COLORADO SPRINGS D11 SCHOOLS

Family-School Partnerships:

An Implementation Guide

Adapted from the PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships
and the CDE's FSCP Implementation Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Families' involvement in their children's learning directly and positively affects educational outcomes. To meet the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, schools became required to address family involvement in substantial ways. However, it is widely recognized that given the constraints of limited time, funding, staffing and resources, involving families in their children's education in ways that are effective and meaningful remains a challenge to schools and districts across the country.

There is no topic in education on which there is greater agreement than the need for family and community involvement.

- Teachers and administrators want to know how to work with parents in positive ways and how to involve the community to increase student success.

- Families want to know if schools are providing high-quality education, how to help their children do their best, and how to connect and communicate with teachers and administrators.

- Students want to succeed in school. They know they need guidance, support, and encouragement from their parents, teachers, other family members, and others in the community.

ACHIEVING HIGH STANDARDS

Our country has focused on raising the bar for students and teachers. The federal government has set high standards for all students, with regular assessments to see if students are achieving basic academic success. This guide has been developed to assist all D11 schools with the mission of consistently improving academic growth and success for all students.

There is no alternative to high expectations. If we want students to achieve at even higher levels, we must engage more with their parents and families. The following standards are based on national research and interviews conducted with education experts. The standards that follow identify what schools, parents, and communities can do together to support student success.

ABOUT THIS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

This guide follows the Colorado Department of Education's Family, Schools, Community and Partnerships' framework (FSCP) to assist schools in District 11 in creating and supporting high-quality family involvement programs. It is a guide meant to empower educators, families, community members, and students to work together for the educational success of all students in our district.

Research consistently demonstrates the benefits of family-school-community partnerships:

- Higher teacher morale

- Increased communication among parents, teachers, and school leaders

- More parent involvement in supporting teaching and learning

- More community support for the school

- Greater student success

But effectively engaging families and communities in schools to support student learning takes a true commitment to shared leadership and collaboration. Here you'll find a comprehensive and practical guide to achieving high standards for involvement.

For each standard, the guide provides the following information:

- A definition of the standard, followed by a brief explanation of its importance and a discussion of the key goals

- Expert insights which demonstrate the standard's value

- A success story from a school community making real progress toward meeting the standard

- Action steps for your school community

- Additional resources to enhance your understanding and help your school meet the standard

The guide also contains:

- Self-assessment guides (rubric) correlating to each standard with specific goals, indicators and examples of what good practice looks like; and,

- A family-school partnership action plan template and sample.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide will help school communities in District 11 implement programs and practices that encourage partnerships between families, schools, and communities and promote student success. Use the guide to educate your community about the importance of family involvement, and to direct the development of effective relationships.

To put these materials to best use, it is suggested to form a school action team focused on promoting family and community involvement. Include parents, other caregivers and family members, school staff, community members, and even students. Have the whole team familiarize themselves with this guide, but also consider establishing a sub-team for each standard. Offer opportunities for a diverse group of individuals to lead those sub-teams

Once the organizational structure is in place, consider the following steps:

Step 1

Assess your school's current practices for engaging families and the community in improving school climate and student success. Invite each member of the action team to review the self-assessments included in this toolkit. Ask for input from the action team members on how well they think the school is doing. Compile the results and discuss them with the team and school staff to decide where and how to focus efforts.

Step 2

School principals should review the findings with staff and parent group leaders. Based on the findings of the self-assessments, a plan should be put into action. This guide provides a number of action ideas for each standard to help you get started, as well as success stories showing how real schools have more effectively engaged families. Use the action plan template to document your goals and objectives. Remember, building successful partnerships between families and schools is a process, not an event. One-time events can be a good beginning, but it's important to make sure there's a continued connection to supporting student learning. Building a strong parent leadership group will be crucial in assisting school leaders in this endeavor.

Step 3

Principals, school staff and parent leadership groups collaboratively present the action plan to the school community for feedback and buy-in. When families feel invited into the development of involvement programs and practices, there is a greater likelihood of success.

Step 4

Put the plan into action and have the action team monitor the progress throughout the school year
The action plan should be a living document. If something is not working, collaborate with parent groups to make the necessary changes.

Step 5

At the end of the school year, the action team should document the successes and share them with the school community, which includes families, students, teachers, the executive director for that school, and community members.

Step 6

As you plan for the next school year, explore how you can build on your accomplishments and use these goals and strategies in your Unified School Improvement Plans.

