

## *A Checklist for Schools*

### *Making Your Family-Community Partnership Work*

Following are examples of practices that schools can use to encourage family and community support of children's learning. They are meant to be advisory and should be adapted to each school's needs.

#### **Parenting**

- We sponsor family learning workshops on topics suggested by parents, and held at times and places easily accessible to all parents.
- We ask families what types of workshops or informational events they would be interested in attending and what session times are most convenient for them.
- We provide families with information on child development.
- We lend families books and tapes on parenting and parent workshops.
- We provide families with information about developing home conditions that support school learning.
- We survey parents to determine their needs, assign staff members to help address those needs, and work to link parents with community resources.
- We have a family resource center or help parents access other resource centers in the community.
- We have support groups for families with special interests and needs.
- We train staff members and support them in reaching out to all families.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Communicating**

- We schedule parent-teacher-student conferences to establish student learning goals for the year.
- We listen to parents tell us about their children's strengths and how they learn.
- We follow the "Rule of Seven" offering at least seven different ways that parents and community members can learn about what is happening in the school and comment on it.
- Teachers have ready access to telephones to communicate with parents during/after the school day.
- Staff members send home positive messages about students.
- We make efforts to communicate with fathers.
- Staff members make home visits.
- Parents know the telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of school staff members and the times teachers are available to take phone calls from parents.

- We involve families in student award and recognition events.
- We encourage and make provisions for staff members to communicate with parents about the child's progress several times each semester.
- We communicate the school's mission and expectations for students to parents.
- The school has a homework hotline or other kind of telephone system.
- We provide parents with structured ways to comment on the school's communications, for example, with mailed, phone, or take-home surveys.
- We have staff members available to assist and support parents in their interactions with the school (i.e., home-school liaisons).
- We send home communications regarding:
  - student academic progress,
  - meetings at school,
  - how parents can be involved in student activities,
  - Parent Teacher Association,
  - student discipline,
  - child development,
  - the curriculum,
  - how parents can be involved as volunteers,
  - how parents can be involved in school governance,
  - how parents can help with homework and encourage learning at home,
  - community resources available to families,
  - how parents can communicate with school staff, and
  - the school's philosophy of learning.
- We directly speak to parents (does not include leaving messages on answering machines) if students are having academic difficulty or causing classroom disruptions **before** a crisis occurs.
- We provide copies of school textbooks and publications about the school to the public library.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Learning at Home**

- We have specific goals and activities that keep parents informed about and supportive of their children's homework.
- We offer learning activities and events for the whole family.

This information was adapted from:

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Parents Plus of Wisconsin. (n.d.). *New Teacher Welcome Packet*. Retrieved August 6, 2007 from <http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/fcswelpk.pdf>.

- We invite parents to borrow resources from school libraries for themselves and their families.
- We link parents with resources and activities in the community that promote learning.
- We give parents materials they can use to evaluate their child's progress and provide feedback to teachers.
- We help parents understand student assessments, including report cards and testing, and how to help students improve.
- School staff and school communications help parents link home learning activities to learning in the classroom.
- We include parents and other community members in developing children's learning outside of school activities.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- We gather information about the level and frequency of family and community participation in school programs.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Decision Making

- We encourage parents to attend school improvement team meetings.
- We assign staff members to help parents address concerns or complaints.
- We invite staff and parent groups to meet collaboratively, providing space and time to do so.
- We help families advocate for each other.
- We involve parents in
  - o planning orientation programs for new families
  - o developing parenting skills programs
  - o hiring staff members
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Volunteering

- We encourage families and other community members to show their support by attending school events.
- We offer youth service learning opportunities for students who want to volunteer in the community.
- We help school staff learn how to work with parent and community volunteers.
- We ask family members how they would like to participate as volunteers at their child's school or in the community, and we respond in a timely manner to their offers of assistance.
- We encourage family and community members to become involved as
  - o participants on the school improvement team
  - o presenters to students on careers and other topics
  - o assistants with art/music/science, etc. shows, read-aloud events, theater workshops, book swaps, and other activities
  - o tutors/mentors
  - o chaperones on field trips and other class outings
  - o instructional assistants in classrooms, libraries, and computer labs
  - o non-instructional assistants
  - o from-the-home contributors of baked goods, assembling materials, typing, etc.
- We offer volunteer opportunities for working single parents.
- We have a program to recognize school volunteers.

### Collaborating with Community

- We act as a source of information and referral about services available in the community for families.
- We use a variety of strategies to reach out to adults, families, and children of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds in the community.
- We encourage local civic and service groups to become involved in schools in a variety of ways such as mentoring students, volunteering, speaking to classes, and helping with fund-raising events.
- We encourage staff and students to participate in youth service-learning opportunities.
- We open our school buildings for use by the community beyond regular school hours.
- We work with the local chamber of commerce or business/community organizations and public library to promote adult literacy.
- We have a program with local businesses that enhances student work skills.
- We widely publish and disseminate school improvement team meeting notices, summaries, and agendas, and encourage the feedback and participation of community members.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_