and includes parents and family members			
• provides training for parents on the school's annual report card every year and how to interpret the results			
• provides information on the school's test results and report cards and how to analyze them			
Does Our School Recognize Parent Led Organizations? Our School			
• recognizes a variety of groups, not just the “official” parent advisory group			
• provides information and the use of facilities and office supplies and machines such as the copier and fax			
• helps arrange for food, activities for younger children and transportation			
• encourages teachers and administrators to speak at meetings			

Source: www.pritchardcommittee.org

Collaboration: The Path to Partnerships

Collaboration, local control and self-reliance are keys to achieving successful results in school communities. Collaboration happens when people and organizations come together to achieve common goals. The result is that they often accomplish more together than they would working separately.

Local control and self-reliance occur when local people determine how to make things happen in their own communities. As people begin to work together, they realize the many strengths and resources that exist in their own backyard. They also take responsibility for making things happen, instead of waiting for someone else to provide solutions. Building local leadership and increasing community capacity help sustain change efforts over a long period of time.

Creating Collaborative Action Teams
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)

We all make decisions every day. Some decisions help us go about our daily lives—setting the alarm clock to get to work or school on time; choosing what to wear; or finding the best place to shop for groceries. We don't need a committee to help us decide these things. We can use the information we have on hand.

Decisions that are made to create a safe learning environment that supports student achievement and social competence are more complex. These decisions require time and effort to set goals, gather information, discuss options and plan. When all partners have access to information with opportunities to openly discuss the issues, we share a common sense of purpose. Together, we can improve future outcomes for our children.

Does this mean that every single decision made in schools needs to be shared?

No. Schools are complex communities that operate under federal, state and local guidelines. Certain decisions must be made by school leadership to make sure that laws and regulations are being followed. Good leaders know that sound decisions are not made by a gut feeling or just a good guess. Effective decisions are based on the facts, shared information and feedback from others.

Schools that have developed successful partnerships with parents view student achievement as a shared responsibility. All stake-holders (parents, administrators, teachers, and community leaders) play important roles in supporting children's learning. At the same time we need to use common sense.

If every decision needed a "vote" or survey before it was made, we all would be spending our time in committee meetings or completing surveys while our children waited to learn. We need to use our time wisely. Epstein's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) format provides an effective and efficient way to insure that all partners have a voice in the decision making process.

When we identify areas for shared decisions, we can work smarter, not harder!

How Do We Make Decisions?

One of the big questions regarding decision making is “Who actually decides?” Research shows that when people are involved in making a decision, they’re much more likely to support the decision. Going up the decision making scale (from individual decision to unanimous decision) increases commitment, but the process also increases the difficulty of arriving at an agreement and the time needed to reach decisions.

Use the definitions below to think of a situation at school or in your home that fits each type of decision. Write your answer on the line provided.

1. **Individual decision.** One person, normally the leader, actually makes a decision. Others involved in the situation are expected to abide by it.

2. **Minority decision.** A few of those involved in the situation meet to consider the matter. They make a binding decision for all concerned.

3. **Majority decision.** More than half of those involved in the situation make a binding decision for all concerned. Many political and democratic organizations use this principle.

4. **Consensus decision.** An entire group considers a problem on the basis of reason and discussion, with each member expressing a view. The group reaches a decision that all members can accept, regardless of how satisfied they are with it. (No “majority-rule” voting, bargaining or “averaging” is allowed.)

5. **Unanimous decision.** Each person fully agrees on the action to be taken, and everyone concerned fully subscribes to the decision they make.

Personalize decision making to fit the needs of your school community.

Schools in New Mexico are required to develop and implement an Educational Plan for Student Success. Families are key partner in this process. The EPSS process requires your district/school to evaluate current practices in terms of where students are performing according to state standards and benchmarks. This information is the base line for developing goals and defining areas for shared decision making to improve outcomes for students. The design of the School Advisory Council and Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) framework (page vi) provides the foundation for shared decisions focused on EPSS goals.



Building Capacity to Make Decisions

Developing a successful school-family partnership must be a whole school endeavor, not the work of a single person or program.

In order to build strong partnerships, families and school staff members need time to get to know one another, plan how they will work together to increase student learning, and carry out their plans. *How do we find the time to do this?* School leadership with the support of their district, school board and community must be willing to look at the big picture and the benefits of building capacity for decision making. *Family Involvement in Children's Education: Successful Local Approaches, an Idea Book*,¹ provides suggestions for school leaders to consider.

Overcoming time and resource constraints: Strategies for helping teachers make time to develop school-family partnerships include:

1. assigning parent coordinator or home-school liaisons to help teachers maintain contact with parents through home visits or by covering classes for teachers so they can meet with parents,
2. providing time during the school day for teachers to meet with parents or visit them at their homes,
3. providing stipends or compensatory time off for teachers to meet with parents after school hours, and
4. freeing up teachers from routine duties, such as lunchroom supervision, in order to meet with students' family members.

Schools can be sensitive to time pressures facing parents by scheduling meetings at night or before shifts to accommodate the schedules of working parents or on weekend mornings to address parents' safety concerns. Schools can also help parents by providing early notices of meetings and activities, allowing parents to have time to adjust their schedules, and establishing homework hotlines or voice mail systems so parents can stay in touch with their children's schoolwork without leaving their home.

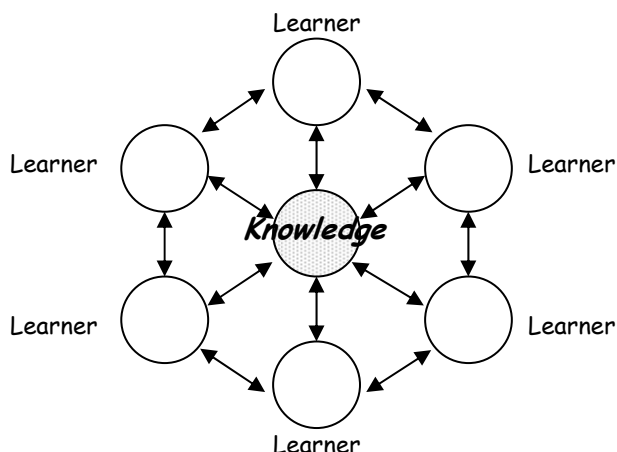
Providing information and training to parents and school staff: Without the information and skills to communicate with each other, misperceptions and distrust can grow between parents and school personnel. Through *team-building* workshops and outreach activities (informative newsletters, handbooks, and home visits) parents and school staff learn how to trust each other and work together to help children succeed in school. Workshops may include helping parents support learning at home, preparing parents to participate in school decision making, and providing teachers, principals, and school staff with strategies for working with parents as partners. Workshops on parenting help families learn about child development and how to support student academic learning. Parenting workshops may also cover a number of different issues, such as children's language development, learning styles, parent nurturing, discipline strategies, child abuse prevention, nutrition and health practices. *PRO Note:* *Some schools in New Mexico offer parents opportunities to take English as a Second Language (ESL) classes or to get their high school diploma through GED classes.*

¹ Family Involvement In Children's Education: Successful Local Approaches, An Idea Book, prepared by Policy Studies Associates, Inc. for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

Becoming a Learning Community

Effective partnerships can be built through a collaborative learning model. Each partner plays a useful, competent role in the process. There is no single “expert”. Learners ask questions, share ideas, and discuss solutions. Each person shares ownership in the process.

If we are going to work as partners to improve outcomes for our children, then we have to get to know each other. Educators, families and other stakeholders will need to learn to listen to one another and begin to trust one another. It won't happen overnight.



Providing opportunities for families, schools and community member to make personal connections will help build the trust that is needed for school communities to put plans into action. Organizing a series of community discussions is a great way to begin. Community-wide discussions increase understanding and are a great starting place to encourage families to get involved in the issues that are important to them.

Community-Wide Discussions Energize Partnerships

Here are a few tips to consider as you plan activities in your community.

Topics: Make use of survey results, school data or new information to target the topics of high interest or critical to student success. Hold community meetings!

Place: Consider dates and locations that are convenient and comfortable for families. Remember: Not all “school meetings” have to take place in the school. Tap other agencies or community organizations to provide childcare and/or settings for these meetings (public library, churches, and senior citizens centers).

Time: Select times for these meetings that will encourage families to participate. Would a “breakfast meeting” work for parents? Would an after school meeting work? Would an early evening meeting be best for your community? Consider planning repeat sessions at a couple of different times and dates.

Value Contributions: Set up a “welcome table” with a “greeter” to give each person a name tag—even if it is just a first name. Invite each participant to sign in so they can receive follow-up information or other materials. During the discussion, use a flip chart to record ideas, concerns or information. This adds value to their input and provides notes” that can be shared after the session.

Follow-up and Follow Through: Report the outcomes of the meeting to the school community as a whole through a newsletter, web-site posting, etc. Post the outcomes in public places like libraries or chapter houses. Add a personal touch by sending the notes (with a thank you) to all who participated.

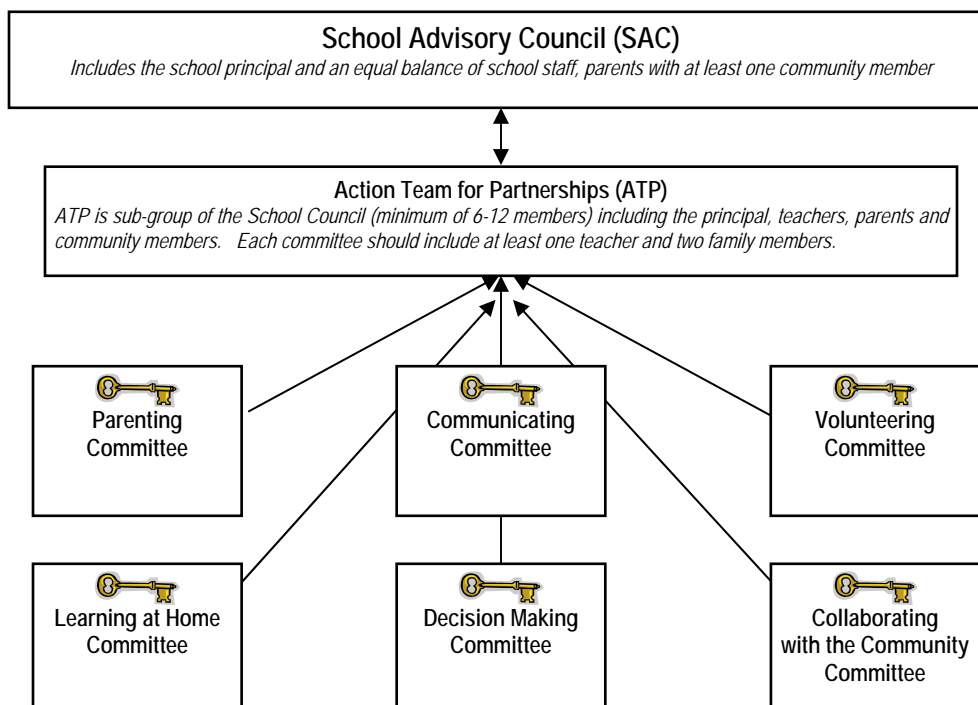
From Conversations to Actions

Conversations in community meetings build partnerships and provide time for school staff and families to get to know each other to form common goals. If we are really going to make a difference for our students, our school community partnerships must go beyond the talking stage and move to action steps. We can't expect new and improved results if just "talk" about what we should do—we need to take action. *In the next section of our book, you will learn about the Epstein's Action Team model and ways to build partnerships that offer the best opportunities to help our children succeed.*

Why use Epstein Model's of Action Team for Partnerships?

- ★ Research-based and field-tested
- ★ Flexible
- ★ Allows people to follow their passion without wasting their time
- ★ Goal oriented

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) is as its name implies, it is the "action arm" for the School Council that focuses on educational goals. Recreational or social activities are valuable for children as well, but better suited to be organized by other organizations within the school. The purpose the ATP is to engage more families and community members to work as partners alongside administrators and school staff to increase parental involvement and other components of NCLB. *We share responsibility!* The Action Team works with the School Council to assess present practices, organize options for new partnerships, implement selected activities and evaluate next steps. The Action Team is a vehicle for continuing to improve and coordinate practices for all six keys of family involvement from year to year.



Action Team for Partnerships (ATP)



Action Team for Partnerships: Step by Step

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) builds successful school communities and offers a research-based approach to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind, NM House Bill 212 and legal mandates for schools. To learn more about the mandates facing today's schools, please review page 51 of the Action Team Toolbox.

The Action Team is a sub-group of the School Council. Both the School Council and the Action Team includes the principal, parents, school staff and community members. The ideal structure of an ATP is shown on page 13. In the following sections, we share tools and information to help organize an effective ATP in your school.

The Members

The Action Team should represent school staff (teachers from different grade levels), parents, community members and for high school teams, at least two students from different grades as well. At minimum, the team should be composed of 6-12 members: one teacher and two parents per subcommittee. Ideally, the teachers would personally invite two parents to serve on the team. Parents would be encouraged to invite other parents to help "grow" the group.

The Team Chair and Co-Chair

The chair and co-chair of the action team can be any member who possesses the respect of the other members. These "leaders" should have good communication skills, an understanding of partnerships and the willingness to form them. They keep the team focused, committed and on task. *(On-going training for teams to build capacity for leaders and team members is important.)* The ATP leadership reports progress to the School Council related to team objectives and how they connect with the overall goals for the school. The Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) process required for all NM public schools is the common link. Family involvement is required in this process.

Subcommittee Chair and Co-chairs

Those who lead the subcommittees should also possess all the leadership qualities above, including the respect of the subcommittee, good communication skills and the ability to keep the subcommittee focused. Once again, on-going training for team members is essential.

The Subcommittees

The subcommittees should be made up of a minimum of three members; one teacher and two parents. Each subcommittee should also have one chair and one co-chair person. The chair and co-chair can either volunteer, be elected or be assigned by the leader or principal.

Follow Your Passion! Think about the Six Keys to Family Involvement. Which area interests you most? Which subcommittee would be a good fit for you?

- Parenting Communicating Volunteering Learning at Home
 Decision Making Collaborating with Community

How Do We Get Started?

Tap every resource! Contact Parents Reaching Out (1-800-524-5176). Our Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) staff members are ready to provide support and assistance to help families and schools who are interested in developing Action Teams based on the Epstein model. Our presentations and workshops are useful tool to build understanding and provide that spark to everyone involved in this process. Here are some thoughts to consider.

1. Presentations, Blessings and Invitations. Sometimes it is not the principal who initially chooses to implement a school Action Team for Partnerships. Anyone can propose and/or establish an Action Team in their child's or their community's school. The Promising Practices on pages 37 through 46 including "One New Mexico School's Story" on page 44 offer ideas for building an Action Team in your school.

a. **Present the model to the principal.** This will essentially be your "sales pitch". Express enthusiasm and offer examples of to show how it would be beneficial for the school.

b. **Obtain the principal's blessing.** Remember, the whole point is to be partners, not adversaries. If you are hoping to establish an Action Team in your school, it is necessary to have the principal's blessing. After all, you will need to use school space, teachers will be involved and hopefully Title I funds will support your efforts.



c. **Invite the teachers.** After the principal is on board, work with him or her to invite teacher participation. You might even want to plan a special event or 'social' activity to begin this exciting journey. You will repeat step one by presenting your sales pitch to build enthusiasm and support to get them to buy in to the benefits of using Action Team model. Have a sign up sheet ready.