Family School and Community Partnerships (FSCP)

A Preschool through 12th Grade Guide for Colorado School Districts

FAMILY SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

COLORADO
Department of Education

Definition:
Families, early childhood programs, schools, and communities actively partnering to develop, implement, and evaluate effective and equitable practices to improve educational outcomes for children and youth.

The below **4 Essential Elements** will help you guide your way.

Create an Inclusive Culture

Create an Inclusive Culture

An inclusive culture honors the lived experience of families in early childhood programs and/or the school community. Self-assess with the following:
- How are your practices inclusive of all families?
- How are you learning about families lived experiences?
- Who is leading and supporting the creation of the welcoming culture?

Build Trusting Relationships

Trusting relationships enable families and programs/schools to partner about the education outcomes for children and youth. Self-assess with the following:
- What do trusting relationships look like in your program/district/school?
- How are you ensuring effective use of two-way communication with your families to sustain positive relationships?
- How do you leverage relationships with families to achieve your program/district/school goals?

Build Trusting Relationships

Design Capacity Building Opportunities

Design Capacity-Building Opportunities

Capacity building opportunities for staff and families promote shared leadership about educational outcomes for children and youth. Self-assess with the following:
- How do you use the context expertise of families to better your content expertise?
- How are you utilizing the assets of your families in your programs/schools?
- How are you using FSCP as a school improvement strategy?

Dedicate Necessary Resources

Necessary resources integrate and elevate partnering practices to scale. Self-assess with the following:
- How do you implement evidence-based practices to cultivate and sustain FSCP?
- Where are you now and where will you go?
- How will you continually improve your family partnerships through community-based resources?

Dedicate Necessary Resources

FSCP link for statute, research, and promising practices that provide the foundation for these 4 Essential Elements.

STANDARD 1
WELCOMING ALL FAMILIES INTO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Schools are all about relationships. The interactions among teachers, students, families, principals, other school staff, and visitors set the tone for everything else. That's why the first standard in this guide is about creating a welcoming school community. Walk into any school and you can feel right away if it is a happy, productive place where people enjoy working and learning or if it is not. Greeting parents and family members warmly and treating them with respect is a big reason for why they will be involved with their school environment.

There are two main goals for the standard of welcoming all families into the school community. The first is creating a welcoming climate. When families walk into the school building, they should feel that it is a place where they "belong." Are there opportunities for families to develop personal relationships with teachers and other school staff, including the principal? Is the atmosphere family-friendly for everyone, not just the "in crowd"? Are there many ways to volunteer and help out, even for parents who may be working two jobs or don't speak English, live near the school, or have a car?

The Importance of Trust

A study of trust in Chicago schools found that higher-achieving schools had higher levels of trust, while schools with the lowest achievement rates had minimal trust. The researchers used four qualities to define trust:

- Respect: Recognizing that each person plays an important role in a child's education and knowing that parents and educators can talk honestly and openly

- Competence: Feeling that families and educators can create and effective working environment and will work hard to get the job done

- Integrity: Feeling that people keep their word, doing what they say they will do, and always put the best interests of children first.

- Personal regard: Knowing that people in the school community are willing to go out of their way to help each other.

Anthony S. Bryk and Barbara Schneider, Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement
(New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002).

The second goal for this standard is **building a respectful, inclusive school community.**
All the school's policies and programs should reflect, respect, and value the diversity of the families in the community. Does school staff value the contributions of all families and work together with families to identify and address barriers to involvement, such as differences of race, education, and culture?
Are events, programs, and activities for families and students low-cost or free? Are they open to the whole family and offered at convenient times and places?

ENGAGING FAMILIES AT FISHKILL ELEMENTARY

The Challenge

Fishkill Elementary is a school of nearly 500 students in New York's Hudson Valley, approximately 90 miles north of New York City. It serves a diverse community in which many of the parents commute to full-time jobs or take care of younger children at home, making involvement in the school difficult.

The Action

To make volunteer opportunities more accessible and more appealing, and thus increasing parent involvement in the school, the Fishkill School Leadership Team decided to initiate a PTA program, "Three for Me." The principal introduced the program at Parents as Partners Night at the start of the school year. Teachers wore "Ask Me About Three for Me" badges, used in-class introductions to invite parents to complete Three for Me promise cards, and explained how parents could volunteer on committees, at events, in the classroom, or even from home. Throughout the year, the newsletter featured volunteer opportunities, while the program's coordinator regularly distributed program reminders, progress reports, and volunteer stories.

