

Parental involvement

Education



School Family and Community Connections - Components of a Comprehensive Program of Partnerships, How Partnerships Link to Other Aspects of Successful Schools students families activities parents Ads by Google Search All U. S. Universities The goal of positive and productive family and community involvement is on every school improvement list, but few schools have implemented comprehensive programs of partnership. Research suggests that this goal is an important one to reach because families and communities contribute to children's learning, development, and school success at every grade level. Studies are accumulating that show that well-designed programs of partnership are important for helping all families support their children's education in elementary, middle, and high schools. That is, if schools plan and implement comprehensive programs of partnership, then many more families respond, including those who would not become involved on their own. Three questions need to be addressed to help educators move from believing in the importance of family and community involvement to conducting effective programs of partnership: What is a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships? How do family and community partnerships link to other aspects of successful schools? How can all schools develop and sustain productive programs of partnerships? Components of a Comprehensive Program of Partnerships A framework of six types of involvement guides schools in establishing full and productive programs of school-family-community partnerships. This section summarizes the six types of involvement and discusses a few sample practices that are being implemented in schools across the country that are working to improve and increase family and community connections. Also noted are some of the <https://assignbuster.com/parental-involvement/>

challenges that all schools must overcome to create successful partnerships, along with examples of results that can be expected from each type of involvement for students, families, and educators. Comprehensive programs of partnerships include activities for all six types of involvement. Because there are many activities to choose from, elementary, middle, and high schools can tailor their programs of partnerships by selecting activities that match specific school goals and the interests and needs of students and families.

Type 1—Parenting. Type 1 activities are conducted to help families strengthen parenting skills, understand child and adolescent development, and set home conditions to support learning at each school level. Type 1 activities also enable families to provide information to schools so that educators understand families' backgrounds, cultures, and goals for their children. Sample practices. Among Type 1 activities, elementary, middle, and high schools may conduct workshops for parents; provide short, clear summaries of important information on parenting; and organize opportunities for parents to exchange ideas with other parents, educators, and community experts on topics of child and adolescent development. Topics may include health, nutrition, discipline, guidance, peer pressure, preventing drug abuse, and planning for the future. Type 1 activities also provide families with information on what to expect and how to prepare for students' transitions from pre-school to elementary school, elementary to middle school, and middle to high school. Additional topics for successful parenting may concern family roles and responsibilities in student attendance, college planning, and other topics that are important for student success in school. Schools also may offer parents General Educational Development (GED) programs, family support sessions, family computer

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classes, and other learning and social opportunities for parents and for students. To ensure that families provide valuable information to the schools, teachers may ask parents at the start of each school year or periodically to share insights about their children's strengths, talents, interests, needs, and goals. Challenges. One challenge for successful Type 1 activities is to get information from workshops to parents who cannot come to meetings and workshops at the school building. This may be done with videos, tape recordings, summaries, newsletters, cable broadcasts, phone calls, and other print and nonprint communications. Another Type 1 challenge is to design procedures that enable all families to share information easily and as needed about their children with teachers, counselors, and others. Results expected. If useful information flows to and from families about child and adolescent development, parents will increase their confidence about parenting, students will be more aware of parents' continuing guidance, and teachers will better understand their students' families. For example, if practices are targeted to help families send their children to school every day and on time, then student attendance will improve and lateness will decrease. If families are part of their children's transitions to elementary, middle, and high school, then more students will adjust well to their new schools, and more parents will remain involved across the grades. Type 2—Communicating. Type 2 activities increase school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and student progress through notices, memos, conferences, report cards, newsletters, telephone calls, e-mail and computerized messages, the Internet, open houses, and other traditional and innovative communications. Sample practices. Among many Type 2 activities, elementary, middle, and high schools may provide parents with <https://assignbuster.com/parental-involvement/>

clear information on each teacher's criteria for report card grades; how to interpret interim progress reports; and, as necessary, how to work with students to improve grades or behavior. Type 2 activities include parent-teacher conferences; parent-teacher-student conferences; or student-led conferences with parents and teachers. Student involvement in conferences helps youngsters take personal responsibility for learning. Activities may be designed to improve school and student newsletters by including student work, a feature column for parents' questions, calendars of important events, and parent response forms. Many schools are beginning to use e-mail, voice mail, and websites to encourage two-way communication between families and teachers, counselors, and administrators. Challenges. One challenge for successful Type 2 activities is to make communications clear and understandable for all families, including parents who have less formal education or who do not read English well, so that all families can understand and respond to the information they receive. Other Type 2 challenges are to know which families are and are not receiving and understanding the communications in order to design ways to reach all families; develop effective two-way channels of communication so that families can easily contact and respond to educators; and make sure that students understand their roles as couriers and interpreters in facilitating school and family connections. Results expected. If communications are clear and useful, and if two-way channels are easily accessed, then school-to-home and home-to-school interactions will increase; more families will understand school programs, follow their children's progress, guide students to maintain or improve their grades, and attend parent-teacher conferences. Specifically, if computerized phone lines are used to communicate