2. Obtain Funds and Support. At minimum, an Action Team will need at least \$1000 for time and materials for subcommittees to effectively plan and implement the Six Keys of Family Involvement to reach the school's goals. Funding sources may include Title I and/or other programs that require family involvement. Other fundraising efforts by the Action Team or the PTO/PTA can also be used. We encourage partnerships with PTO/PTA or other parent organization to align their plans with Action Team activities. Be sure that you are also prepared to discuss:

a. *Specific budget needs* including what will be spent, what can be donated, etc. It is a good idea to talk about accountability and how the Action Team budget will be monitored.

b. *A detailed "start up" list* of supplies, resources etc. that will be needed for the team to function and be successful. Time is money! An important topic to discuss will be how schedules can be adapted to provide time for staff and family participation.



c. *Possible needs for future fundraising efforts to support the plan.*

- 3. Organize the Action Team!** Your school's Action Team should include a representative membership from your school community. Identifying members may take many forms. Members may be elected, selected by the principal, nominated by their peers or they may volunteer. This may be a way to include existing committees with overlapping responsibilities. The process offers opportunities to take a fresh look at focus areas to *work smarter—not harder!*

Remember that great teams don't just happen. Take time for team building activities. The *Team Talk* sections in this book highlight just a few of the strategies included in Creating Collaborative Action Teams by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). These materials, in addition to Working Together: A Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities developed by The Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP) and supported by NMPED, are great resources for your journey.

- 4. Begin the “action process”. Evaluate the current conditions of the school.**

Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How will we get there?

It may be helpful for team members to think about history at your school and decide which approach to take. Gathering information about your school community will help the team make future decisions. Collecting feedback from families, students, staff and other stakeholders helps set focus areas for action.

This information can be collected through: written surveys, web-based surveys, telephone interviews, panel discussion, focus groups or communitywide meetings or a combination of these formats. Select the method that will work best to insure the greatest participation. The Tools Section of this book includes sample surveys. Feedback opportunities should include these areas:

- Current strengths in our school (What practices are working?)
- Areas for change in our school (What practices are not working?)
- Expectations in our school (What is expected of all stakeholders?)
 - What are the expectations for students?
 - What do teachers expect from families? What do families expect from teachers, the principal and all other school staff?
 - What do students expect from their families? What do students expect from teachers, the principal and all other school staff?

Feedback tools should provide clear information about family involvement and a sense of community partnership. Which families are we currently reaching? What is keeping other families away? Results will help develop strategies to engage more families in their child's education and involve the community.

The work of the Action Team should be linked to school goals. In addition to collecting feedback from the school community, the team will need to spend time reviewing school reports and other public record information. Members will need to review the Annual School Report Card and Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS). The key questions should be: “How can the work of the Action Team and Sub Committees connect to goal areas or activities? Are there areas that need to be revisited or refined to involve the Action Team?”

5. Review Data and Develop a One-Year Action Plan and a Three-Year Outline.

The Epstein Model for school Action Teams for Partnerships offers a three-year outline and a one-year action plan. At minimum, the Action Team should develop a detailed action plan, annually, that is connected to a measurable educational goal. Forms to help you with this process are included in the *Toolbox* section of this book. *The one-year action plan should include:*

Details

- The goal(s) that the Action Team is working on for that year
- Specific activities to be implemented, improved or maintained for each of Six Keys for Family Involvement (Epstein Model) to reach each goal
- A detailed timeline outlining monthly meetings, activities, etc.
- Specific requirements including how the activities will be evaluated or assessed and how data records will be kept

Responsibilities

- Identification of all subcommittee chairs and co-chairs
- Who will assist the team; both team members and non-team-members?
- How will members, including teachers, students, parents, community members be recognized for their efforts?
- How the activities and progress toward goals will be shared with the school community (families, students, staff and other stakeholders)?

Costs

- Specific budget needs including what will be spent, what can be donated, etc. and a plan for action in regards to the budget
- A detailed list of supplies, resources etc. needed for the team to function and be successful
- Will there be a need for additional fundraising



Evaluation

- How well have the practices been implemented and what are the effects on students, teachers, families and the community as a whole?
- What activities or strategies require adjusting to improve results?

The three-year outline can be used in order to document the steps that the Action Team will take to have the school be where it wants to be in three years. However, a lot can change in three years. Families move away, teachers or principals leave, etc. It is optional for the school to complete the three-year outline, but the one-year action plan is required for success.

"We need each other to test out ideas, to share what we're learning; to help us see in new ways, to listen to our stories. We need each other to forgive us when we fail, to trust us with their dreams, to offer their hope when we've lost our way."

Margaret Wheatley

6. **Monitor and Adjust.** Use the evaluation information collected during activities to continually monitor progress toward goals. Adjust activities or strategies as needed to make the most of every opportunity to expand and improve family involvement and student outcomes.
7. **Celebrate Successes!** Specifically recognize individual and group contributions of team and committee members so they continue to feel valued in this partnership. Use newsletters, articles in the local paper, presentations to the school board or community groups and the school web site to celebrate success—big or small. At the end of each year, hold a special celebration that includes presentation opportunities for the subcommittees for each of the Six Keys. Celebration is a very important part of the process.
8. **Look to the Future.** Evaluate effectiveness of the activities implemented during the past year. Discuss problems and share ideas to identify solutions for the next year. The team wants to address anything and everything that ensures the future success of parental involvement in their school.



The School, Family and Community Partnerships Handbook for Action advises that the number of families who become involved each year will increase as time passes. You will see this as you read about *Promising Practices* that begin on page 37 and in *One New Mexico School's Story* that begins on page 44. Some families may not want to get involved because their fear the unknown or do not want to be a part of something new. Once they witness the success, more and more people will be willing to participate.

The Handbook for Action reminds us that three years is typically needed for a team to establish itself as a productive and permanent fixture in the school, which is true for any new program. Practices will require continuous reviews and adjustments to meet the ever changing needs in your school community.

Creating and establishing partnerships is a process, not a single event or final product. Not all activities will always be effective or engaging. Together, your school community will find out what works and what does not. With good planning and a continuous process of evaluating what you do, your activities will reach more and more families and community members to improve the future for all children and young adults.

To be truly effective, a school should strive for at least seven opportunities/events for parental involvement each year.

Who Benefits from the Action Team Process?

	Students	Families	School & Community Educators, Support Staff, Others
Key 1 Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of family support and value of education • Increased respect for parents • Positive personal qualities, habits, values taught by family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase self-confidence about the role and value of parenting • Increased knowledge of child and adolescent development • Feeling of support from school staff, other parents & community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding family goals, needs cultures and views of their children • Respect for families strengths, efforts and student diversity • Awareness of knowledge to share on child development
Key 2 Communicating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of school programs & policies • Awareness of role as link for communication between home and school • Awareness of progress and actions needed to maintain or improve grades 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of school programs and policies • Ease of interactions and communications with teachers and other school staff • Awareness of child's progress in subjects and skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to communicate easily and clearly • Diversity of communication methods with families • Ability to understand family views and ask for help
Key 3 Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop skills in communicating with adults • Awareness skills, talents, occupations and contributions of parents or other volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased self-confidence to work in school and with children • Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school • Contribute skills as volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readiness to involve all families in new ways, not only as volunteers • More individual attention to students with volunteer help
Key 4 Learning at Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework completion • View parent as more similar to teacher and home more similar to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of how to support, encourage and help students at home • Understanding of what child is learning in each subject • Awareness of child as a learner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for family time • Satisfaction with family involvement and support • Recognition of helpfulness of all families in motivating, supporting and reinforcing student learning at home
Key 5 Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of representation of families in school decisions • Understanding that student rights and interests are protected and come with responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of school, district and state policies • Input on the policies affecting children's education • Feeling of partnership and ownership of the school • Awareness that parents voices count in school decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of perspectives of families in policy development and school decisions • Acceptance of equality of family representatives on school committees and families in leadership roles
Key 6 Collaborating with Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and exploration of careers and options for future education and/or work • Positive relationships with adults in the community • Skills enriched from curricular and extracurricular experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactions with other families in the community • Awareness of contributions and school support by community • Increased knowledge of community resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction • Skill in working with mentors, business partners, community volunteers, etc.

Why Involve the Community?

It may seem odd to think of including community members or local businesses in the activities and decisions that involve your child or your school, especially if they do not have children who attend your school. In her article *“Community Involvement in School Improvement: The Little Extra that Makes a Big Difference”*, Mavis G. Sanders describes community partners as valuable players in the development of children. Community partners have a wide range of skills and knowledge and, just like families, bring resources to the table. We all have a vested interest in fostering future successful and productive members of society that they may one day employ.

In building your school’s Action Team, involve partners in your community.

- Businesses/Corporations: Local businesses, national companies, and franchises
- Universities/Educational Institutions: Colleges, universities or vocational institutes
- Healthcare Organizations: Hospitals, healthcare centers, public health offices, and early intervention service provider agencies.
- Government/Military Agencies: Fire departments, police departments, chambers of commerce and other state government agencies or departments
- National Service/Volunteer Organizations: Rotary Club, Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, VISTA, Shriners, Boy/Girl Scouts, YMCA, United Way, Americorp or others
- Faith-Based Organizations: Churches, mosques, synagogues, charities, etc.
- Senior Citizens Organizations: Nursing homes, senior volunteer or service organizations and others
- Cultural and Recreational Institutions: Zoos, museums, libraries, historical societies or cultural groups
- Other Community Organizations: Non-profit organizations, fraternities, sororities neighborhood groups, foundations, political associations and alumni groups

Who are the Partners in Your Community?

Take a moment to think about businesses, churches, neighborhood associations or groups in your community that could be invited to join your school as partners. If you live in a small community or rural area, think about ways to pool resources with neighboring towns or other schools. *(This could be used as a team building activity.)*

"Action is the catalyst that creates accomplishments.
It is the path that takes us from uncrafted hopes to realized dreams."

Thomas Huxley

Family Involvement Checklist

The Action Team can use this tool with the results from school community surveys and other information in the *Toolbox* section of this book to set priorities and develop plans for action.

In Place	Partially In Place	Not In Place	Task	PRIORITY High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
			Climate	
			1. There is a process for assessing how welcomed, valued, and satisfied parents are in and with the school.	
			2. There is a plan for addressing ways to help families feel welcomed and valued that is respectful of diverse needs of families in our school.	
			3. There is a plan for training all staff to work collaboratively and respectfully with families.	
			Parent Involvement in Learning Activities at Home	
			4. There is a process for assessing parents' opinions about their own involvement in learning activities at home.	
			5. There is a plan or set of activities for helping families to support their child's learning at home.	
			6. The plan includes activities for helping diverse families, including those with students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ESL) or other needs, support their child's learning.	
			Communication with Parents/Families	
			7. There is a process for assessing parents' opinions about how well schools communicate with them.	
			8. There is a plan for communicating with families in varied and helpful ways using languages spoken in homes in the community.	
			9. The plan includes activities for communicating with diverse families about important school/home matters.	
			Parent/Family Involvement at School (Volunteering, Assisting)	
			10. There is a process for assessing parents' opinions about how they can support schools through their involvement at school.	
			11. There is a plan for how parents can be involved in supporting learning at school through volunteering and assisting.	
			12. The plan for parental involvement in school activities addresses how diverse families can participate.	
			Parent/Family Involvement in Decision Making	
			13. There is a process for assessing parents' opinions about the extent to which they are encouraged to participate in decision making committees and activities (e.g., leadership teams).	
			14. There is a plan for encouraging and supporting parent participation in decision making committees and activities.	
			15. The plan for parental participation in decision making committees and activities addresses how diverse families can participate.	
			16. There is a process for assessing parents' opinions about the extent to which they can provide input to school personnel about matters of importance including discipline that is taken seriously.	
			Parent-Family Involvement in Collaborating with Community	
			17. There is a plan for identifying community partners that includes local agencies, businesses, non-profit organizations and other groups.	
			18. There is a plan for assessing the opinions and inviting support of the community in matters of importance including career exploration, higher education and employability in the workforce.	

Adapted from Epstein (2003) and Fullen (1991)

What is Shared Leadership?

Shared leadership offers a fresh approach to decision making and problem solving. It's a way of building capacity in our school communities. Our schools can be better and our students can be well prepared for the future if we work together to share leadership.

Values of Shared Leadership

- We, not I
- Trust among members
- Diverse perspectives
- Preparing members for leadership
- Empowering members through shared responsibility
- Appreciating each team member's expertise and skill



Traditional Leadership	Shared Leadership
<p>Closed Participation Followers listen and do what they are told.</p>	<p>Broad Participation All team members participate actively in any discussion or decision the team makes.</p>
<p>Centralized Power Followers conform and take no part in making decisions.</p>	<p>Decentralized Power Diverse perspectives are valued as a way to increase everyone's knowledge.</p>
<p>Vertical Relationships Decisions come from the top.</p>	<p>Horizontal Relationships All team members have equal opportunity to participate.</p>
<p>Focus on Cooperation School, home, community and students work informally with, but independent of each other.</p>	<p>Focus on Collaboration School, home, community and students formally share resources, power and authority to accomplish a mutual goal.</p>
<p>Leadership Based I, you, he or she is accountable.</p>	<p>Community Based We take responsibility.</p>
<p>Autocratic One voice dominates.</p>	<p>Democratic Many voices are heard.</p>
<p>Rigid Leadership is rule-oriented, regardless of the situation.</p>	<p>Flexible Leadership is group-oriented and sensitive to the situation.</p>

Team Talk



Tips for school communities from Creating Collaborative Action Teams by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL).

Shared leadership helps team members see themselves as a group of leaders working together to benefit the students and their families. “Balancing power” among school, home, community and student representatives promote equal partnership. Shared leadership teams have the following characteristics:

- *Investment*—Team members participate actively and are committed to their mission.
- *Decentralized power*—No one person or group holds all the power.
- *Horizontal relationships*—All team members have equal opportunity to participate.
- *Interdependency*—All team members trust that they’re all in this together.
- *Democratic decision making*—All voices are heard and influence decisions.
- *Creativity*—No one individual is as clever as the team as a whole.
- *Flexibility*—Team members are group oriented and sensitive to the particular situation.

Strengths-Based Leadership Roles: Effective, well-balanced teams find ways to tap the personal strengths of members for important roles that reflect the leadership qualities they bring to the team. *What hidden talent will you bring to your team?*

Communicator—Helps everyone understand the message. *“Let’s go through this step by step so we can ask questions.”*

Consensus Builder—Helps people talk with one another so they can make a decision all members can support. *“I listen to others before I make a decision.”*

Evaluator—Pays attention to detail. Helps the team evaluate decisions and activities. *“How will we measure our progress?”*

Implementer—Follows through on decisions and gets things done. *“I’m good at getting the job done when someone tells me what to do.”*

Mediator—Helps people understand each other. *“I have a good sense of humor.”*

Mentor—Helps people lead activities and advises them how to improve. *“I will work with you on this.”*

Planner—Thinks about what’s needed to make things happen. *“I love to plan parties for kids in my neighborhood. I organized this year’s Book Fair.”*

Resource Developer—Finds what’s needed to make things happen. *“I know where we can find that.”*

Risk Taker—Tries new ideas and approaches. *“I thrive on the challenge of trying something new.”*

Team Builder—Helps people feel like they’re part of the team. *“I want everyone to have a chance to be heard.”*

Visionary—Shares dreams about making things better and helps lead people to make these dreams come true. *“I have strong ideas about how to improve things.”*

Roles and Responsibilities in Shared Leadership

Many people play important leadership roles on an Action Team and it can be natural for a member to feel out of place “leading” a particular member of the other group. *All members should speak about the team’s effort to others at the school or in the community and actively publicize activities. All members should be ready for opportunities to recruit new members and build new partnerships in their community.* Some of the roles and responsibilities of each of the Action Team member are shared in the pages that follow.