The Impact

Three for Me was a catalyst for parent involvement. Seventy percent of the school's families now complete at least three hours of volunteer work during the year, with a significant number continuing to volunteer beyond their original commitment. The school has developed a more welcoming climate and a culture of volunteering thanks to this growing network of parent volunteers.

ACTION STEPS

Getting Started

- Establish a welcoming committee made up of representatives from your school action team who will be responsible for identifying ways to make all families feel welcome.
- Survey family members and school staff to determine how family-friendly your school is.

What School Leaders and Staff Can Do

1. Work with the school leadership teams to develop customer service guidelines to be used in the school.
2. Set up a parent help desk or visitor welcome center outside the school office.
3. Conduct meet-and-greet walks in the neighborhoods where students live.
4. Use a professional development day to address assumptions about race, class, and culture.
5. Explore the need for and feasibility of establishing a family resource center in the school.
6. Be accessible and available. It's one thing to say families are welcomed and valued, but another thing to show it.

Suggestions to Share With Parent Groups/Leaders

1. Greet other parents at school activities and events; sit with someone you don't know and get to know them.
2. Recruit bilingual parents to greet and interpret for families whose first language isn't English.
3. Budget PTA/PTO or parent group funds to be able to offer family activities at low or no cost so everyone can participate.
4. Work to change the conversations going on over the back fence. If people use ethnic slurs, stay positive and point out the contributions all families can make to the community.
5. Hold meetings in a variety of community locations (e.g., local libraries, a community center, a church) to make them accessible to all.

Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships, by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (New York: The New Press, 2007), examines, among other things, how to know whether your school is really open to partnerships (chapter 3) and how to develop trusting relationships (chapter 4). Chapter 4 ends with a checklist for determining how family-friendly your school is. For a free copy of the checklist and more information about the book, go to www.thenewpress. com/bakesale.

Building Relationships for Student Success: School-Family-Community Partnerships and Student Achievement in the Northwest, by Diane Dorfman and Amy Fisher (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002), is a booklet of key research and of promising practices in schools with high poverty rates and large minority populations, including schools on Indian reservations. Go to www. nwrel.org/partnerships/cloak/booklet2.pdf.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) provides resources for developing relationships, including Ideas and Tools for Working with Parents and Families at www.casel.org/ pub/packet.php.

Including Every Parent (2003), a guide developed by parents and teachers at the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston and the Project for School Innovation, explores specific practices critical to engaging and empowering parents at school. Learn more at www.psinnovation.org.

National Fatherhood Initiative offers programs, workshops, publications, and other materials to encourage men to be involved, responsible, and committed fathers. Go to www.fatherhood.org.

Tellin' Stories, the parent organizing program of Teaching for Change, uses the power of story to connect people from diverse backgrounds. For more information, visit www.teachingforchange.org/parentorg.

Create an Inclusive Culture

The school has created an inclusive culture honoring the lived experience of families in early childhood programs and/or school community.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

1. How are your practices inclusive of all families?

Our staff implements FSCP practices and events in ways that consider only site needs. Flyers, phone calls, and/or social media posts are done only in English and tell families what they need to know about registration, calendar dates for site events and holidays, and/or site policies.	Not Working on This
Our staff implements FSCP activities in ways that acknowledge diversity of family types and situations in the community but does not attempt to adapt FSCP practices to accommodate this diversity. Communications are often translated into another language or two and food may be served at site events.	Early/Developing Stage
Our staff implements FSCP practices that acknowledge the diverse family types and situations that exist in the community by adapting practices to be inclusive of family experiences. FSCP practices at the site typically include translators, in addition to serving food. Events are planned that are intended to celebrate and empower family diversity (i.e., Latinx family night, Muslim family meeting, father involvement, Gay/Straight Alliance).	Proficient
Our staff implement FSCP practices that celebrate the diversity among families in the school community by designing practices that build on the strengths of this diversity. School events and workshops take place in the community and/or on weekends in consultation with community leaders, so that more families have easier access. Food, translation, childcare, and transportation are provided to enable more families to attend.	Excelling

Create an Inclusive Culture

The school has created an inclusive culture honoring the lived experience of families in early childhood programs and/or school community.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