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information about homework, more families will know more about their children's daily assignments. If newsletters include respond-and-reply forms, more families will send ideas, questions, and comments to teachers and administrators about school programs and activities. Type 3—Volunteering. Type 3 activities are designed to improve recruitment, training, and schedules to involve parents and others as volunteers and as audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs. Sample practices. Among many Type 3 activities, schools may collect information on family members' talents, occupations, interests, and availability to serve as volunteers. These important human resources may help enrich students' subject classes; improve career explorations; serve as language translators; monitor attendance and call parents of absent students; conduct "parent patrols" and "morning greeters" to increase school safety; and organize and improve activities such as clothing and uniform exchanges, school stores, and fairs. Schools may organize volunteers to serve as home-room parents, neighborhood representatives, and sports and club contacts and may establish telephone trees to help parents communicate with each other about school programs and events. Schools may establish a corps of volunteers to offer a "welcome wagon" of information about the school to students and families who enroll during the school year. Schools also may create opportunities for mentors, coaches, tutors, and leaders of after-school programs to ensure that students have experiences that build and expand their skills and talents and that keep them safe and supervised after school. Some Type 3 activities may be conducted in a parent room or family center at the school where parents obtain information, conduct volunteer work, and meet with other parents.

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Challenges. Challenges for successful Type 3 activities are to recruit volunteers widely so that parents and other family members feel welcome; make hours flexible for parents and other volunteers who work during the school day; provide needed training; and enable volunteers to contribute productively to the school, classroom, and after-school programs. Volunteers will be better integrated in school programs if there is a coordinator who is responsible for matching volunteers' available times and skills with the needs of teachers, administrators, and students. Another Type 3 challenge is to change the definition of "volunteer" to mean anyone who supports school goals or students' learning at any time and in any place. This includes parents and family members who voluntarily come to school as audiences for students' sports events, assemblies, and musical or drama presentations, and for other events that support students' work. It also includes volunteers who work for the school at home, through their businesses, or in the community. A related challenge is to help students understand how volunteers help their school and to encourage students to interact with volunteers who can assist them with their work and activities. Results expected. If tasks are well designed, and if schedules and locations for volunteers are varied, more parents, family members, and others in the community will assist elementary, middle, and high schools and support students as members of audiences. More families will feel comfortable with the school and staff; more students will talk and interact with varied adults; and more teachers will be aware of and use the time, talents, and resources of parents and others in the community to improve school programs and activities. Specifically, if volunteers serve as attendance monitors, more families will assist students to improve attendance. If volunteers conduct a "

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hall patrol" or are active in other locations, school safety will increase and student behavior problems will decrease because of a better student—adult ratio. If volunteers are well-trained as tutors in particular subjects, student tutees will improve their skills in those subjects; and if volunteers discuss careers, students will be more aware of their options for the future. Type 4— Learning at home. Type 4 activities involve families with their children in academic learning activities at home that are coordinated with students' classwork and that contribute to student success in school. These include interactive homework, goal-setting for academic subjects, and other curricular-linked activities and decisions about courses and programs. Sample practices. Among many Type 4 activities, elementary, middle, and high schools may provide information to students and to parents about the skills needed to pass each class, course, or grade level and about each teacher's homework policies. Schools also may implement activities that can help families encourage, praise, guide, and monitor their children's work by using interactive homework strategies; student-teacher-family contracts for long-term projects; summer home-learning packets; student-led at-home conferences with parents on portfolios or folders of writing samples or work in other subjects; goal-setting activities for improving or maintaining good report card grades in all subjects; and other approaches that keep students and families talking about schoolwork at home. Family fun and learning nights are often used as a starting point to help parents and students focus on curricular-related topics and family interactions. These meetings require parents to come to the school building. A systematic approach to increasing academic conversations at home is found in the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) interactive homework for the elementary and middle <https://assignbuster.com/parental-involvement/>

grades. Challenges. One challenge for successful Type 4 activities is to implement a regular schedule of interactive homework that requires students to take responsibility for discussing important things they are learning, interviewing family members, recording reactions, and sharing their work and ideas at home. Another Type 4 challenge is to create a schedule of activities that involve families regularly and systematically with students on short-term and long-term goal-setting for attendance, achievement, behavior, talent development, and plans for college or careers. Results expected. If Type 4 activities are well designed and implemented, student homework completion, report card grades, and test scores in specific subjects will improve; and more families will know what their children are learning in class and how to monitor, support, and discuss homework. More students should complete required course credits, select advanced courses, and take college entrance tests. Students and teachers will be more aware of families' interest in students' work. Type 5—Decision-making. Type 5 activities include families in developing schools' mission statements and in designing, reviewing, and improving school policies that affect children and families. Family members become active participants on school improvement teams, committees, PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, Title I and other councils, and advocacy groups. Sample practices. Among Type 5 activities, elementary, middle, and high schools may organize and maintain an active parent association and include family representatives on all committees for school improvement (e. g., curriculum, safety, supplies and equipment, partnerships, fund-raising, postsecondary college planning, career development). In particular, along with teachers, administrators, students, and others from the community, parents must be members of the "