Principals

Principals are essential members of the Action Team. Their support and guidance promotes success. When the team sees the principal as truly supportive of partnerships and parental involvement, they are likely to remain inspired and productive. The principal is needed to:

- Present the model to teachers and stress the importance of planning and conducting school, family and community partnerships with the school’s families. The principal should not only talk about the importance, but demonstrate their own belief in the model and importance of greater parental and community involvement and partnerships. Remember, action speaks louder than words!
- Allocate funds for the efforts of the Action Team in order to implement school, family and community partnership activities in the school. The principal should include the funds as a line item in the annual school budget.
- Provide time, flexibility and space for Action Team meetings, including arrangements for teacher on the Action Team to meet at the same time or allowing the school to open for meetings before and after school.
- Encourage all educators and staff and families and community members to participate in involvement activities.
- Create a welcoming school climate and sense of community.
- Diligently publicize involvement activities throughout the year.
- Evaluate each teacher’s activities and practices for parental involvement as part of their annual or periodic review.
- Support the Action Team by making or supporting reports to the School Advisory Council on the plans, goals and accomplishments of the team.
- Work with community groups and leaders to locate resources that will enrich the curriculum and help students, teachers and parents in important ways.
- Recognize and thank Action Team leaders, members, family volunteers and other community or school staff participants.
- Work with the school district facilitators, district administrators and principals from other schools to understand, build and improve all school, family and community partnerships.

Teachers

Ideally, at least six teachers from different grade levels would serve on the Action Team as a chair or co-chair for each of the subcommittees. Teachers' roles may include:

- Contribute ideas for family and community involvement activities that can be linked to academic goals. This is a way for them to use their valuable, hands on experience and perspective of working directly with children in particular.
- Work with other teachers in their school to reinforce and model the importance of parental involvement and establishing genuine connections with families.
- Inspire and provide support for other teachers to participate in partnership and parental involvement activities.
- Share their own tried and true best practices of how to include families and make them feel truly welcome.
- Collect data about their own parental involvement activities and efforts to contribute to the Action Team and School Advisory Council.
- Mentor others to become more effective communicators with each other, the community, their principal, and most importantly children and their families!

Families

Family leaders should come from different neighborhoods, different backgrounds, and represent different ethnic and socio-economic groups. Family members should outnumber all other Action Team members and continue to grow year after year. Remember that families include not only the parents, but grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings and other caregivers. Roles for family member could include:

- Serve as a chair or co-chair of a subcommittee in partnership with a teacher.
- Provide key information from the family perspective about what will work to involve more families, including activities, practices, etc.
- Recruit more families or community members to serve on the Action Team or continually work to publicize current activities or efforts.
- Work with the Action Team and principal to design or redesign the school to be an open and welcoming environment for families

Parents Reaching Out offers workshops and support for families interested in building their leadership skills. We provide tools in Family Leadership Institutes focused on communication, advocacy and building partnerships with schools. Our Project FLECHA (Family Leadership in Education, Culture and Healthcare Access) materials series helps families become Learning Advocates to raise healthy children who are eager and able to learn in school and at home. Workshops are offered in English and Spanish.

One of the greatest gifts you can give to another human being is to care enough to listen to their story.

Richard Leider

All Other School Staff

All school staff are encouraged to participate in parental involvement activities. Those observing interactions between parents and teachers from the outside can offer fresh ideas. School staff includes counselors, psychologists, nurses, librarians, custodians, social workers, instructional assistants, and other staff. Their role could include:

- Serve as a chair or co-chair of a subcommittee in partnership with a teacher.
- Provide key information from their perspective about what will work to involve more families, including activities, practices, etc.
- Work with the Action Team and principal to design or redesign the school to be an open and welcoming environment for families.
- Collect data about their own parental involvement activities and efforts to contribute to the Action Team and School Advisory Council.
- Inspire and encourage other members on the Action Team.

Students

At the high school level, students must serve on the Action Team and be encouraged to serve as subcommittee chair or co-chairs with teachers or family members. Student members should be valued for the perspective they bring to the team. Having students on a team helps keep adults motivated and accountable. It also helps the team develop projects and programs that really meet the needs of young people in the school community. Involving students as equal partners on the Action Team requires a shift in thinking for many adults and many young people. Here are a few tips:

- Share the responsibility for leadership. Provide guidance, but avoid total control.
- Listen carefully to students and try to understand their perspective.
- Provide meaningful roles and assignments for students.
- Share all work activities, even the tedious ones.
- Treat young people as equals and develop a partnership relationship.
- Keep students informed about activities, even when problems occur.
- Be energetic and excited about activities. Have a positive, open attitude.
- Make activities fun and challenging.
- Be clear about levels of authority for students and back their decisions when they fall within the agreed-upon guidelines.
- Serve as role models and be consistent and fair in your actions.

Source: National Assembly of National Voluntary Health and Social Welfare Organizations

Good leadership is essential for a well-functioning team. Leaders should:

- A—Accept Leadership**
- B—Be Ready to Share Leadership**
- C—Communicate with All Partners**
- D—Develop Good Plans**
- E—Evaluate Progress**
- F—Foster Team Spirit!**

What Does It Take to Become a Successful Team?

Have a bias toward action—let's see something happen now. You can break that big plan into small steps and take the first step right away.

Indira Gandhi

You have recruited teachers, families and community for your team. Chairs or co-chairs have been selected or appointed. During a series of meetings your team developed a one year action plan. *How do you know if your team will function successfully?*

Communication

- Have members developed respect for each others strengths and talents?
- Is the team following the ground rules for communication that it established?
- Are the roles and responsibilities for team members clear and being met?
- Is there a spirit of cooperation, encouragement and appreciation amongst the team members?
- Has the team communicated with faculty, staff and families about activities?

Remain Goal-Oriented

- Make your one year action plan ambitious but achievable!
- Make sure goals are clear, as well as specific objectives to meet those goals.
- Keep activities strictly linked to school improvement plans and goals; leave the school dances, for example to someone else.
- Remain active in seeking and obtaining resources for planned activities.

Ensure that Meetings Are Useful!

- Ineffective, useless meetings are frustrating for everyone! Remain on task and follow the agenda at each meeting. Including starting and ending on time.
- Create appropriate schedules for team meetings and for committee meetings.

Sharing Leadership and Decisions

- Agree to disagree about ideas, but not people.
- Discuss problems to solve them and focus on building consensus.
- Share leadership! Don't overwhelm anyone person and hold yourself accountable for your responsibilities.
- Develop ground rules for decision making.

Continue Working to Improve All Partnerships

- Celebrate successes! This is so important for boosting the morale of the team and partnerships.
- Honestly identify areas for improvement.
- Write new one year action plans every year.
- Promptly replace members that leave.
- Allow for flexibility. Adjust roles and responsibilities, meeting dates, as needed.

Team Talk

Brainstorming Guidelines



Brainstorming is a commonly used term for creative thinking. It's often helpful to break an Action Team into small groups to discuss an issue or question. It is also a useful tool for sub-committees. Brainstorming is simple to use, it takes little time and materials and it's quite effective.

Purpose: *To get as many ideas possible on a given question or issue.*

This process taps team members' creativity without stopping to discuss or judge the worth of anything that comes up. *It's helpful to have a well-defined and clearly stated problem or question to which people can respond.*

Time Needed: Brainstorming takes 15 to 30 minutes, depending group size and the complexity of the question. The ideal group size is five to eight persons.

Materials Needed: Provide each small group with flip chart paper and markers.

Get Started: Use the first 10 to 15 minutes for forming and recording ideas from each small group. If you're working with several small groups, it's a good idea to ask each group to select someone to record the ideas (Recorder) and someone who will share ideas (Reporter) with the larger group at the end of brainstorming time. Post or provide team members with these brainstorming rules:

1. List all the ideas—the more the better. Don't hold back any ideas, even if they seem silly at the time.
2. Don't discuss ideas as they're being formed.
3. Don't judge ideas. All ideas are welcome.
4. Repetitions are okay. Encourage people to build on others' ideas.

Next Step: Use the balance of the time to eliminate duplications and prioritize items. Review all ideas. Eliminate or combine any duplicates. Select top 3 to 5 ideas. Groups should use consensus decision making to select these items. The group then reaches a decision everyone can accept, regardless of how satisfied they are with it.

Time's Up: Facilitator calls time. Each group is asked to post the top 3-5 items and report to whole group. (Do not judge or discuss ideas while small groups are reporting.)

Look at the Big Picture: Review the ideas presented by each group. Ask whole group to compare and contrast ideas. Eliminate or combine duplicates to form the action item.

Take Action: If the issue is simple, this may mean simply assigning responsibility for carrying out a decision. If the decision will require multiple actions, assign a group of volunteers to develop an action plan to address it or plan a separate meeting with everyone involved to develop goals and strategies for action.

Adapted from Creating Collaborative Action Teams
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)

Facilitating the Meeting: It is Your Turn!

The Action Team process encourages shared roles and responsibilities. The Facilitator of any meeting is an essential factor to the success of the work of the team or committee. The role of facilitating a meeting may be new to some members of the group and may not be new to others. We have adapted tips from the Family Leadership in Education, Culture and Healthcare Access (FLECHA) Facilitator Guide that you can use when it is your turn to facilitate a meeting.

Establishing Your Role as Facilitator:

As the Facilitator you are responsible for establishing your role. You are there to facilitate the learning of the participants and to keep conversation flowing. *You do not have to have all of the answers or become an expert on the information.* Facilitation will allow the expertise and knowledge to come from the participants. The meeting agenda provides a framework, the participants fill in the content based on their experiences, and your role is to create and maintain a safe learning environment.

- Set the tone. As a facilitator, you will need to set the tone for the hour, the day and the topics of discussion on a continuous basis. The tone that the participants receive from you should be that you enjoy being present with them and feel enjoyment with their participation.
- Participants should know that you are in charge and responsible for their well being. They need to know that you will take charge if/when the situation requires. Role clarity is important especially if you have other relationships with some of the participants.
- Before you facilitate, think about your personal style in communicating information. What do you like about your style? What would you like to improve or change while in this special role as a facilitator?

Creating a Safe Learning Environment:

- Establishing solid Ground Rules for group conduct are very, very important. DO NOT conduct a meeting without them. Ground rules are typically established in the early stages as a group is formed. Action Steps to create Ground Rules:
 - Ground rules should come from the participants so that they establish what will make them feel safe and therefore open to learning. Ask the participants to think rules that would help meetings be successful. This will help identify a “common ground” for open discussion and shared responsibility. Some common ground rules are:
 - ★ One person speaks at a time
 - ★ Raise your hand if you have something to say
 - ★ Listen to what other people are saying
 - ★ No mocking or attacking other people's ideas
 - ★ Be on time coming back from breaks (if it's a long meeting)
 - ★ Respect each other.



- Be sure to confirm agreement to each of the Ground Rules so that participants have an opportunity share their voice in the discussion. This is a simple way to establish clear communication and empower the participants to own their learning experience.
- List Ground Rules created by the group for future reference. Provide written copies to team members and post them in your meeting space.
- Refer to the Ground Rules during meetings to keep participants on track.
- Room Set-Up is important to the dynamics of the group. Tables and chairs offer work areas for team activities. Some people feel too exposed in a circle without a table in front of them. This set-up assists to establish facilitation standards as well as provide good group dynamics. Be sure to consider accommodations that might be needed for persons with disabilities.
- Everyone should be treated equally in the seating set-up. When people sit outside of the circle, this may set up feelings of being “left out” of the action.
- Remember, as a facilitator, the best way to gain trust is to be open and share some of who you are. If you want them to open up to you, be open with them.
- “Inclusion” is the practice of having all people participate to the degree that they wish to contribute. Keep track of how the group members are participating, who has spoken, who has not and whose points have not been heard.
- Decide how and what you will do to assist you to learn the names of the participants quickly. Name tags may be useful. Referring to members by their names is important to demonstrating respect and establishing rapport.

Enhancing Learning and Participation:

- Using hands-on exercises or “energizer” activities help to keep people’s attention and provides a way to use learning styles other than auditory or visual learning.
- Writing on a flip chart provides visual learners with a way to learn what is being said more effectively. This can also be a good “note-taking” tool.
- You are a role model. Demonstrate active and respectful listening. Provide acknowledgement and positive feedback to what is being shared. If a participant has a question or issue, another participant will probably have a possible answer or solution if given the chance to share.
- “Check In” with the group. Is there anything that they need? Do you need to adjust the time or the agenda because of special dynamics in each group? Is the pace too fast or too slow for them as a whole? Do they need a break? Do not make assumptions—Check In with the participants. Let them guide you.
- *There will be special dynamics in each group. There might be cultural or time considerations that you will need to consider.*



Handling Challenging Facilitation Situations:

- If you have the challenge of the unexpected change in the schedule, or the time is off or you are running short on time, “Check In” with the participants, let them of the situation and let them participate in deciding how to best make use of their time.
- If group dynamics seem off check your Ground Rules. Was something left off of the list? If necessary you can bring it to the attention of the participants and see if they are open to adding one more ground rule. If the group is not following the Ground Rules, provide gentle reminders.
- One-on-one time with individuals that are having difficulty can make a big difference. During the break time you can ask to meet in private with any of the participants. This is another way to “Check In”. Is there a need that is not being met or some support that can be offered?
- If conflict develops you can remind participants that they have the option to agree to disagree. A reminder to everyone that as humans we each have the right to our opinions and perceptions based on our histories, values, backgrounds and life experiences. There can be strong feelings about an issue, but that does not mean that two different opinions are not both based on valid points. Your role is to acknowledge both positions and move on to the next area if possible. When conflicts occur, people generally “go on the defensive”. By changing the energy in the group, a facilitator will help to make everyone feel safe and comfortable again.
- There may be times that unacceptable behavior is displayed and must not be allowed to continue. The Ground Rules you created at the beginning of the session will be your support in handling these situations.
- Dominating participants are often people who feel strongly about their ideas, principles and standards. First, remind the group that participation is encouraged from all. Second invite participants who have not had a chance to speak by addressing them directly by name. Help create limits for those who need to participate less, and for those who need to participate more.
- Sometimes lack of interest is due to the facilitator talking too much and not giving participants enough time to answer. Silence can help participation. Everyone needs time to think, analyze and prepare to respond.
- Participants who show lack of focus may be the result of the facilitator not presenting the information clearly or not effectively listening to the feedback from the group. Check In with the participant to see what is needed. You can repeat, reword or readdress the idea.
- Maintaining eye-contact and awareness allows you to gauge participation. You must be aware at all times of what direction the training is going and your best tool is to check in with the group to measure whether you are on target.



Investing Time to Build Consensus

Consensus decision making is one of the most effective methods of group decision making. It requires that all members agree that they can live with the decision. In other words, even though the decision may not represent an individual's preferred choice, he or she will agree to support it. This method is recommended for reaching major decisions and building group support in an Action Team. Consensus helps members take ownership for their decisions in the long run. We have adapted tips from [Creating Collaborative Action Teams](#) by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) to help you with this strategy.

How Consensus Decision Making Works

1. A member of the team states the proposed decision.
2. Someone writes the proposal on a flipchart or board so everyone can see it and check its accuracy and completeness.
3. The facilitator asks each member in turn to talk about whether he or she supports the decision and why or why not.
4. Team members opposed to the decision can suggest modifications or alternative decisions.
5. If all team members agree that they can support the proposed decision, then consensus exists. No decision is finalized until all members indicate that they can live with it.

