

## **Role of the Principal on the Partnership Action Team**

School principals are essential members of the Partnership Action team. Even if the principal cannot attend every Action Team meeting, it's important for him or her to keep informed about team plans, actions, and challenges.

The principal's support of partnership efforts gives team members the administrative endorsement needed for them to devote adequate time and attention to working with families. School staff members on the team – teachers, counselors, social workers, aides, or school food, transportation, or maintenance staff, to name a few – will appreciate the principal's "official" endorsement of their efforts for families. Parent and community members on the team will see their membership as an important way for school staff to gain access to the thoughts and feelings of the wider school community.

Most of the time, the principal does not chair the Action Team, but does provide at meetings important information about the school, curriculum, and funding that direct team deliberations. The principal also helps the Action Team:

- Allocate funds, time, and space for meetings and events
- Model collaboration on the team and with other groups
- Lead the process for well-planned, long-lasting, and comprehensive programs
- Give "voice" to the spirit and importance of family-school-community partnerships.

The principal's voice on the team can inform the community, other school and district committees, and students, families, and staff about Action Team goals and activities.

Indeed, principal support of partnerships and the Action Team sends a solid message of welcome to all parents and families at the school. Parents are more likely to monitor and to be involved with their child's schoolwork when they hear the principal make clear and frequent statements about the importance of family involvement. Parents are also more likely to contribute time and resources to the school when the principal, the child's teacher, and other school staff voice consistent support for family involvement and when they offer specific ways and multiple times for families to be involved.

Here are some other actions that principals can take to enhance the quality of their school's partnership efforts:

- Let all students know – often – how important their families are to the students' progress and learning, and to the school.
- Devote time at the first faculty meeting of the school year to talk about the Action Team's mission, the importance of partnerships, and how they will be supported.
- Recognize teachers' efforts to contribute to the partnership program. Encourage their participation in involvement efforts to create a welcoming school community.
- Help teachers become more effective at communicating with families about children's progress
- Publicize scheduled involvement activities often throughout the year.

- Work with community groups and leaders to locate resources that enrich the curriculum and benefit students.
- Recognize and thank Action Team leaders, parents, business and community partners, and others for their involvement.
- Work with district administration and other principals to spread partnerships district-wide; i.e., to provide professional development, share ideas and resources, and solve challenges to family involvement.

Source:

*Developing Successful Partnership Programs* by Joyce L. Epstein and Natalie Rodriguez Jansorn, Principal, Jan/Feb 2004.