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Action Team for Partnerships," which plans and conducts family and community involvement activities linked to school improvement goals. Schools may offer parents and teachers training in leadership, decision-making, policy advocacy, and collaboration. Type 5 activities help to identify and provide information desired by families about school policies, course offerings, student placements and groups, special services, tests and assessments, annual test results for students, and annual evaluations of school programs. Challenges. One challenge for successful Type 5 activities in all schools is to ensure that leadership roles are filled by parent representatives from all of the major race and ethnic groups, socioeconomic groups, and neighborhoods that are present in the school. A related challenge is to help parent leaders serve as effective representatives by obtaining information from and providing information to all parents about school issues and decisions. At the high school level, a particular challenge is to include student representatives along with parents in decisionmaking groups and in leadership positions. An ongoing challenge is to help parents, teachers, and students who serve on an Action Team for Partnerships or other committees learn to trust, respect, and listen to each other as they collaborate to reach common goals for school improvement. Results expected. If Type 5 activities are well implemented in elementary, middle, and high schools, more families will have input into decisions that affect the quality of their children's education; students will increase their awareness that families and students have a say in school policies; and teachers will increase their understanding of family perspectives on policies and programs for improving the school. Type 6—Collaborating with the community. Type 6 activities draw upon and coordinate the work and resources of community

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businesses; cultural, civic, and religious organizations; senior citizen groups; colleges and universities; governmental agencies; and other associations in order to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. Other Type 6 activities enable students, staff, and families to contribute their services to the community. Sample practices. Among many Type 6 activities, elementary, middle, and high schools may inform students and families about the availability of community programs and resources, such as after-school recreation, tutorial programs, health services, cultural events, service opportunities, and summer programs. This includes the need to assist students and families to gain access to community resources and programs. Some schools work with local businesses to organize "gold card" discounts as incentives for students to improve attendance and report card grades. Collaborations with community businesses, groups, and agencies also strengthen the other five types of involvement. Examples include enhancing Type 1 activities by conducting parent education workshops for families at community or business locations; increasing Type 2 activities by communicating about school events on the local radio or television stations, and at churches, clinics, and supermarkets; soliciting volunteers from businesses and the community to strengthen Type 3 activities; enriching Type 4 activities by offering students learning opportunities with artists, scientists, writers, mathematicians, and others whose careers link to the school curriculum; and including community members on Type 5 decision-making councils and committees. Challenges. One challenge for successful Type 6 activities is to solve problems associated with community-school collaborations, such as "turf" problems of who is responsible for funding, leading, and supervising cooperative

activities. The initial enthusiasm and decisions for school-community partnerships must be followed by actions that sustain productive collaborations over the long term. Another Type 6 challenge is to recognize and link students' valuable learning experiences in the community to the school curricula, including lessons that build on students' nonschool skills and talents, their club and volunteer work, and, in high school, their part-time jobs. A major challenge is to inform and involve families in community-related activities that students conduct. Related challenges are to help students understand how community partners help their school and to engage students, themselves, as volunteers and in service-learning in their own schools, in other schools, and in the community. Results expected. Well-implemented Type 6 activities will increase the knowledge that families, students, and schools have about the resources and programs in their community that could help them reach important goals. Well-designed community connections will increase student access to and participation in community programs. Coordinated community services could help many students and their families prevent health, social, and educational problems or solve problems before they become too serious. Type 6 activities also should support and enrich school curricular and extracurricular programs.

Summary. The six types of involvement create a comprehensive program of partnerships in elementary, middle, and high schools, but the implementation challenges for each type of involvement must be met in order for programs to be effective. The quality of the design and content of the involvement activities directly affect the expected results. Not every practice that involves families will result in higher student achievement test scores. Rather, practices for each type of involvement can be selected to

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help students, families, and teachers reach specific goals and results. The examples above include only a few of hundreds of suggestions that can help elementary, middle, and high schools develop strong programs of partnerships.

How Partnerships Link to Other Aspects of Successful Schools

Good schools have qualified and talented teachers and administrators, high expectations that all students will succeed, rigorous curricula, engaging instruction, responsive and useful tests and assessments, strong guidance for every student, and effective school, family, and community partnerships. In good schools, these elements combine to promote students' learning and to create a school climate that is welcoming, safe, caring, stimulating, and joyful for all students, educators, and families.