Guidelines for Consensus Decision Making

- Avoid arguing for your own position. Present your views as clearly as possible. Then listen carefully to other members' reactions.
- Don't assume that someone must win and someone must lose when the discussion reaches an impasse. Instead, look for the next most acceptable option for all concerned.
- Don't change your mind simply to avoid conflict. When agreement seems to come too quickly and easily, be suspicious. Explore the reasons and ensure that everyone accepts the decision for similar reasons.
- Avoid conflict-reducing techniques, such as majority vote, averaging, coin flips and bargaining.
- *Differences of opinion are quite natural and should be expected.* Try to involve everyone in the decision making process. Disagreements can help a team reach a decision with a range of information that yield more adequate solutions.
- Paraphrase issues to ensure understanding and clarity.
- Listen carefully and encourage all team members to participate.

What enables choices is the courage of our own voice. And that voice takes place through what we do, what we say, and how we show up. ~Richard Leider

Be The Best That You Can Be!

Being an effective partner in shared decision making takes practice. We learn by doing. Take time to get to know yourself so that you can expand your skills as a contributing member of the team. You can also ask others (someone you trust and admire) to help you critique your skills. *Constructive criticism* is a way to help us use our strengths to tackle areas that seem to challenge us.

My Strengths:

My Small Challenges: (Things I need to work on a little bit to be more effective.)

My BIG Challenges: (Things I really need to work on or strategies that I to learn to be an effective partner in decision making.)

My Action Plan for Learning

(What did you learn today that you will use to expand your skills as a partner in shared decision making in your school community?)

Promising Practices



Home and School Partnerships for Student Success

Resources and Support for Your Action Team Journey

The National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) invites schools, districts, states, and organizations to join together and use research-based approaches to organize and sustain excellent programs of family and community involvement that will increase student success in school.

To join NNPS, a school must be able to meet five membership requirements and pay a \$100.00 processing fee. Partnership Schools receive a comprehensive handbook; certificate of membership; poster of six types of involvement; monthly e-briefs from an NNPS Facilitator; workshop information; on-call consultations with NNPS by telephone, e-mail, and website; annual collections of best practices and other benefits.

Membership requirements include:

1. Create or identify an Action Team for Partnerships.
2. Use the framework of six types of involvement to plan a partnership program.
3. Allocate an annual budget for family and community involvement activities. A modest budget is needed for the activities planned each year. Funds may come from federal, state, and local programs that mandate or support family and community involvement, including Title I.
4. Allocate time for an initial one-day team training workshop, and at least one hour per month for the Action Team for Partnerships to meet to plan, coordinate, and evaluate activities. An ATP needs sufficient time and collegial support to do its work. The principal and district leaders support partnership work by allowing time for team members to meet, plan, conduct, and evaluate the activities.
5. Complete an annual UPDATE survey to report progress and to renew school membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools. The school must complete a progress report for the National Network of Partnership Schools, to identify challenges faced and progress made each school year. By returning UPDATE, a school renews membership in NNPS and continues to receive benefits and services and NNPS waives the renewal fee for the next year.

For more information visit their website: nnps@csos.jhu.edu

Promising Practices

The beauty of the Action Team process is that all the Six Keys in the Epstein Model work together. Strategies for one key will “activate” another key to fulfill multiple tasks. This strengthens involvement and “multiplies” effectiveness to decrease the amount of work needed to accomplish the overall goals of the school community. *For example:*

ABCD Elementary is holding a Night of Reading event. By *collaborating with the community* (Key 6), they have found a community member to sponsor the event by providing space at his banquet hall for free, allowing more room for more parents to attend (Key 1). Another local business has supplied interpreters for the event (Key 2). The local high school has offered student volunteers to read to or tutor students at the event (Key 3).

Several bookstores have donated books for the attending families to receive to participating to read to the children at home (Key 4). A community caterer has supplied the food for the event that will also have parents meeting with school staff to make decisions about a reading list for the next school year (Key 6).

Examples of Action Team Activities (Epstein Model)

We have selected examples of tested and true practices from NNPS that other Action Teams for Partnerships have used at their schools. Even though these schools are miles away from New Mexico, we can learn from their experiences to find new ways to connect with families and promote family involvement. *We invite schools in New Mexico to send us their examples to include in future books!*

Parent University: Parenting (Key 1)

Carstens Elementary School; Detroit, Michigan (Article submitted to NNPS by Abby A. Phelps, Parent-Community Service Coordinator)

Carstens Elementary established a Parent University for parents whose children had been identified as “at-risk” because of previous expulsions, chronic absences or academic deficiencies. A planning team developed the curriculum based on survey feedback from 300 parents about what they wanted at the school.

The Parent University offered 16 weeks of classes on relevant parenting topics on how to become more effective partners in their child’s education and familiarize themselves with local school policies and procedures. Classes were three hours long and held weekly. While parents were in class, their children enjoyed activities in another part of the school, easing the burden of having to find childcare, which is usually a big issue for many families.

As part of the curriculum, parents were assigned homework and took midterm and final exams. And at the end of the program, the school held a “promotion” ceremony and luncheon where they awarded certificates of graduation. After the program, none of the “graduates” children were expelled again or even reprimanded for fighting. The school has also experienced a sharp decrease in student expulsions, chronic absenteeism and delinquency.



Parent-Principal Coffees: Communication (Key 2)

Steeple Run Elementary School; Naperville, Illinois (Article submitted to NNPS by Michael Scorzo, SFCP Member)

In order to improve communication, parents and administrators at Steeple Run Elementary School kicked off a “Parent-Principal Coffees” program. The whole vision behind the parent-principal coffees was to bring families together with school administrators in an effort to renew volunteerism and communication.



Steeple Run invited parents to host the events in their home in order to foster the feel of a relaxed, home environment. These events could be offered in the school library or parent center. The coffees begin with introductions, followed by a question and answer session between the principal and the parents. The principal announced the coffees in his newsletter and sends out follow-up flyers.

Every Minute Counts: Volunteering (Key 3)

Whittier Elementary School; Pasco, Washington (Article submitted to NNPS by Christy McEachen, ATP Chair and Fourth Grade Teacher)



In an effort to prove that Every Minute Counts, Whittier Elementary Schools Action Team for Partnerships sponsored a parent involvement activity that literally counted every minute – 25,534 of them – meaningfully spent by parents in the school for 17 days. Parents were invited to attend the school anytime during the day to join children for lunch, recess or other activities. The school kept track of how long parents visited and at the end of the program rewarded the class that accumulated the most parent minutes with a pizza party.

The Action Team for Partnerships and school staff welcomed parents at the door and distributed buttons that read, “I am helping to make every minute count at Whittier Elementary School.” In the library, the clerk took pictures of each parent with their child and the pictures were displayed on a bulletin board in front of the main office.

The event was advertised through invitations distributed in class. Some of the invitations specified the best times for parents to visit, such as breakfast, lunch, recess, art or music class, etc. Additionally, the invitations included an area where students could write a personal invitation to their families. The ATP and staff later mailed thank you postcards to those who participated during the event.



Think about the possibilities. *How would these activities look if they were held at your school? How could the community support these activities?*

Exam Practice Packets: Learning at Home (Key 4)

Northridge High School; Layton, Utah (Article submitted to NNPS by Kristin C. Davidson; Career and Technical Education Coordinator)

Staff at Northridge High School developed a take home test preparation packet for the Utah Basic Skills Competency Test. The goal of this program was to increase parental awareness of the upcoming exam as well as improve test scores by easing student test anxiety due to a feeling of preparedness.



The packet included information about strategies for doing well on the test for student and information for parents about why their students were taking the test and how they could help their child do well. The packets included sample test question, test taking strategies and questions and answers for parents and was distributed in Sophomore English classes. Students reported feeling less stressed and more relaxed because they knew what kind of questions to expect and received moral support from teachers, older students and their families.

Around the World in 90 Minutes: Multi-Cultural Awareness

Prairie Elementary School; Naperville, Illinois (Highlights of article submitted to NNPS by Barbara Ryan, School/Family/Community Partnership Co-chair)

Some of the international families with children at Prairie Elementary were feeling isolated from others at the school. They talked with the teacher of English Language Learners (ELL) about wanting to be more involved with the school and with their children's education. So the school decided to conduct an International Night to welcome these families and help them connect with others at this celebration of cultures. With the theme, "Around the World in 90 Minutes" and a hot air balloon to carry the idea, International Night took off, with adventures galore.

Each family was invited to share its heritage with a display of interesting facts, photos and artifacts, and to bring a food or prepared dish from its cuisine. Students, teachers and parents traveled around the school to:

- View cultural displays showing fun facts about many families' native countries
- Sample ethnic foods prepared by families
- Try out crafts and learning activities, including Chinese character writing, origami, and German paper cutting, an African stone-passing game and salsa dancing.

The ATP designed a passport that included each activity and its country of origin. The passports included interesting facts about each country and space for a stamp on each page as families visited the various activities. Members of the ATP oversaw the entire event and stayed in contact with the ELL instructor, who communicated instructions to the families, making sure everyone understood what they needed to do. All Prairie families were able to appreciate and enjoy the cultural diversity within the school. As a result, ELL families seem to feel more welcome. The event was well-attended, with 140 students and 80 parents present. When the ATP solicited informal feedback from attendees and volunteers, many commented on how much fun the evening was. The ELL instructor said she had never seen her students look so happy and confident.

Community Forum: Decision Making (Key 5)

Oltman Junior High School; Saint Paul, Minnesota (Article submitted to NNPS by Luis Saenz. Community Involvement Coordinator)

Connecting parents to Oltman Junior High is a priority and a challenge for the school, given that students' families speak as many as 14 different languages. To increase parent involvement, solicit parent feedback and create a greater sense of community, the school launched the Community Forum Series. The intended audience was the parents of the school's English Language Learners (ELL), some of whom had never been in the school.

The forums included dinner and time for questions, comments and informal conversation. Organizers hoped parents would get acquainted with one another and with how they might become more involved in their children's education. The guiding principles of the forums were:

- Establish and cultivate relationships of trust
- Connect with families that have not been involved
- Reassure parents, families and community members that the school values their input in the educational process
- Involve families and community members as participants in school decision making

Forums were held once a month and began with a presentation by a community organization on a topic such as post-secondary opportunities, parent teacher conferences, etc. Dinner and conversations followed, allowing parents to voice their concerns and to make suggestions on improving the school's parent and community outreach efforts. The forums gave families and community members a rare opportunity to meet the principal, the community involvement coordinator and the president of the PTO, all at the same time.

Four translators staffed the forums so that all the parents understood what was happening and were comfortable speaking. With the help of the district's translation service, all publicity about the forums, including formal written invitations from the principal and personal phone calls to target parents, were in the native languages of the families. The series reached its target audience. Most of the more than 40 parents attending each forum had never been in the school building before, not even for a parent-teacher conference.

The reason they had not come, they said, was that they did not feel comfortable there. The forum organizers extended an invitation to parents to actively participate as volunteers in decision making by joining the PTO, the School, Family and Community Partnership Committee or the school site team. Organizers handed out a 10-item questionnaire about school climate that focused on the quality of communication.

Attendees commented that they now felt comfortable bringing genuine concerns to the table and that those concerns would be addressed. The issues raised by parents at the forums were later presented to the whole staff during faculty meetings. The forums helped start a meaningful conversation about the importance of parent involvement and its contribution to student success.

Weather Academy: Collaborating with Community (Key 6)

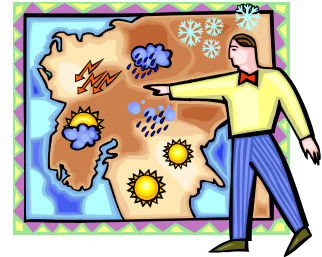
Northwoods Elementary School, Eau Claire, Wisconsin (Article submitted to NNPS by Laurie Erdman, Partnership Coordinator)

TV, hot dogs and the weather proved to be a winning combination at Northwoods Elementary School. More than 300 people showed up on a May evening when the school and a local television station turned an open house into an event to increase parent involvement in science and to strengthen school, family and community partnerships. The “open house” was part of the TV station’s “Weather Academy,” a meteorology program offered to area schools.

The academy is primarily a science-based, experiment-driven, one-hour presentation about the weather for Grades 3 to 5. Presented by the three meteorologists from the local TV station, it involves some exciting experiments around the weather, including air pressure, effects of warm and cold fronts, tornado development and lightning

After the daytime presentation, the presenters came back in the afternoon with TV trucks to broadcast the nightly weather news from the school. This portion of the program is called “open house” and students, parents and teachers were invited. Northwoods decided that the open house should be not only a weather show for the station, but also a time to have parents and children come for a hot dog supper. “This is when things got interesting and evolved into a real partnership with the community and families,” said the school’s parent coordinator.

The event was held in the school cafeteria and gym. The mascot from a local Northwoods League baseball team visited and gave away team souvenirs. The partnership coordinator worked with 10 teachers, 2 custodians, 18 parents and a media specialist to make it happen. Teachers rearranged schedules, encouraged children to make weather-themed table decorations and set up computers, TVs and sound systems.



The parents took charge of organizing the supper. One parent bought all the paper products, while other parents were in charge of setting up, cooking, serving and cleaning up. Because many of the parents were new to Northwoods, the partnership coordinator took time to introduce the parent volunteers to each other. This planted seeds for future collaboration, community-building, and leadership at Northwoods.

“This practice is a great example of turning a ready-made community program into an opportunity for school-family-community partnerships,” said the coordinator. Although many parents volunteer at Northwoods, school personnel felt that it was getting more difficult for parents to attend meetings and activities at the school. Their goal was to build on community partnerships in such a way that parents would consider the school as a resource and desirable place to be. “The local TV station’s “Weather Academy” program was just what Northwoods needed to reach out to its families and to celebrate students’ science learning,” she concluded.

The school advises others to find out about existing programs in the community in science, the arts, music, civics, and health that can be brought to the school. Then, build on the program by inviting parents and children to enjoy it together.

One New Mexico School's Story

Eugene Sierra works for Parents Reaching Out as a Liaison for the New Mexico Parent Information Resource Center (NMPIRC). In 2002, he attended the National Network of Partnership Schools Conference in Baltimore, Maryland where he learned about The Epstein Model for School-Family-Community Partnerships. He returned to New Mexico with a new vision on parental involvement to share with families and his school district.

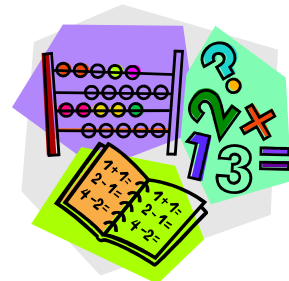
However, Eugene lives in the remote, rural border town of Columbus, New Mexico. As a long time resident of this area, Eugene knew that the migrant and monolingual Spanish speaking families were faced with challenges to family involvement including language barriers, poverty and a lack of transportation. Yet, he also understood that the families cared deeply about their children and wanted them to be safe, contributing members of the community.

He approached the Superintendent of Deming School District and offered to help implement a school Action Team for Partnerships in each school in the district in order to help increase parental involvement. To his surprise, however, the superintendent declined the offer and informed him that the district not only met, but surpassed the requirements for parental involvement.

Undeterred, Eugene decided to take a smaller step instead and began working with just one school within the district, Columbus Elementary School. The principal quickly agreed to provide six teachers to head up the team. He first gave his teachers the opportunity to volunteer, but indicated that if no one volunteered, he would appoint six teachers to participate. Not surprisingly, there were no volunteers so the principal appointed six reluctant teachers to take part in this new endeavor.

Each teacher was then required to recruit two parent volunteers to serve on the team, attend all the committee meetings and report back to their teacher sponsor. Thirty people attended the first meeting—six teachers and 24 parent volunteers. By the second meeting, the team had grown to include approximately 60 parents, six teachers and four administrators.

