

Collaborating with Families



Lou Ann Jones

Brainstorm

- Define the concept of families...



How does this topic fit in the portfolio?

- Entry 4 - One of the categories of involvement that must be addressed is "Teacher as partner with families and community."
- Entries 1, 2, 3- Although the standard is not specifically referenced in these entries, family/parent partnerships plays into your "knowledge of student."

Brainstorm

- Define your concept of collaboration...



Remember your most meaningful parent contact / communication.

What made it special?



Methods of Communication

- It is not possible to design a single method of communication that will reach all homes.
- Personal contact, including conferences, home visits, telephone calls, & curriculum nights or open houses, seem to be most effective.
- Parent surveys are returned most often when done at beginning of school year.



Parent Surveys

- Design your survey to fit the student's age.
- Keep length of survey (# of questions) in mind. Parents of young children will complete a longer survey more than parents of older students (many different teachers, not enough time, etc.).
- Survey samples - Write down questions you like and design your own. It will be more personable for your specific needs.

Studies find that students with involved parents are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Pass their classes, earn credits and be promoted
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills, show good behavior and adapt well to school.
- Graduate and go on to further education

Avoid Barriers to Parental Involvement

• Four Biggest Barriers:

- "I don't have time."
- "I don't know what to do."
- "I don't know why it's important."
- "I don't speak English."



Make plans this summer how to overcome these barriers and enhance your parental involvement and contacts.

Different Standard Titles - - But Same Topic

- Family Partnerships
- Family & Community Partnerships
- Family Involvement
- Family & Community Involvement
- Family Outreach
- Family & Community Partnerships
- Collaboration with Family & Community
- Schools, Families, & Communities
- Partnerships with Colleagues, Families, & Community
- Linkages With Families



Standards Review

- What does your Certificate area say about Collaborating with Families?
- What is considered required communication with families?
- What is the difference between required and above and beyond?

The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to:

1. *Create a home environment that encourages learning*
2. *Express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers*
3. *Become involved in their children's education at school and in the community*

From the experts at:



Seventy-Five Ideas to Build Parent Involvement and Support

1. Hold your first parent meeting at a fast-food restaurant.
2. Hold a "Parent University" program right at your school.
3. Provide "Fact Cards" for parents with school name, address, phone number, name of principal, school secretary, school nurse, PTA president—perhaps a refrigerator magnet.
4. Establish "Take Home Tuesday" as day to send school papers home.
5. Send home tape recorded messages in parents' own language.
6. Provide a **short** newsletter for parents—consider *Parents Make the Difference!*
7. Remember "**30-3-30**" in writing school newsletters. Eighty percent of people will spend just **30 seconds** reading it. Nineteen percent will spend **three minutes**. One percent will spend **30 minutes** (your mother).
8. Remember the dollar bill rule for school newsletters.
9. Write for parents at 4th to 6th grade level.
10. Try Brown Bag Seminars—parenting program at work site during lunch hour.
11. Use the key communicator system to control the rumor mill.
12. Know **THE SECRET** to getting parents to attend meetings at school.
13. Remember the 3 "F"s for success—Food, Families, Fun.
14. Understand and use the 80-20 rule for parent groups.
15. Take heart from the one-third rule which research has revealed for achieving improved student achievement through parent involvement.
16. Use videotape to show busy parents their children in action.
17. Use refrigerator notes.
18. Encourage "Sunshine Calls," "Thinking of You" Calls.
19. Understand the fact that teachers are more reluctant to contact parents than parents are to contact teachers. Work to overcome the problem.
20. Put up parent-friendly signs at school—directing them to the office.
21. Greet visiting parents as quickly as possible—perhaps use volunteers.
22. Have children's work on display all over the school—every child's work, not just the future commercial artists' work.
23. Have some place in the building that parents can call their own.
24. Know why parents say they are not involved: don't have time, don't know what to do, don't know it is important, don't speak English.
25. Try "Project Newborn" to contact future parents when new child is born.
26. Push for written school district policies on parent involvement.
27. Push for funding for parent involvement—it pays off.
28. Stress training for staff—all staff—in parent involvement.
29. Stress two-way communication between schools and parents.
30. Work for links with other social service agencies that can help parents.

