



Chapter 1: What a Partnership Looks Like

Have you ever looked at your school through the eyes of a parent or a community member? When creating an environment of partnership, schools must consider the image that is being projected to those who enter their doors. In fact, they even have to consider their door!

This chapter addresses many topics of importance; however, some will be covered in depth in other segments of the training.

This chapter will help staff identify where their school falls on the School-Home-Community continuum.

Goals for Building Partnerships

Participants Will:

- Assess the school's partnership status using the *4 Variations of Partnership Schools* rubric.
- Identify reasons/experiences that shaped their opinions of the school environment by sharing examples of practices that created that environment. Discuss and record in small groups.

Materials Needed:

- Karen Mapp DVD
- Computer and projector
- Chart paper for each group
- Posters or chart paper labeled with each of the four partnership school types
- Copies of the Partnership School rubric
- Markers for charts
- Pens/pencils for rubric
- Soft music to play during Gallery Walk (optional activity)
- Post-it notes in two colors (optional activity)

Handouts:

- *4 Versions of Family School Partnerships*
- Reflection form



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PARTNERSHIPS

Background Information

One of the key strategies for increasing student achievement is to enlist the support and assistance of families and the community. Schools that are deliberate in their efforts to connect with families and community have a welcoming environment that: honors and celebrates what they have accomplished as a school community and are open to suggestions of improvement.

A Partnership School is a place where “all families and communities have something great to offer—we do whatever it takes to work closely together to make sure every single student succeeds.”

(Beyond the Bake Sale, Henderson, Mapp, et al, 2007, p. 15)

How successful has your school been in partnering with families?

- Does your school cling to attitudes and practices that confine parents to traditional roles?
- Has your school defined parent involvement? What does it mean to have partnerships with families?
- How is your school connecting with community resources?
- If a school created a genuine culture of school-family-community partnerships and aimed toward achievement for all students, what would that look like?

Does your school reflect a partnership school?

Current research shows that creating partnerships with families and the community will help all students reach high levels of social and academic achievement.

- “Parents tell us that feeling welcome and being treated with respect by school staff is the number one key to their connection with a school.”
(Beyond the Bake Sale, Henderson, Mapp, et al 2007, p. 47)
- “To forge successful relationships with families, teachers must understand their students’ home situation to assess how and when to include parents in the discussion.” Not being aware could make a bad situation worse.
(Beyond the Bake Sale, Henderson, Mapp, et al 2007, p. 159)
- “Many marketing experts feel that image is more important than reality because image—the sum of perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, ideas and feelings held about an object—makes people act in certain ways and shapes attitudes toward...a public school system.”
(Ed Marketing, Carroll and Carroll, p. 69)
- “The person who looks after the front desk is in many ways the most important person in the whole school when it comes to communicating with parents.”
(Involving Parents in School, Lucas, 2006 , p.14)
- Through home visits, a strong personal connection is made between the school personnel and family members.
(Promising Practices for Family Involvement in Schools, Hiatt-Michael, 2001 , p. 46)



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Workshop Sequence

Welcome and Introductions

Have materials ready prior to participants' arrival. Set up either five chart stands or five sheets of paper around the room, and put a line down the middle of each. Label one side "building" and on the other as "classroom." Distribute Post-it notes (two different colors), note cards, pens, pencils and markers.

Opening Activity

After welcoming all of the participants, introduce, and play Chapter 1 on *The Power of Partnerships* DVD.

Central Ideas

Ask participants to reflect on what they heard from Dr. Mapp. Ask them to share some of the main ideas they heard from the presentation. Introduce the "4 Versions of a Family-School Partnership" handout to determine where the staff perceives the school to be on the continuum.

Activity 2 -- 4 Versions of a Family-School Partnership

Have participants number off and gather in groups of 4 to 5 (not grade levels, if possible). Ask participants to read through the grid and complete it individually (5 min.) and then share their perceptions as a group. What are they currently doing? What could they be doing to improve? A sample question might be: "What are we doing to create a positive family-school partnership in our school?"



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Optional Activity

Ask participants to identify specific examples that can be categorized under the *4 Versions of a Family-School Partnership* by posting them on two different colors of Post-it notes (one color for **Building**, the other for **Classroom**). Each participant should write examples of what they feel represents “Fortress “ tendencies in the *building* on one color, and then, on the other color, do the same thing in reference to his/her own *classroom*. Repeat this for the other three versions, as well.