Eugene, serving as the team's technical assistant, helped them to develop a one year action plan that outlined a year's worth of activities that consisted of four events to take place at three month intervals: Literacy Night, Math Night, Science Night and a Back to School Night.



As they began planning, the committee was faced with the obstacles of having to raise money, support and resources, which are all limited in small communities. In addition, Columbus Elementary serves students from Palomas, Mexico who cross into the United States to receive their education. Their parents are restricted from crossing the border, however, so parental involvement from this population was limited. Plans needed to include provisions for staff to cross into Mexico to connect with families. Nonetheless, the community pulled together to provide what they could for their children (with the additional support provided by Title I funds from the school).

The first event was the Literacy Night. While previous events had yielded six to seven parent attendees, this event had a turn out of 420 parent attendees, setting a school record! The math and science night events planned by the committee that followed were just as successful, involving 300 and 400 parents per activity.

As the year progressed, the team actively distributed and collected evaluations from the family attendees. The results were overwhelmingly positive, with parents stating that they could see the benefits of being an active participant in their child's education and that they wanted to events to continue. Similar responses were generated among the teachers. Although they were reluctant participants in the beginning, by the second year teachers were so eager to participate that the committee had to create new roles in order to utilize all of them.

As year two came to a close, the school community of parents, teachers and administrator expressed confidence in their ability to continue this process on their own. This allowed Eugene to pursue new adventures in new schools. Today, he still serves as a resource for the committee

Eugene admits now that this process of building family involvement to improve outcomes for students was not only time-consuming in the beginning but challenging as it was faced with so much resistance from administrators, teachers and parents. But it was time and effort well spent for all stakeholders because ultimately, the committee flourished and proved to be successful for those who matter the most—the children.

In just the first two years that the Action Team for Partnerships began collaborating and coordinating parental involvement activities, test scores at the participating schools have increased. Additionally, families now make informed decisions and demonstrate a new confidence as they work with schools. They share in learning experiences with their school partners to increase their understanding of No Child Left Behind and what it means for each child.

In the office, we often refer to this story as “Eugene’s Story”, but he would be the first person to tell you that this really isn’t his story. This story is about the people in these communities—the parents, teachers, administrators and community members and their desire to build a brighter future for this generation and those to come.



Short Stories: Action Teams at Work in New Mexico

The stories on this page are excerpts from *Creating Collaborative Action Teams: Working Together for Student Success* developed by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). These New Mexico schools were demonstration sites for SEDL's continuing research efforts focused on partnerships between home and school.

Mora, New Mexico: Representatives from the Mora Independent Schools Collaborative Action Team in Mora, New Mexico, joined the "Sangre de Cristo Communities and Schools Consortium." This consortium is a group of ten small school districts in rural New Mexico. Where these school districts once competed with each other for resources, they now share information. They have received grants that benefit the students in all ten communities.

This team wanted to increase parent and community involvement in the schools. They developed two strategies—one short-term and the other long-term. As a short-term strategy, they helped host a parent involvement training with parents and teachers, so that everyone could better understand the challenges of parent involvement from both perspectives. They followed this up with a parent/teacher potluck lunch during the teachers' in-service days at the beginning of the school year. Their long-term strategy was to develop a parent resource center. When space on the school campus fell through because of construction taking place, the team immediately started looking for community space to house the resource center temporarily. Having both a short and long-term goal helped the team moving forward, despite setbacks.



Los Lunas, New Mexico: The Ann Parish Collaborative Action Team in Los Lunas, New Mexico was concerned about the condition of roads that school buses traveled to pick up elementary school students. They recruited a county commissioner to become an active team member through face-to-face meetings with team members who lived and worked in her district.

One of the team members on the Ann Parish Collaborative Action Team in Los Lunas, New Mexico, created a video presentation. The video explained how and why the team was formed, highlighted some of the team's early successes and described the team's goals and their plans to accomplish them. It also included information about the Los Lunas community. The team first developed the video to give the school board a progress report, but they've also used it to orient new team members and to approach potential funders.

Albuquerque, New Mexico: The Highland High School Cluster Collaborative Action Team in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has been operating since 1991. In 1999, an administrative transition occurred in the Albuquerque Public Schools. Several of the school administrators and other staff who had been heavily involved in the team were no longer there. Initially, the team experienced a loss of direction. However, team members realized that they could use this opportunity to re-evaluate what they had done so far and find new direction for the team. They proceeded to recruit new members and revisited the team's vision, mission and goals. Then team members approached the new administration and secured support for their vision and goals. The team reorganized itself and learned that broad-based membership and leadership can sustain a team in the midst of external changes.

Do You Have a Story to Share?

Think about your school. Think about activities, programs or practices that celebrate family involvement in one of the Six Key areas: Think about *Promising Practices* you'd like to try at your school. Jot down your thoughts and share your story with someone else in your school. Better yet, write a story for your school newsletter or local paper or send a note of thanks to let them know you appreciate family partnerships.

Parenting _____

Communicating _____

Volunteering _____

Learning at Home _____

Decision Making _____

Collaborating with Community _____

Parents Reaching Out invites school communities in New Mexico to send their Action Team examples to us for use in future publications or presentations.

Action Team for Partnerships ATP Toolbox



No Child Left Behind and Parental Involvement

Across the nation, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has sparked an increased awareness in the value of meaningful parental involvement in public schools. The No Child Left Behind Act became law in 2002 with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). NCLB calls for improved student achievement based on four principles that provide a framework for teaching and learning. The four guiding principles are accountability for results, local control and flexibility, expanded parental choice, and effective and successful programs that reflect scientifically based research. Most importantly, NCLB specifically requires that schools identify parents as decision makers and meaningfully involve them in their child's education.

So what is meaningful parental involvement? Section 1118 of the NCLB Act defines parental involvement as “the participation of parents in regular two-way and meaningful communication that involves student learning and other school activities.” Parental (or family) involvement is much more than names on a sign-in sheet. Just saying “we had families involved in this process” is not a valid measure of quality parental involvement.

To achieve positive and effective partnerships, each partner must play a useful role in the process. No one person can do it alone and there is no single “expert”. It is important for all participants in the process to recognize and acknowledge that every person brings a very unique element to the team. Together, everyone gains new knowledge by asking questions, brainstorming and sharing ideas while working toward a common goal. Creating partnerships lightens the load for all those involved, and help schools meet the requirements of NCLB to improve student outcomes.

Parental involvement comes in many forms and it is as unique as each of the families that shape a community. It can be as basic as parent-to-parent conversations on current topics or as involved as organizing your school's Action Team. It is a continual learning process that includes gathering information, tapping resources, knowing about choices and communicating with other parents. Educators and administrators need to know that a simple, yet genuine, invitation to participate is a starting place. Meaningful parental involvement begins when invitations are combined with actions that recognize families as *competent, useful and important members* of the partnership for student success.

Our Action Team for Partnerships Toolbox section includes forms used in the Epstein model to give families, schools and communities a place to begin their journey. *Yes, we want you to write in this book!* We have designed it as a “starter kit” or quick refresher for everyone involved in our children's lives.

You will want to use many resources to find just the right type of plan that fits the needs of your school community. You will find great information in the last section of our book, *Resources for Student Success*. The NM Public Education Department is committed to parent and family involvement. All schools and districts in our state have been provided with *Working Together: School-Family-Community Partnerships, A Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities developed by the Center for Education and Diverse Populations (CESDP)*. Download the toolkit and find other resources at these web sites: www.cesdp.nmhu.edu and www.ped.state.nm.us/parents/index.html

Working Smarter—Not Harder

Action Teams for Partnerships

Schools no longer just teach the 3 R's (readin', 'riting' and 'rithmetic). Our world has changed. Life is more complex. *Schools Cannot Do This Alone*, by James Volmer, highlights federal and state requirements that have been added to the "school's plate" since the 1900's.

Schools Cannot Do This Alone

America's public schools can be traced back to the year 1640. The Massachusetts Puritans established schools to:

1. Teach basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills, and
2. Cultivate values that serve a democratic society (some history and civics implied).

The creators of these first schools assumed that families and churches bore the major responsibility for raising a child. The responsibility of the school was limited and focused.

From 1900 to 1910, we added

- nutrition
- immunization, and
- health to the list of school responsibilities

From 1920 to 1940, we added

- vocational education
- the practical arts
- business education
- speech and drama
- half day kindergarten
- physical education (including organized athletics)
- school lunch programs (We take this for granted today. It was, however, a significant step to shift to the schools the job of feeding America's children 1/3 of their daily meals.)

In the 1950's, we added

- safety education
- driver's education
- expanded music and art education
- foreign language requirements are strengthened
- sex education introduced (topics escalate through 1990's)

In the 1960's, we added

- Advanced Placement programs
- consumer education
- career education
- peace education
- leisure education
- recreation education

In the 1970's, the breakup of the American family accelerated, and we added

- special education (mandated by federal government)
- Title IX programs (greatly expanded athletic programs for girls)
- drug and alcohol abuse education
- Head Start

- parent education
- behavior adjustment classes
- character education
- environment education, and
- school breakfast programs appear (Now, some schools are feeding America's children 2/3 of their daily meals. Sadly, these are the only decent meals some children receive.)

In the 1980's, the floodgates open, and we added

- keyboarding and computer education
- global education
- ethnic education
- multicultural/ non-sexist education
- English-as-a-second-language, and bilingual education
- early childhood education
- Jump Start, Early Start, Even Start, and Prime Start
- full day kindergarten
- pre-school programs for children at-risk
- after school programs for children of working parents
- alternative education in all its forms
- stranger/danger education
- anti-smoking education
- sexual abuse prevention education
- health and psychological services are expanded
- child abuse monitoring becomes a legal requirement for all teachers

And finally, in the 1990's, we have added

- HIV/AIDS education
- death education
- expanded computer and Internet education
- inclusion
- tech prep and school to work programs
- gang education (in urban centers)
- bus safety education
- bicycle safety education
- gun safety education

And in most states we have not added a single minute to the school calendar in five decades! All of the items added to the list have merit, and all have their ardent supporters. They cannot, however, all be assigned to the schools. The people of each community must come together to answer two essential questions: *What do they want their children to know and be able to do when they graduate? How can the entire community be organized to ensure that all children reach the stated goals?*

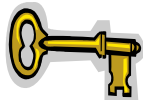
***The bottom line: schools cannot do it all.
Schools cannot raise America's children.***

The time has come for every school district to organize a community-wide conversation that results in a shared commitment to create public schools that provide a high quality education for all.

Source: James Volmer and Associates, 2001, <http://jamievollmer.com/>

The Keys to Successful School, Family and Community Partnerships

Use this worksheet to brainstorm activities, strategies and programs that are already happening in your school for each area of Epstein's Six Types of Involvement.



Parenting

Type 1



Communicating

Type 2



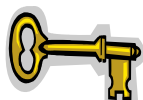
Volunteering

Type 3



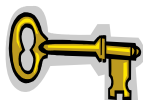
Learning at Home

Type 4



Decision Making

Type 5



Collaborating with the Community

Type 6

Source: School, Family and Community Partnerships by J.L. Epstein, et al., 2002

Levels of Commitment to School, Family and Community Partnerships

Can You “C” the Connections?

1. Care
2. Civility / Courtesy
3. Clarity
4. Cooperation
5. Collaboration



1. **Care.** We care about the children and each other at this school. Families feel welcome at the school. Educators feel welcome in the community.
2. **Civility / Courtesy.** We respect each other at this school and recognize our shared responsibilities for children. Teachers and families talk with and listen to each other.
3. **Clarity.** We conduct clear and useful two-way communications about school programs, children’s progress, families’ talents and needs, community activities, and other topics important to families, students the school and the community. Our communications can be understood by all families, and all families are able to communicate easily with teachers and administrators.
4. **Cooperation.** We assist each other and the students. Families, educators, and community members are comfortable working with each other. We work together to improve the school, strengthen families, and ensure student success. We try to solve problems, and we are open to new ideas.
5. **Collaboration.** We maintain a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships. We use an action team approach that enables educators, parents, students, and community members to work together over time to design, implement, and improve activities for the six types of involvement. We work as partners to help students at all grade levels reach important goals. We encourage discussion and debate on important issues. We celebrate progress and continually plan improvements in activities to involve all families.

Source: *School, Family, and Community Partnerships* by J.L. Epstein et al., 2002

Partnership Practices Inventory

School: _____ School District: _____ Date: _____

Our Action Team for Partnerships needs your help to identify the practices that are working and the areas we need to improve. We will use this information as we develop our Action Plan for this year. Please complete this survey and return it in to our school office by _____ .

Check one: Parent/Family Member Student School Staff Community/Business/Agency

Are you a member of the school Action Team For Partnership? Yes No

School Staff: Check one box that best describes your role in the school.

Administrator Classroom Teacher Certified Support Staff (Counselor, Librarian, Therapist, etc).

Classified Support Staff (Clerical, Educational Assistant, Cafeteria, Custodial, Transportation, etc.)

Directions: Carefully read each statement and think about the statement as it applies to your school. Measure how well the school is accomplishing that statement and give it a rating of Excellent, Good or Poor by placing an X in the proper column. This survey may be used by one or more schools in our school district, please check the school level for your response.

Key 1 Parenting Goal: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.	Rating			Which Level?		
	Excellent	Good	Poor	Elementary	Mid School	High School
Our School:						
1. Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on child or adolescent development.						
2. Provides families with information, training and assistance to all families who want it or need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.						
3. Produces information for families that is clear, useable, and linked to children's success in school.						
4. Asks families about their children's goals, strengths and talents.						
5. Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand school and to help schools understand families.						
6. Respects the different cultures represented in our student population.						
7. Our school offers family support programs with parent-to-parent discussions groups.						
8. Our school offers families a free lending library on parenting topics that includes books, videos, CDs, DVDs and other media.						
Comments:						

Key 2 Communicating Goal: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.	Rating			Which Level?		
	Excellent	Good	Poor	Elementary	Mid School	High School
Our School:						
1. Reviews the readability, clarity, forma and frequency of all memos, notices and other print and nonprint communications.						
2. Develops communications with parents who do not speak or read English well or need large type.						
3. Provides written communication in the language of the parents and translators as needed.						
4. Has clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.						
5. Conducts a formal conference with every parent at least once a year.						
6. Conducts an annual survey for families to share information and concerns about student needs, reactions to school programs, and satisfaction with their involvement in school and at home..						
7. Conducts an orientation for new parents.						
8. Sends home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.						
9. Provides clear information about the curriculum, assessments, achievement levels and report cards.						
10. Contacts families of students having academic or behavior problems in a timely manner to discuss interventions or ways to address the problem.						
11. Develops school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others.						
12. Trains teachers, staff, and principals on the value and utility of family involvement and ways to build positive ties between school and home.						
13. Teachers have easy access to telephones/email to communicate with parents during or after school.						
14. Builds policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can help.						
15. Produces a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings and parenting tips.						
16. We conduct an annual survey for families to provide reactions to school programs and share information and concerns about students.						
Comments:						

Key 3 Volunteering Goal: Recruit and organize parent help and support.	Rating			Which Level?		
	Excellent	Good	Poor	Elementary	Mid School	High School
Our School:						
1. Conduct an annual survey to identify interests, talents and availability of parent volunteers in order to match their skills and talents with school and classroom needs.						
2. Provides a parent or family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and related topics.						
3. Creates flexible volunteering opportunities and schedules enabling employed parents to participate.						
4. Schedules school events at different times during the day and evening so that all families can attend.						
5. Reduces barriers to parent participation by providing transportation and child care, and by addressing the needs of English language learners.						
6. Trains volunteers so they use their time productively.						
7. Recognizes volunteers for their time and efforts.						
8. Encourages families and the community to be involved with the school in a variety of ways (assisting in the classroom, giving talks, monitoring halls, leading activities, etc.).						
Comments:						