31. Conduct school surveys to reveal family attitudes about your school.
32. Offer parenting classes.
33. Hold informal "drop in" coffee times and encourage parents to come.
34. Establish and use parent advisory groups.
35. Reach out to new families-again, use volunteers.
36. Know that face-to-face contact works best for Hispanic parents—in fact, all parents.
37. With parent volunteers: be supportive, be specific, be sensitive.
38. Insist that teachers not wait until its too late to give parents bad news.
39. Stress the importance of having an agenda for parent meetings.
40. Here are some "Top Topics" parents seem to want to discuss:
 - How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk
 - Dealing with divorce
 - Mastering math facts
 - Talking with kids about sex
 - Helping your child survive first grade (middle school, or whatever)
 - How to handle discipline
 - Proven study skills you can teach your child
 - Liking school, loving learning
41. Try a parents' Hall of Fame.
42. Publish a school calendar.
43. Provide time for teachers to get to know parents.
44. Hold several open house programs throughout the year—Try *Visitation Days*.
45. Know the four keys research tells us about making parent education programs work:
 - **Empower parents**—encourage parents, work with them to set and carry out goals. Especially, don't assume you know what is best for parents. They know themselves best.
 - **Focus on the needs of both parents and the child.** Parents can't help their children if they desperately need help themselves—a job, housing simple support from other adults.
 - **Adjust to the needs of the specific parents in the program.** There is no one-size-fits-all program.
 - **Allow plenty of time for parent discussion.** Programs should be parent dominated.
46. Include student demonstrations at school meetings-not everything has to be a student "performance."
47. Provide child care.
48. Share with parents experiences you have had with your own children—it breaks down barriers, gets you out of your "role" and help parents see you as a fellow parent.
49. At parent group meetings, never ask parents questions where there can be wrong answers.
50. Recognize what parents are doing to help children—praise them.
51. Use simple evaluation forms to get parent feedback on every meeting or event.
52. Learn the tricks for dealing with angry parents-separate the parent from the argument he is making, use active listening, don't get angry, look for areas of agreement (We both want your child to do well), find a win-win solution, if necessary devise a temporary solution.
53. Develop a school handbook, and get parents' help in determining its contents.
54. Tap the vast parent resource pool every school has-parents who have lived overseas, who speak other languages, who have jobs that use skills schools are trying to teach children, who have hobbies that fit into the curriculum, etc.
55. Get Dads out with: Projects that call on Dad's special abilities (building, painting); feature male speakers; proclaim celebrations; offer incentives (raffles, etc.).
56. Try "quick notes" home—notes on the day something happens. A parent helps child with spelling test and child does better. Shoot an immediate note home to say, "It's working."

57. Take parents' pictures. Tell them in advance that pictures will be taken with their child, and prepare for a crowd.
58. Present a TV workshop for parents-how to control TV time.
59. Sponsor a "No TV Week" for your school and enlist parents' help in finding other activities for the whole family.
60. Try to provide interpreters and tell parents they will be there.
61. Investigate "telephone mail" systems.
62. Encourage teachers to assign homework that requires talking with someone at home.
63. Ask hostile parents for their advice on something.
64. Tell parents what teachers would like to tell parents if they had the chance-and ask parents what they would like to tell teachers. Then tell them!
65. Put up a Welcome sign in every language spoken by students and parents at your school-get parents to help get the words right.
66. Try an overnight read-in with parents, kids and local drop-in celebrities.
67. Establish a friendly contact with parents early in the year, "**In Time of Peace.**"
68. Focus on the strengths of families—they know their children better than anyone else. Find ways to get that information to the right people.
69. Set up a parent center in your school stocked with resources to help parents.
70. Consider an inservice program for staff on single-parent families—staff can help provide information and it can be a real eye-opener.
71. Be very careful to monitor how your school telephone is answered. Phone impressions are lasting ones!
72. Consider learning contracts involving school, parent and child.
73. Work to encourage businesses to provide time for parents to attend school conferences.
74. Set up a lending library of at-home learning activities.
75. Remember that hard-to-reach parents can often be reached through their churches.

—This information was prepared by Dr. John H. Wherry, President, The Parent Institute, "Education's #1 Source for Family Involvement Information," P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474, 1-800-756-5525. The Parent Institute publishes a wide range of parent involvement materials for schools to distribute to parents, including newsletters, booklets, pamphlets and videotapes as well as an automatic service providing daily-updated parent involvement information to parents through schools' own websites. For details, visit The Parent Institute website at www.parent-institute.com. Permission is granted for noncommercial reproduction of this material if this credit message is included.