After groups place their Post-it notes on the appropriate charts, have a conversation about the results and ask the participants to identify areas to focus on as a school and staff.

Follow-Up

To remind staff of the discussion and the conclusions they came to, provide a compilation of responses to the participants within the week.

Conclusion and Reflection

As this chapter comes to a close, ask participants how they will use this information to work on becoming a Partnership school. Invite them to share their ideas on their reflection form, Post-it notes, or index cards.



Today, I was (check all that apply)

- Attentive, due to

- Comfortable, due to

- Bored, since

- Frustrated, because

- Excited, since

- Challenged, when

- Distracted, because

- Satisfied, because

- Intrigued, due to

- Stimulated, as a result of

- Other...specify

Reflections

Here's how today met/did not meet my expectations:

Things our school is doing well in building partnerships...

What I learned about partnership schools...

Things we could work on as a school to improve our partnerships with families...

What I want to do differently in my classroom...

4 Versions of Family-School Partnerships

Check the boxes that have the most statements under them marked or circled. Check only 1 box in each row

Partnership School	Open-Door School	Come-if-We-Call School	Fortress School
<p>All families & communities have something great to offer—we do whatever it takes to work closely together to make sure every single student succeeds.</p>	<p>Parents can be involved at our school in many ways—we're working hard to get an even bigger turnout for our activities. When we ask the community to help, people often respond.</p>	<p>Parents are welcome when we ask them, but there's only so much they can offer. The most important thing they can do is help their kids at home. We know where to get community help if we need it.</p>	<p>Parents belong at home, not at school. If students don't do well, it's because their families don't give them enough support. We're already doing all we can. Our school is an oasis in a troubled community. We want to keep it that way.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family center is always open, full of interesting materials to borrow Home visits are made to every new family Activities honor families' contributions Building is open to community use & social services are available to families 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers contact families once a year Parent coordinator is available if families have questions or need help Office staff are friendly Staff contact community agencies & organizations when help is needed 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better-educated parents are more involved "Many immigrant parents don't have time to come or contribute" Staff are very selective about who comes into the school 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Building Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families do not "bother" school staff "Minority families don't value education" Parents need security clearance to come in It is important to keep community influences out of the school
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All family activities connect to what students are learning Parents & teachers look at student work & test results together Community groups offer tutoring & homework programs at the school Students' work goes home every week, with a scoring guide 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers explain test scores if asked Folders of student work go home occasionally School holds curriculum nights 3 or 4 times a year Staff let families know about out-of-school classes in the community 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are told what students will be learning at the fall open house Parents can call the office to get teacher-recorded messages about homework Workshops are offered on parenting 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Linking to Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum & standards are considered too complex for parents to understand "If parents want more information, they can ask for it" "We're teachers, not social workers"
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translators are readily available Teachers use books & materials about families' cultures PTA/PTO includes all families Local groups help staff reach families 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office staff will find a translator if parents ask in advance Multicultural nights are held once a year "Minority" parents have their own group 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "We can't deal with 20 different languages" "Parents can bring a translator with them" "This school just isn't the same as it used to be" 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Addressing Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Those parents need to learn English" "We teach about our country—that's what those parents need to know" "This neighborhood is going downhill"
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a clear, open process for resolving problems Teachers contact families each month to discuss student progress Student-led parent-teacher conferences are held 3 times a year for 30 minutes 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal will meet with parents to discuss a problem Regular progress reports go to parents, but test data can be hard to understand Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School calls families when children have problems Families visit school on report card pick up day & can see a teacher if they call first 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents don't come to conferences Problems are dealt with by the professional staff Teachers don't feel safe with parents
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents & teachers research issues such as prejudice & tracking Parent group is focused on improving student achievement Families are involved in all major decisions Parents can use the school's phone, copier, fax, & computers Staff work with local organizers to improve the school & the neighborhood 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents can raise issues at PTA/PTO meetings or see the principal Parent group sets its own agenda & raises money for the school Resource center for low-income families is housed in a portable classroom next to the school PTA/PTO officers can use the school office A community representative sits on the school council 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal sets agenda for parent meetings PTA/PTO gets the school's message out "Parents are not experts in education" Community groups can address the school board if they have concerns 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Sharing Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal picks a small group of "cooperative parents" to help out Families are afraid to complain. "They might take it out on my kid" "Community groups should mind their own business; they don't know about education."