Key 4 Learning at Home Goal: Provide information to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.	Rating			Which Level?		
	Excellent	Good	Poor	Elementary	Mid School	High School
Our School:						
1. Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.						
2. Provides information to families on required skills in all subjects.						
3. Provides ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.						
4. Makes parents aware of the importance of reading at home, and asks parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child.						
5. Assists families in helping students set academic goals and select courses and programs.						
6. Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.						
Comments:						

Key 5 Decision Making Goal: Include parents in school decisions to develop leaders and representatives.	Rating			Which Level?		
	Excellent	Good	Poor	Elementary	Mid School	High School
Our School:						
1. Has an active PTA/PTO or other parent organization.						
2. Includes parent representatives are on the school's advisory council, improvement team or other committees.						
3. Has an Action Team for Partnerships to develop a goal-oriented program with practices for all six types of involvement.						
4. Has parent representatives are on district-level advisory councils or committees.						
5. Involves parents in organized, ongoing, and timely ways in planning, reviewing, and improving school programs.						
6. Includes parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school.						
7. Deals with conflict openly and respectfully.						
8. Asks involved parents to make contact with parents who are less involved to solicit their ideas and report back to them.						
Comments:						

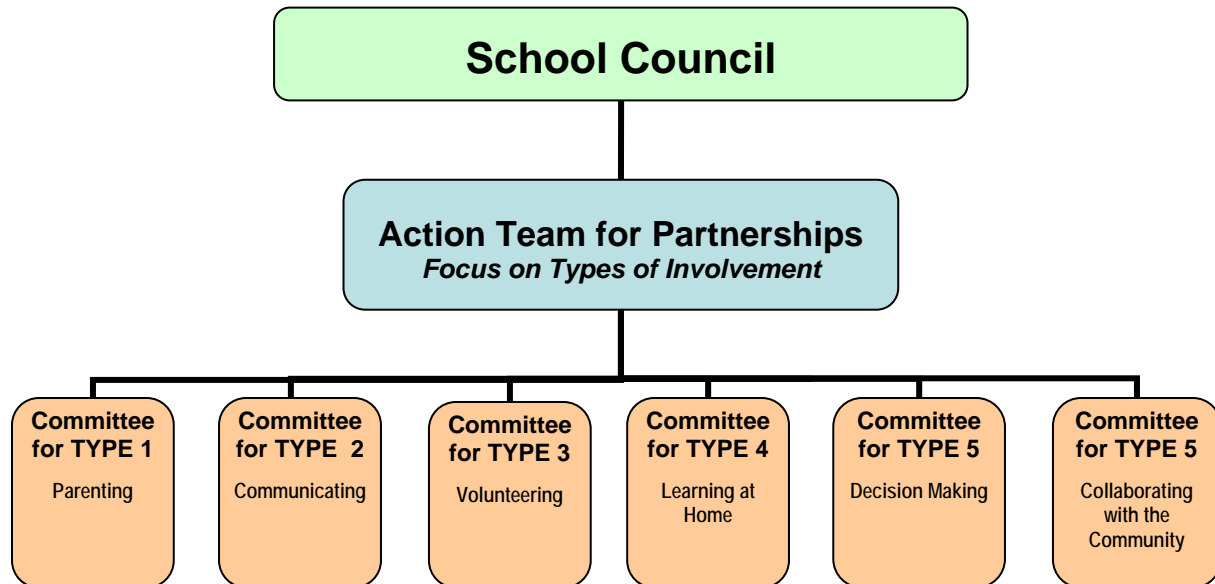
Key 6 Collaborating with the Community Goal: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.	Rating			Which Level?		
	Excellent	Good	Poor	Elementary	Mid School	High School
Our School:						
1. Provides a resource directory for parents and students with information on community services, programs, and agencies.						
2. Involves families in locating and using community resources.						
3. Works with local businesses, industries, libraries, parks, museums and other organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.						
4. Provides "one-stop" shopping for family services through partnerships of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.						
5. Opens its building for community use after school hours.						
6. Offers after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers.						
7. Solves turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities to occur.						
Comments:						

Adapted from *School, Family, and Community Partnerships* by J.L. Epstein et al, 2002 second edition

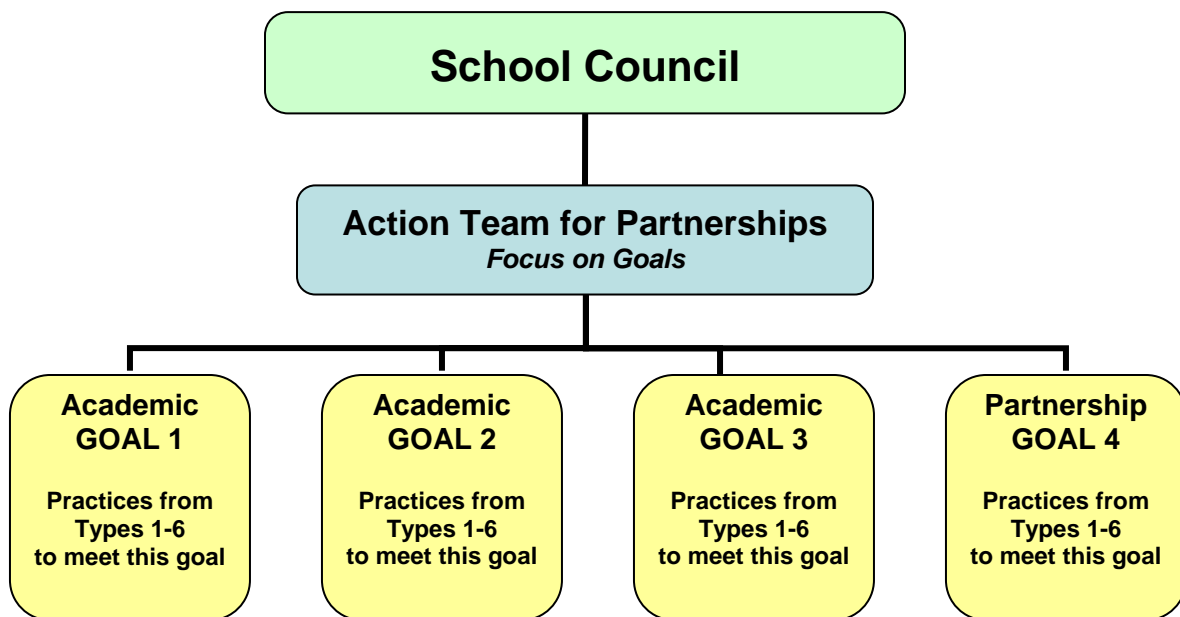
Action Team for Partnerships Structure

Using the Epstein Model, there are two major ways to organize leadership of school, family and community partnerships. Choosing the partnership structure may depend on school and/or district requirements. In both structures shown below, the Action Team for Partnerships is the action arm of the School Council. *Which structure is the “best fit” for your school community?*

Types of Involvement Structure



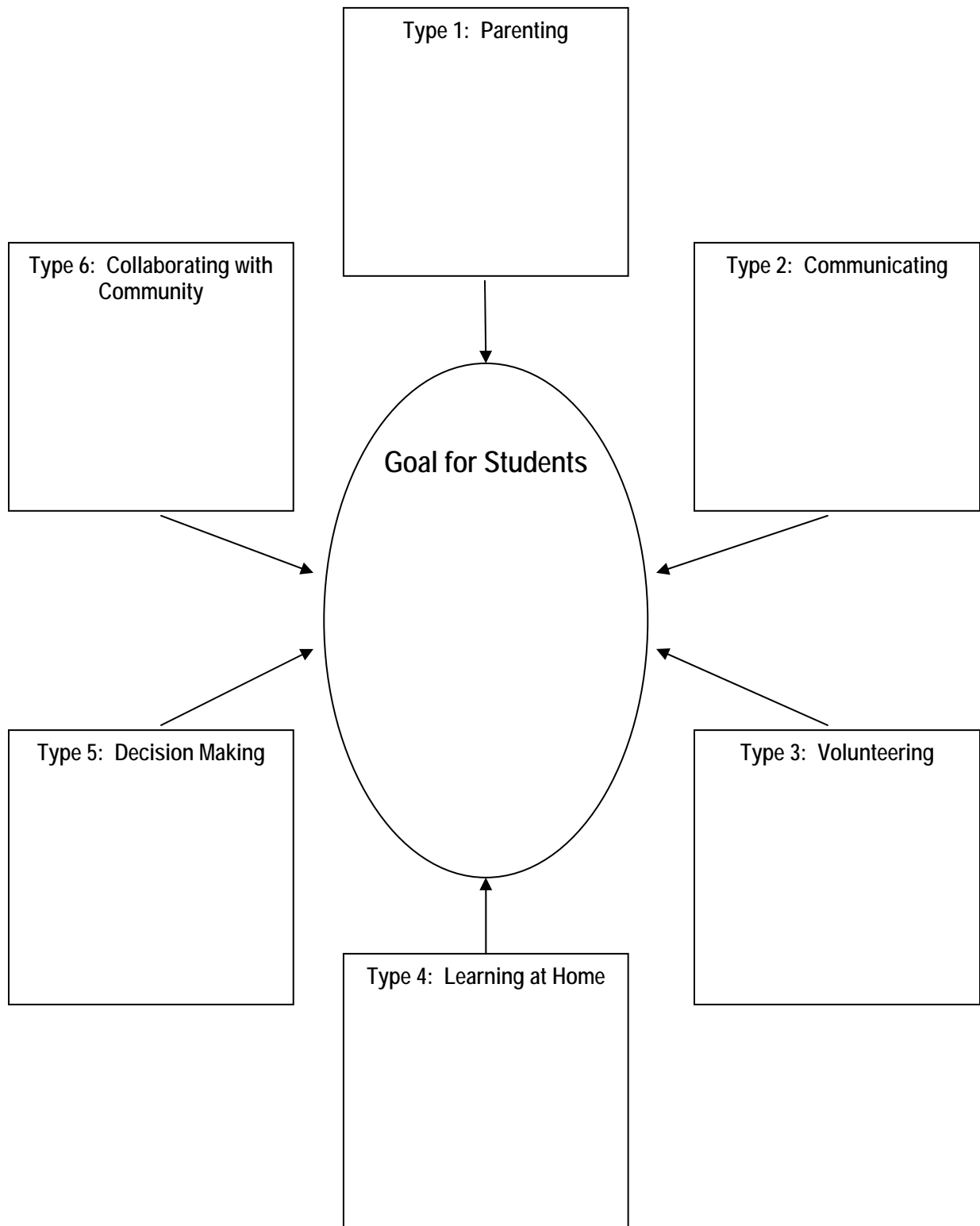
Goals Structure



Source: *School, Family, and Community Partnerships* by J.L. Epstein et al., 2002

Six Types of Involvement to Reach School Goals for Students

How might a comprehensive goal-oriented partnership program benefit students at your school. Choose one major goal that your school has set for students. Then, identify specific partnership practices to support that goal.



National Network of Partnership Schools
Johns Hopkins University

Planning for Productive Meetings

This checklist includes items to consider for the first meeting and future meetings of your Action Team for Partnerships. This list will be helpful for the first meeting of sub-committees as they are formed.

- ✓ **Introductions:** Take time to allow brief introductions by each member of the team.
- ✓ **Team Building:** Developing relationships is an important part of your first meeting and all future meetings. Many of the resources included in this book offer quick and simple tips that can be used for team building or energizers for your work as a team.
- ✓ **Establish a Communication System and Develop Team Norms:** Avoid any confusion later about meeting times, how to contact members etc. and establish communication guidelines and ground rules early. A good way to begin the team partnership is to plan a group activity focused on setting norms or expectations (see page 62).
 - Create and distribute a team roster to members and other school leaders
 - Set a regular meeting schedule to avoid any confusion
 - Establish the team's ground rules for communicating at and in between meetings
 - Decide how members will inform the team if they are unable to attend a meeting or event
 - Decide how the team will provide minutes and brief absent members
 - Plan the methods that the team will use to keep the whole school and community informed of plans, progress and activities
- ✓ **Determine Leadership/Discuss Responsibilities:** Appoint, elect or use volunteers for:
 - Team chair and co-chair
 - Committee chairs and co-chairs based on the Six Keys in the Epstein Model
 - Recorder to take minutes at each meeting and distribute them to members, including members who could not be present for the meeting. Keep all meeting minutes and other forms in a three-ring notebook so the team will have a record of activities.
 - Liaison to the School Council to report team plans, progress, activities, etc.
 - Liaison to the PTA/PTO to collaborate efforts
 - Promoter to publicize the team's efforts, plans, progress, activities to all teachers, staff, families, community members, etc.
 - Other roles as needed or desired: _____
- ✓ **Develop the One Year Action Plan:** (This process may take several meetings.) The team needs to gather/review existing information and survey the school community to have accurate data for developing the plan. Team members should be provided with a copy of the school Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS). Remember that the activities and responsibilities can be revised as needed to remain aligned with the goal of the team.
- ✓ **Begin Implementation of Activities.** Allow for time at the first meeting for the team as a whole or committees to immediately begin preparing for the first activity.
 - Select the first activity of the year (Kick Off Event or Information Session for Survey)
 - What needs to be done in preparation? Establish a detailed timeline to remain on task.
 - Who is in charge of overseeing the activity? Who is helping?
 - How will the activity be evaluated?
- ✓ **Set the date, time, place and agenda for the next meeting. Assign Homework!** *Much of the work of the team and committees will take place between formal meetings of the team. Define what needs to be accomplished before the next meeting (who/what/when).*

Defining How We Work Together: Setting Team Norms

When Establishing Norms, Consider :	Proposed Norm
Time: When do we meet? Will we set beginning and ending time? Will we start and end on time?	
Listening How will we encourage listening? How will we discourage interrupting?	
Confidentiality Will the meetings be open? Will what we say be held in confidence? What can be said after the meeting?	
Decision Making How will we make decisions? Are we an advisory or a decision making body? Will we reach decisions by consensus? How will we deal with conflicts?	
Participation How will we encourage participation? Will we have an attendance policy?	
Expectations What do we expect from members? Are there requirements for participation?	

Norms of the National Staff Development Council

We will work together as a community that values consensus rather than majority rule.

We will be fully “present” at the meeting by becoming familiar with the materials before we arrive and by being attentive to behaviors, which affect physical and mental engagement.

We will invite and welcome the contribution of every member and listen to each other.

We will be involved to our individual level of comfort. Each of us is responsible for airing disagreements during the meeting rather than carrying those disagreements outside the board room.

We will operate in a collegial and friendly atmosphere.

We will use humor as appropriate to help us work better together.

We will keep confidential discussions, comments, and deliberations.

We will be responsible for examining all points of view before a consensus is accepted.

We will be guided by the NSDC mission statement, which focuses on organization and professional development to enhance success for all students.

Source: National Staff Development Council, www.nsdcc.org.

Organizing the Action Team for Partnerships

1. When will the whole team meet? (This should be at least once a month)
 - a. How often? _____
 - b. Date/time: _____
 - c. Place: _____
2. How often will sub-committees meet? _____
3. How will minutes (whole team and sub-committees) be distributed to all members, (including those who miss meetings) and other key contacts? _____

4. How will reports about the team's plans, progress and/or activities be presented to other school groups? Include information such as how often the team will report out, who will report and in what form (meetings, phone messages, written summary/report, newsletter/newspaper articles, school website, etc). Getting the word out keeps everyone up to date and inspires involvement in the activities you plan as a team. Remember to share responsibility.