Homework For Parents

Parent: _____ Child: _____

To help prepare for the upcoming conferences, please answer any or all of the questions below. Use the back of this sheet if more space is needed. Return this form to school no later than _____ . Thanks for your comments and questions!

1. How does your child currently feel about school? _____

2. How often do you and your child discuss school, and what do you discuss? _____

3. What school subject does your child enjoy the most? _____

4. What are your feelings about your child's homework assignments? _____

5. Where and when does your child usually do his/her homework? And what kind of homework assistance do you give? _____

6. What, if any, schoolwork has your child expressed concern about? _____

7. What concerns, if any, do you have about your child's interactions with teachers and/or other students? _____

8. In what ways can I help you and your child? _____

9. What questions would you like to have answered at our conference? _____

Interest Inventory-
2006-2007

Child's Name _____ Nickname _____

Parents Names _____

Does your child have any brothers or sisters?

Brother's Names,
Ages and where they live

Sister's Names,
Ages, and where they live

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Please list other important people in your child's life and their relationship to your child:

Do you have any family pets? Please list their names and the types of pets:

Please list your child's favorite indoor activities:

Please list your child's favorite outdoor activities:

Please list your child's favorite snacks and meals:

Please list your child's dislikes:

Does your child take medications? _____ Please list them below:

Does your child have any fears or dislikes? _____ Please list them below:

Is there something that your child does well at home that we may not know?

Is there any other information you feel we need to know about your child that will help us to understand them better?

Parent Survey

Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

Parent's Name: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

What activities/hobbies does your child enjoy doing at home?

What does your child NOT like doing?

What motivates your child?

Does your child participate in any extracurricular activities (i.e., scouts, church group, sports, etc.)?

Is your child expected to do chores around the house? If so, what are their chores?

What are your long-range goals for your child in the following areas:
Academically:

Daily Living Skills:

Communication System:

Living Arrangements (i.e., group home, independent living, assisted living, etc.):

Employment (i.e., type of job, community, workshop/shelter):

Any other information you would like to include:

Western Geography Parent Survey

Student Name _____

Parent Name _____

What are some special qualities about your student?

What do you wish I knew about him/her which would help me better understand him/her as a person?

What do you hope your son/daughter will gain from Western Geography?

Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

Mrs. Jones

Involving Parents-Setting the Standard

From the National PTA's website (www.pta.org)

Project Ideas:

- Sponsor events where educators and parents can get to know each other on an informal basis. These can include monthly breakfast clubs, a Wild West show, talent shows, or other activities where parents and staff can interact.
- Design "Happy Grams" for teachers to report positive behavior or achievements to parents.
- Publicize the hours when administrators and teachers are available for parent visits.
- Produce or contribute to a school newsletter.
- Sponsor parenting classes or hold an annual "Parent University" in cooperation with local professionals. If possible, provide babysitting services.
- Start a toy/book lending library.
- Start a parent book club. Advertise the current selection, then hold parent meetings to discuss them or include commentary in the school newsletter.
- Assemble a family resource center with a variety of materials and information for parents. Local businesses and agencies are often willing to help fund these kinds of projects.
- Host activities at the school that bring parents and children together, such as a "lunch buddies" program where parents drop in to eat lunch with their children.
- Create "Together Grams", a half sheet flier with one activity or idea for parents to do with their children, e.g. "talk to your children about when you were their age." On the back, provide information on why the activity is valuable and how it supports learning.
- Host informal forums for parents to talk about parenting issues and exchange ideas.
- Sponsor a "Parents Make the Difference" night. Give parents an overview of what students will be learning, how they will be graded and how parents can help. At High Schools, these evenings can focus on specific subject areas, like math or science.
- Help create Exploration Kits that support teachers' activities in an academic subject area. The kits can contain lists of activities, related videos, books and learning toys and games that provide ideas and ways for parents and children to explore an academic subject together.
- Conduct a "Parents Supporting Success" activity. At the beginning of the year, distribute a Bingo-like card on which each square contains a parent activity that supports student learning. Have parents initial each square as it is accomplished.
- Accommodate both working and stay-at-home parents. Survey parents early in the school year to learn where their interests and skills lie. Provide opportunities for volunteering during the school day, in the evenings, and on weekends.
- Seek out parent perspectives by including a one question mini-poll in each school newsletter and providing a space for feedback.