Action Team: Sharing Activities and Reporting Our Progress

Groups	How often:	Format	By whom:
School Council			
School Improvement Team, EPSS Team, other School Committees			
PTA/ PTO Organization			
All parents who have children at the school			
The full faculty			
Students			
Community members			
Local media			
Others (list)			

Action Team Roster

School Year: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____
Strengths/ Talents: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____
Strengths/ Talents: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____
Strengths/ Talents: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____
Strengths/ Talents: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____
Address: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____
Strengths/ Talents: _____

Add more sheets for more members as needed.

Action Team Committee Information

Committee Name	Committee Chair and Co-chairs Name/Contact Info	Other Members Name/Contact Info	Meeting Schedule Day/Time/Place Example: Every first Wednesday of the month at 7:30 am—school library
Parenting	1. 2.		
Communicating	1. 2.		
Volunteering	1. 2.		
Learning at Home	1. 2.		
Decision Making	1. 2.		
Collaborating with the Community	1. 2.		

Action Team: Working Toward Shared Responsibilities

Coordinating Responsibilities	Who Will Do It?	For How Long?
Handling logistics—meeting space, refreshments, etc.		
Organizing team communications and information		
Distributing documents prior to meetings		
Ensuring follow-up on decisions		
Monitoring progress throughout the Collaborative Action Team process		
Monitoring the development and use of the action plan		
Making team materials and resources available		
Facilitating Responsibilities	Who Will Do It?	For How Long?
Leading meetings		
Facilitating discussions		
Ensuring that all members are heard		
Helping to build consensus		
Suggesting alternatives when the team gets stuck		
Summarizing decisions made		
Dealing with conflicts		
Recording Responsibilities	Who Will Do It?	For How Long?
Evaluating how well the team functions collaboratively		
Recording activities and decisions		
Checking the accuracy of records with members		
Communicating information, using a variety of techniques		
Preparing meeting minutes		
Taking notes on flipcharts		

Adapted from Creating Collaborative Action Teams
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)

Action Team for Partnerships – Annual Review

School Year: _____

The Process	Recommendation C = Continue as is N = Need to improve	Comments/Suggestions
Membership		
Are members are composed of teachers, parents, administrators, community members, students, and others?		
Are ATP leaders are useful? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team chair and co-chair • Committee chair and co-chairs • Recorder • Promoter, etc. 		
Are all new members trained in the ATP purpose and process?		
Are new members introduced to the team and oriented on their role and responsibility?		
Schedules		
Did the full ATP meet regularly?		
Did the committees meet enough in order to accomplish activity or event objectives?		
Did the time and place for the meetings work well for most members?		
Organization		
Were the agendas effective and cover important information?		
Were meetings useful and focused on agenda topics/tasks?		
Were minutes distributed in a timely manner to all members, even absent members?		
Were all members valued and encouraged and allowed to share ideas and information at meetings?		

ATP Annual Review (page 2)

The Process	Recommendation C = Continue as is N = Need to improve	Comments/Suggestions
Program Implementation		
Were activities in one year action plan implemented on schedule?		
Was the ATP budget is adequate?		
Did all team members take responsibility for their duties as related to activities and the team?		
Did embers encourage all teachers, staff, parents, students, community members and others to participate in the activities or attend events or join the team?		
Were individual activities are evaluated for quality soon after they occurred?		
Did the team communicate effectively with other school groups to report plans, progress and include in the partnership, including the school council, PTO/PTA, school board, media, etc.?		
Reflecting on the Overall Outcomes of the Action Team for the Year		
In your opinion, what were the major outcomes (results) of the activities planned by the Action Team this year? Describe specific events or strategies and their effectiveness in reaching the goal(s).		
Planning for the Future		
What is the one way the team could become more effective next year (organizing, recruiting more members, planning activities, communication, strengthening partnerships, evaluating results, etc.)?		

End of Year Action Team Committee Report

(Prepared by members of each committee and reported to the group as a whole. Each report becomes a part of the Action Team for Partnership Annual Report.) Check the appropriate key for your committee.

Key 1: Parenting

Key 2: Communicating

Key 3: Volunteering

Key 4: Learning at Home

Key 5: Decision Making

Key 6: Collaborating with the Community

Mission of this key: _____

Work and responsibilities of this committee:

1. From the one year Action Plan, were the activities listed implemented? Were they helpful for reaching your goal and building partnerships? _____

2. Overall, how would you rate the quality of current Key #__ activities specifically at your school?

Weak/Just Starting: Not well developed and needs a great deal of work

Fair: Implemented, but needs improvement and expansion

Good: Well developed and covers all six keys of involvement and addresses the needs of most families at *most* grade levels

Excellent: Well developed and implemented, covers all six keys of involvement and addresses the needs of all families at *all* grade levels

3. Select your committee's most successful event for this year to complete this question.

a. Which activity? _____

b. About how many were involved? _____ Of those, how many were:

• Families: _____

• Teachers: _____

• Community Members: _____

• School staff: _____

• Others: _____

4. Which grade levels were involved? _____

5. What was the main goal of this activity? How did it support the overall goal? _____

6. How well was the activity implemented this year? Was it a new activity or an improved, existing activity? _____

7. What results did this activity produce this year for students, families, teachers and the community? How were these results measured or evaluated? _____

8. What might be done to make this activity more successful next year? Who was not involved that can be? How can you involve those people? What other aspects can be improved? _____

Notes

Resources for Student Success



New Mexico's Guiding Principles on Family & Parent Involvement

A Shared Responsibility

WHEREAS, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) recognizes that parents and families are a young child's first teachers, are essential to school readiness, and that when children enter school the responsibility for their education is then shared with the school and the entire community; and

WHEREAS, the NMPED recognizes that creating positive home, school, health, and community partnerships is essential to carrying out this shared responsibility successfully; and

WHEREAS, the NMPED recognizes a clear connection between parent involvement and increased student achievement; and

WHEREAS, the NMPED recognizes that the education of children begins at birth. A birth through twenty-one continuum of services requires an alignment of practices and building relationships between families, schools, and communities; and

WHEREAS, the NMPED recognizes that in this changing world our children's success will require schools, families, and communities to reinvent how they work together.

NOW THEREFORE, the NMPED adopts these principles for key stakeholders in ensuring quality education for all students. NMPED, all local school districts, schools, school personnel and policymakers are encouraged to:

- Value families as equal partners/joint decision makers in the education of our children;
- Listen carefully to the family perspective;
- Make collaborative communication (talking, thinking and planning together) a priority;
- Include social interaction and learning to be respectful of families, language and culture;
- Respect each child and family's individuality and personal circumstances;
- Create high expectations for student academic and social outcomes among all staff and policymakers;
- Engage families and community-based programs as valued partners in the design of efforts to promote school success for all children;
- Acknowledge ALL partners' strengths, capabilities, contributions, and interests;
- Provide ongoing growth and training opportunities necessary for adults responsible for the care and education of children; and
- Design and practice smooth transitions aligning services around each child's needs.

The New Mexico Public Education Department will take steps to foster wider and more substantive family and community involvement by identifying and sharing information with parents and families about effective educational programs. It also will provide information on funding sources for the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs. Further, it will encourage professional development programs on family/school/community involvement for school staff and families. Efforts will be made to connect with families who did not have a positive school experience or for whom English is not their native language.

The New Mexico Public Education Department will continue to support and assist schools and local school systems in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies and programs that involve all parents and families at all grade levels. It will seek to collaborate with community agencies serving children and families to encourage parent and family involvement in the lives of children. These principles complement legislative initiatives regarding family and parent involvement.

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department, Family Parent Memo, April 2008

A Family Involvement Policy to Fit Your School Community

Developing school policies is not an easy task, especially when you are trying to develop meaningful practices for your school community. The words that you use should be common terms that will move your school beyond written policy into everyday actions. We have selected the Family and Community Engagement Policy from the Baltimore City Public School System to share with you as a sample. As you read this policy, you may find new terms (Example: SIT (School Improvement Team)). Do not do let the new or different terms become a barrier for you. Think of the big picture.

Schools in New Mexico all have some type of school improvement team, but you may know them by a different name such as: School Advisory Council, Educational Plan for Student Success Team (EPSS team), Building Improvement Team (BIT), School Leadership Team or other titles. NM House Bill 212 requires that all schools have a School Advisory Council (see page iv). In April 2008, the New Mexico Public Education Department released *Guiding Principles on Family & Parent Involvement*. (page 74) These principles along with the memo (page 79) from the NM Secretary of Education welcoming the Family/Parent Involvement Advisory Council provide direction for schools partnerships with families to develop a policy that fits their school community. This Council and *Working Together: A Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities* developed by The Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP) and supported by NMPED provide resources that promote family involvement. Read sample below and think about a Family Involvement Policy for your school

Family and Community Engagement Policy

The Baltimore City Public School System (Approved May 25, 2004)

The Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) believes that family and community engagement is an important component for student success. The engagement of parents, families, and community members in the education of our children creates a positive bond between the home and the school. So that we can provide a more responsive and inviting school climate to increase the level of family and community engagement, the BCPSS will continue to develop and implement systemic and school-based strategies and programs, based on the National Standards for School- Parent Partnerships and other research- based programs. The BCPSS recognizes that strong, continuing family and community engagement, in all aspects of school programs and activities, provides support for measurable improvement in student achievement. The BCPSS commits to building engagement capacity in: communication, parenting across the grades, volunteering, at -home learning, decision making, collaborating with the community, and advocacy. The BCPSS Family and Community Engagement Policy creates a collaborative environment in which the parents, the families, and the communities of our students are invited and encouraged to be involved stakeholders in the school community.

Purpose: This policy establishes the framework and responsibilities for the implementation of strategies to increase family and community engagement in schools and throughout the system. An effective school-family community team assures parents, families, and community members the opportunity to be effective collaborators and decision-makers at all levels in support of improved academic performance for all students. The BCPSS will provide support and training for the engagement of all parents, families, and of federal and state parent involvement mandates.

At the school level

- The BCPSS will support the development of a goal oriented comprehensive program of family and community engagement that supports the academic achievement of all students and that meets local, state, and federal mandates. The BCPSS will ensure that a family and community engagement program is implemented at every BCPSS school. The BCPSS will develop, for school staff, a professional development program on the family and community engagement policy and family and community engagement strategies. The BCPSS will require that each Baltimore City public school principal identify, through a process that involves interested stakeholders, a team of persons who, with the support of the principal, will be responsible for implementing the family and community engagement policy and the family and community engagement program.
- The BCPSS will work with each Baltimore City public school to establish a recognized organized parent group if one does not currently exist. The organized parent group will: meet at least four times a year; provide notice of all meetings to all parents/families; consist of at least ten active members, inclusive of the elected officers and one representative of the special education population and one representative of the largest Limited English Proficient (LEP) population in schools where LEP populations exist; increase in membership each subsequent year; and work collaboratively with the School Improvement Team (SIT) and the school's family and community engagement team.
- The BCPSS requires that each Baltimore City public school have an active SIT which must meet at flexible times throughout the school year. The SIT will include, in addition to teachers and administrators, a minimum of two parent representatives, one of whom is a representative of the recognized parent group, and a minimum of two community members, one of whom may be a business partner. All SIT members will collaborate with the recognized organized parent group. The BCPSS and the principal of each school will disseminate the guidelines for school improvement teams.
- SIT roles and responsibilities and SIT membership will jointly be developed annually by the SIT members, each of whom is a full partner. Every parent and community SIT member will be a part of the SIT decision- making process. The BCPSS will make every effort to provide translators for LEP parents who serve as members of the SIT.
- The BCPSS requires that each Baltimore City public school annually hold a public meeting for and with parents, family, and school community members to inform, explain, and discuss yearly school and student progress data and school program plans, including financial program information. Parents, families, and school community members will annually assess the effectiveness of its school program, including the family and community engagement component. This annual meeting is to be held when BCPSS provides the data for the evaluation and development of school program plans to increase the academic achievement of all students.
- The BCPSS requires that each Baltimore City public school develop a Home - School Parent Compact, similar to the compact mandated by Title I, to identify the responsibilities of school staff, parents, families, and students to ensure the academic achievement of all students. Schools will use a school climate survey to gauge the level of school support for parent/family involvement. A parent /family checklist will serve as a guide for parents/families in support of the academic success of their children. Each of these documents is to be developed by a group comprised of all stakeholders.

At the district level

- The Board of School Commissioners will regularly consult and meet quarterly with the Parent and Community Advisory Board (PCAB). Per the law, as established by Senate Bill 795, PCAB will meet quarterly with the Chief Executive Officer and can meet more frequently by agreement. Every BCPSS program effort that requires parental input is to be formally presented to PCAB, as an agenda item, at a publicly scheduled PCAB meeting.
- The BCPSS will implement and make available a complaint/concern procedure for all families. The complaint procedure will include a tracking system with a complaint number. Responses to families must be translated into the spoken language of the family. The complaint procedure will acknowledge the COMAR13A.01.05 Title13A State Board of Education, MD ED CODE ANN 4-205 Appeals to the State Board of Education.
- The BCPSS will regularly provide opportunities for parents, families, and community members to participate in the dialogue and decision making related to district wide and school-based issues. The BCPSS will develop and use effective communication methods to ensure that all families, regardless of income, ethnic background, or language—whose children attend BCPSS schools, share and receive school-to-home and home-to-school communications about district, school and classroom programs, and student progress.

The Baltimore City Public School System
Family and Community Engagement Policy

Office of Parent Involvement and School, Family, Community Connections
200 E. North Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Phone: 410-545-1870
Website: www.baltimorecityschools.org

*The BCPSS requires central office, area office, and school personnel to annually assess the implementation of the Family and Community Engagement Policy and program. The BCPSS will develop, with the input of parents/ families and community members, an annual assessment tool to measure the effectiveness of the Family and Community Engagement Policy and the degree to which annual goals have been met. The BCPSS will make the evaluation available to the principal, SIT, family and community engagement team, and president of the organized parent group in each school.



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
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DR. VERONICA C. GARCÍA
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

BILL RICHARDSON
Governor

April 21, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Fellow Champions for Education

FROM: Veronica C. García, Ed.D.
Secretary of Education

RE: **The NMPED Welcomes the New Mexico Family/Parent Involvement Advisory Council**

Over the last year and a half, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) initiated an extensive Parent Involvement program. This comprehensive approach involves the development, alignment, and integration of parent, school, and community resources; district training; and a public awareness campaign to emphasize the importance of parents and community in education.

I am pleased to officially announce the New Mexico Family/Parent Involvement Advisory Council. The Council serves in an advisory role to the NMPED. The membership of the New Mexico Family/Parent Involvement Advisory Council includes parents and representatives from 29 organizations and districts statewide. They meet monthly to share successes and address the challenges facing families, schools and communities. Council members also help explore the future direction of parental and family involvement for the New Mexico community.

Advisory Council efforts focus on connecting and developing resources to expand positive opportunities for students and families. The work of the Council compliments and supports NMPED activities for public awareness and informed policy decisions that promote the importance of family involvement. Already, the Council developed *New Mexico's Guiding Principles on Parent and Family Involvement*. The guiding principles are aligned with state statute and policy. They help define parent involvement and will serve to guide and align the work of the NMPED, the Council, and the organizations with Council representatives. A copy of *New Mexico's Guiding Principles on Parent and Family Involvement* is attached.

The Advisory Council provides advocacy, guidance, and support for child centered policies and practices affecting family, school, business, and community engagement to local and state decision-makers. I encourage districts, schools, and families to contact the New Mexico

Fellow Champions for Education
April 21, 2008
Page 2

Family/Parent Involvement Advisory Council for access to family and parent voices statewide and to tap into the pooled resources available for families, students, and education communities.

The liaison for the Family/Parent Involvement Advisory Council is NMPED Family/Parent Involvement Program Coordinator, Alicia Benavidez, 505-827-6665 or alicia.benavidez@state.nm.us. Also attached is a Council roster listing all members with their contact information.

I invite you to visit the NMPED website at <http://ped.state.nm.us/> to look at two new links on our homepage: *Resources for Districts* and *Resources for Parents and Families*. We will continue to add information about programs, services, organizations, tools, and strategies under these links that help build strong family-school-community partnerships.

Thank you for all you do for the students and families of New Mexico.

VCG/dm

Attachments (3)

Access to Information (new paragraph)

We all need facts to be effective partners in shared decisions that will make a real difference for all students. Access to information helps create trusting environment for schools, families, and community partners to work toward student success! No Child Left Behind requires schools to make certain information publicly available in a simple format and in languages that people can understand. Each school district must issue a “report card” for every school each year.

As we become involved with the school and district through school councils and the Action Team for Partnerships, all partners need to advocate for high quality public reports. These reports should tell us what the data means and how the district will use the data for school improvement. Use the chart below to get the information you need.

Types of Information	Sources of Information	Contact Information
Student Information		
Student enrollment information: age, ethnicity, gender, etc. Percentage of students from economically disadvantaged households, and single-parent households Percentage of English as Second Language (ESL) students	School District Data Division School District website NM Public Education Department	
Attendance rates / Dropout rates Discipline referral rates Standardized test scores	Same as above School principal / School counselor	
School District Information		
School district policies School district contact information: administration, school board, etc. District EPSS Plan	Superintendent's office School District Information office School District website	
School EPSS Plan Student handbook School-sponsored programs and services for students and families PTA/PTO contact information	Same as above School principal	
School rankings from NM PED	Superintendent's office State Department of Education	
Community Information		
Community maps: school feeder groups, etc.	Public Library City Hall	
Census information	Public Library / City Hall State government website	
Programs and services available to families	United Way Department of Human Services Other nonprofit organizations	
General community information: business/industry, colleges, etc.	Chamber of Commerce Public Library Tourism and Visitors' Bureau	

Resources from Parents Reaching Out

The follow publications are available in hard copy and on CD. Please contact Parents Reaching Out (505-247-0192 or 1-800-524-5176) to request workshops, publications or our PRO CD of all publications. You may download our publications from our website: www.parentsreachingout.org (* Indicates Spanish version is available)

Acronyms, Abbreviations and Definitions

A Bridge to the Future * (Ability Pathway to Diploma)

Book of Ideas * (Learning Styles, Instructional Strategies and more)

DD Waiver Application & DD Waiver Allocation Handbooks * (Health Care Access)

Did You Know Fact Sheets * (NCLB, Literacy, Parent Involvement, Early Childhood)

Early Intervention and Natural Environments * (Birth to three)

Extended School Year * (Special Education Related Service)

Family Health Care Tips* (Fact Sheets on Health Care Access)

Family Connections Series* (Six books based on Epstein's Model)

Family Involvement: Building Community Partnerships* (NCLB, IDEA and more)

First Steps Fact Sheets* (Early Intervention)

How Can I Help This Child? (Sensory Integration)

Let's Begin the Journey * (Overview of Special Education)

Mission Transition * (Head Start to Elementary)

Next Steps to Success * (Early Intervention to Early Childhood)

Open Line and More * (Communication Skills)

Positive Directions for Student Behavior (Intervention Strategies & Tools)

Practical Inclusive Education in New Mexico * (Differentiated learning at its best!)

Response to Intervention (RTI)* (Planned support system for NM schools)

Telling Your Story * (Communication Skills--Sharing Your Perspective)

The Journey Continues* (Standard and Career Readiness Paths to Diploma)

The Handbook: Parental Rights and Special Education Procedures * (IEP Process)

We also distribute New Mexico Public Education Department-Technical Assistance Documents and publications from other federal, state and local agencies serving children and their families..

Tools for Well Informed School Communities!

As your school Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) put plans into place in your school community, you might find helpful information in publications available from Parents Reaching Out. Our *Family Connections Series* offers booklets loaded with tools and ideas that are great for sub-committees for each of the Six Keys to Family Involvement.

Our ***Did You Know*** fact sheets listed below are great for workshops and school newsletters. Please call our office (505-247-0192 or 1-800-524-5176) to request a workshop, publications or our PRO CD with all publications. You may also download these fact sheets and other publications from our website: www.parentsreachingout.org

Parents Reaching Out is the Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) for NM.

- | | |
|---|--|
| What is a PIRC? | 26. Dads Do Make a Difference |
| 1. NCLB-10 Facts | 27. About Self Esteem and Student Success |
| 2. NCLB-Parent Involvement | 28. About Productive Parent Conferences |
| 3. NCLB-Public School Choice | 29. Homework Hassles and Strategies |
| 4. NCLB-School-District Report Cards | 30. Teaching Responsibility |
| 5. NCLB Supplemental Ed Services | 31. The Importance of Grandparenting |
| 6. NCLB District Parent Involvement Policy | 32. Step Parenting |
| 7. NCLB School Parent Compacts | 33. Helping Your Child Be Ready for School |
| 8. NCLB Teacher Qualifications | 34. Activity Overload |
| 9. NCLB English Language Learners | 35. Raising a Reader |
| 10. Resources for Families and Schools | 36. The Motivated Child |
| 11. NCLB-Student Success | 37. Learning Styles and Your Child |
| 12. NCLB-McKinney Vento | 38. Our Children and the Internet |
| 13. NCLB-Accountability | 39. Home Alone |
| 14. NCLB-AYP | 40. Safer Schools |
| 15. Demystifying Supplemental Ed Services | 41. Peer Pressure |
| 16. Demystifying Adequate Yearly Progress | 42. Easing the Teasing |
| 17. Demystifying Public School Choice | 43. Being Bullied |
| 18. Reading Questions Tool | 44. Stopping Back Talk |
| 19. Myths and Realities About Testing | 45. Adventuring with Your Child |
| 20. Free Tutoring | 46. Summer Fun |
| 21. EPSS Educational Plan for Student Success | 47. Becoming a More Effective Parent |
| 22. Quality Reading Instruction | 48. Ways That Words Help Instead of Hurt |
| 23. Measuring Adequate Yearly Progress | 49. The Right Question |
| 24. Scientifically Based Instruction | 50. Boost Your Child's Attitude |
| 25. Communicating with Your Child's School | |

Web Resources



Appleseed Network

<http://www.appleseednetwork.org/>

A non-profit network of 16 public interest justice centers in the U.S. and Mexico, Appleseed is dedicated to building a society where opportunities are genuine, access to the law is universal and equal, and government advances the public interest. Their website includes resources that may prove useful to those who wish to learn more about the importance of parental involvement.

Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP)

www.cesdp.nmhu.edu

The Center for Education and Study of Diverse Populations provides assistance to communities for improving the quality of education for all learners. *Working Together: School, Family and Community Partnerships—A Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities* was developed by CESDP and supported by the NM Public Education Department. The Toolkit with resources in English and Spanish is on their web site.

Children, Youth and Family Consortium (CYFC)

<http://www.cyfc.umn.edu>

The Children, Youth and Family Consortium's web site is a bridge to a wide range of information and resources about children and families. It connects research, teaching, policy, and community practice. CYFC seeks to advance greater understanding, shared knowledge, and action that is informed and deliberate.

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education

<http://www.ncpie.org/DevelopingPartnerships/>

The work of NCPPIE is focused on advocating for the involvement of parents and families in their children's education. The information and resources on this website are designed to foster relationships between home, school, and community to enhance the education of all of our nation's young people.

National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)

http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/nnps_model

"...NNPS tools, guidelines, and action team approach may be used by all elementary, middle, and high schools to increase involvement and improve student learning and development," explains Dr. Joyce L. Epstein, Founder and Director of NNPS. This link has many tried and true volunteering practices based on the Epstein Model.

New Mexico Parent Teacher Association

<http://www.nmpta.org/100ways.html>

There are many ways to be involved. *100 Ways to Know More. Do More.* describes ways you can be involved with your school. Whatever you choose, you'll soon see the effects your efforts have on your children, their schools and yourself. That's because when parents get involved in their child's education, everyone benefits.

New Mexico Public Education Department

<http://www.ped.state.nm.us>

New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) provides leadership, technical assistance and quality assurance to improve student performance and close the achievement gap for all public schools in New Mexico.

Parents Are Teachers Too!

<http://www.parentsareteacherstoo.com/Index.htm>

This website is based on the Family Tools section of the School, Community & Parent Toolkit produced by the New Mexico Public Education Department. It has some good ideas about getting more involved through volunteering at your child's school.

Project Appleseed

<http://projectappleseed.org/sitemap.html>

Through the National Campaign for Public School Improvement, Project Appleseed is helping schools involve parents. This organization has created a list of 37 different ways in which parents can connect with schools to make a difference.

PTO Today

www.ptotoday.com

PTO Today supports PTA's and parent organizations with free articles, tips, resources and management tools (available for purchase) to develop and sustain vibrant, equitable family involvement and volunteering in schools.

Service Leader

<http://www.serviceleader.org/new/volunteers/index.php>

Great information to help you decide about the right volunteer opportunity that is a good match for you. Making the most out of your volunteer activities can be crucial to making a real difference and having a rewarding experience.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)

www.sedl.org

SEDL is funded by a grant the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education to identify and sustain effective solutions for the problems facing educational systems. *Creating Collaborative Action Teams: Working Together for Student Success* is a good resource for school communities as they design quality learning opportunities to sustain partnerships through the Action Team process. Action Teams in school communities in New Mexico are featured in these materials.

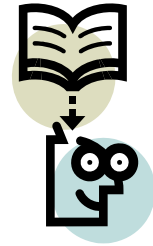
United States Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>

Everything you need to know about No Child Left Behind, including fact sheets, success stories, policy information and much more.

<p>You cannot order people to become cohesive. You cannot order great performance. You have to create the culture and climate that makes it possible. You have to build the bonds of trust.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Michael Abrashoff</p>

The Glossary



Action Team for Partnership (ATP) – This action arm or work group of an Advisory School Council writes and implements plans for partnerships to produce desired results for students, families, and for the school as a whole. It includes teachers, administrators, family members, business and community partners and students (at the high school level). Their primary goal is to involve families and the community in productive ways so that more students reach important educational goals for learning and success.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires that each state measure yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards. “Adequate Yearly Progress” is the minimum level improvement that states, school districts and schools must achieve each year. The report is done annually.

Advisory School Council – This council is the umbrella for all school activities and can be a school administrator’s right hand. It includes the school administrator, family leaders, educators and community representatives. It is the connecting link to the work of other groups within the school. Topics addressed by this council include: Parental Involvement policies, Student Handbook policies, Parent Compact, instructional issues and curriculum planning for the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS), school improvement initiatives from the Action Team for Partnership (ATP), Next Step Planning for post-school transitions and the school’s proposed and actual budgets. This council is mandated and described in section 27 of New Mexico House Bill 212.

The Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) – This is a long-range strategic plan that each school and school district is required to develop, implement, assess, and evaluate on a yearly basis. The purpose of the EPSS is to promote student academic achievement and continuous school improvement. Districts/schools are required to invite parents to participate in the EPSS process.

Parent Compact – All Title I schools must have a written agreement between the parents and school describing what both parties will do to help students be successful. This agreement must also state how educators and parents will work together to improve the child’s achievement and promote parent involvement.

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) – The National Parent Teacher Association is a formal membership organization with a 105-year history of working for children. School PTA’s are linked to the state PTA and National PTA, forming a nationwide network of members working on behalf of all children and youth. Local groups that choose to belong to the PTA must pay dues to the state and national organization and abide by state and national group rules. PTA is a valuable resource to the school community with (1) access to programs to benefit children, youth, and their families; and (2) the recognition and size to influence the formulation of laws, policies, and practices—education or legislative.

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) – These are most often single-school groups that operate under their own bylaws and by and large concern themselves with focusing exclusively on improving and creating community at their own school.

Reflections

Before you close this book, take time to reflect by answering these questions.

What did I learn from this book?

How will I make a difference for the children and families in my school?

How will I work with others to promote shared decision making in my community?



Your One Stop Resource for a Stronger Family

As a statewide non-profit organization, we connect with parents, caregivers, educators and other professionals to promote healthy, positive and caring experiences for New Mexico families and children. We have served New Mexico families for over twenty five years. Our staff and Family Leadership Action Network volunteers reflect the unique diversity of the communities throughout our state.

Children do not come with instructions on how to deal with the difficult circumstances that many families experience. Parents Reaching Out believes that families' needs go beyond the bounds of formal services. *What we can offer to each other is uniquely ours. We have all been there.*

Our Mission

The mission of Parents Reaching Out is to enhance positive outcomes for families and children in New Mexico through informed decision making, advocacy, education, and resources. Parents Reaching Out provides the networking opportunities for families to connect with and support each other. This mission supports *all families* including those who have children with disabilities, and others who are disenfranchised. Parents Reaching Out achieves this by:

- ♦ Developing family leadership
- ♦ Connecting families to each other
- ♦ Building collaborative partnerships
- ♦ Providing families knowledge and tools to enhance their power

Our Beliefs

- ♦ Families need support where ever they are in their journey.
- ♦ All families care deeply about their children.
- ♦ Families may need tools and support to accomplish their dreams.
- ♦ All families are capable of making informed decisions that are right for their family.
- ♦ Families in the state benefit from our organization having the staff and materials that meet their diversity.
- ♦ Systems that listen carefully to the family perspective improve outcomes for our children.

We invite all families and those serving families and children in New Mexico to make *Parents Reaching Out your one stop resource for a stronger family.* Our publications, workshops, and Resource Center offer tools for informed decision making and building partnerships in communities. Our trained staff and network of volunteers are here to serve you.

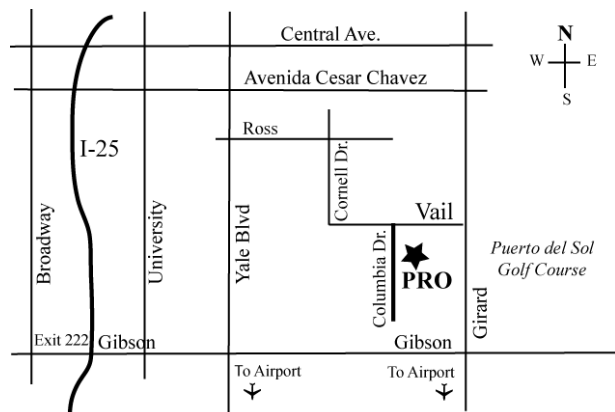
Parents Reaching Out is the home of:

- NM Parent Information and Resource Center (NMPIRC)
- NM Parent Training and Information Center (NMPTIC)
- NM Family to Family Health Information Center (NMF2FHIC)

Parents Reaching Out

1920 B Columbia Drive, SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106
1-505-247-0192 ♦ 1-800-524-5176
www.parentsreachingout.org

From I-25—take the Gibson Blvd Exit 222 and go East on Gibson. Turn left at the third stop light (Girard). Turn left on Vail. Go one block to Columbia. Turn left on Columbia. Parents Reaching Out is on the east side of the street. Welcome!



"The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families. If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. That is, the family is expected to do its job and leave the education of children to the schools. If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development. Partners recognize their shared interest in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students."

Dr. Joyce Epstein, "Caring for the Children We Share"