2. How are you learning about families lived experiences?

No efforts are made to learn about families in the community. Our focus is on the student and getting them to excel in the classroom environment.	Not Working on This
Our site tries to learn about families solely through students or by having the school counselor or family liaison work with those who come to them for assistance.	Early/Developing Stage
Our site works to learn about families by inviting them to share information about their cultural or ethnic background using a school-wide survey or some other similar method. Teachers invite families to share information about their daily routines and the schedules they maintain with their children.	Proficient
Our site invites families to share their daily routines, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as the most pressing issues in their community, by engaging in a dialogue with teachers and site staff. Families are included in the planning and design of school events and practices to engage marginalized families. Teachers and site staff actively reach out to families through practices such as home visits early in the school year in order to get to know them better.	Excelling

Create an Inclusive Culture

The school has created an inclusive culture honoring the lived experience of families in early childhood programs and/or school community.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

3. Who is leading and supporting the creation of the welcoming culture?

There is no leadership to support the creation, expansion, or persistence of a welcoming site culture. Our principal/site coordinator rarely talks about how welcoming we are or should be to families.	Not Working on This
The principal/site coordinator delegates all responsibility for expanding or maintaining a welcoming and inclusive culture to someone else and rarely checks in with her/him (e.g., counselors, family liaisons, PTA/PTO).	Early/Developing Stage
The principal/site coordinator works closely with others from the site (e.g., counselors, parent liaisons, or PTA/PTO) and supports their efforts to develop a welcoming and inclusive culture throughout the building.	Proficient
The principal/site coordinator supports a welcoming culture and empowers school staff, teachers, and families to have leadership in the development of FSCP programing. These efforts are visibly supported by the principal/site leader through her/his active participation in FSCP efforts and by sharing a vision for equity through FSCP efforts.	Excelling

STANDARD 2
COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

The lifeblood of any relationship and any organization is communication. Communication is a process through which information is exchanged. Yet many ways that schools give out information, such as handouts, newsletters, handbooks, automatic phone messages, and websites, do not provide and easy and routine way for families to respond. Even parent group meetings are often seen by school leaders merely as a way to get the message out to families. The most effective way to build a real partnership is to create regular opportunities for open, honest dialogue.

For this standard, there is one key goal: **Sharing information between school and families**. All families should feel that the school keeps them informed on important issues and events and that it is easy to communicate with teachers, the principal, and other school staff. Creating the perception, however unwittingly, that a dominant group of parents is in the know while everyone else is in the dark reduces trust and stifles the free flow of ideas.

Does your school offer many different ways to communicate every day? Does the school or parent group survey families at least once a year to find out what's on their minds and what they think about the school? Are the principal and other school administrators easily accessible to any parent? Is information about current events and issues readily available, not just on a bulletin board? Do the school and parent group make it easy for parents and families to build connections and communicate with each other?

Motivating Parent Involvement

When school staff makes an effort to communicate with and reach out to families, students score higher on tests. A research review by the Harvard Family Research Project found that the following approaches pay off:

- Accommodating parents' English skills as needed
- Communicating with even those families who don't attend meetings
- Encouraging parent input and ideas
- Offering opportunities to volunteer
- Assigning homework that calls for parent-student interaction
- Ensuring that parent committees reflect the school's racial and ethnic mix.

Family Involvement in Elementary School Children's Education, Family Involvement Makes a Difference 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project, Winter 2006/2007).

The Challenge

Eastwood Elementary School has long been considered one of the more successful schools in Decatur, Alabama, but even the best schools need to reevaluate old habits and look for new ways to meet today's challenges.

While school leaders have always known that strong communication is essential in developing a healthy home-school connection, changing technology-coupled with a decrease in stay-at-home parents presented new challenges in communicating effectively.

The Action

An action team with parent representatives from all grade levels identified three strategies to improve communication.

First, after reviewing what several other schools did to facilitate teacher-parent communication, the action team selected an academic planner, approved by the principal, to become the school-wide method for communicating homework, tests, and other classroom activities.

At the beginning of the school year, the principal also gave all families the option of being part of the school's email system. While the school still uses more traditional means of communication, the expanded use of email allows communication between home and school to occur quickly and easily.

Lastly, the Eastwood parent group created a family resource center to provide a central location for sharing parent group materials, viewing academic planners, and disseminating information about community programs and resources.

The Impact

The academic planner has helped parents become true partners with teachers in supporting student learning, and has the added benefit of helping prepare students and parents for the transition to middle school, where a similar planner is used. The more frequent use of email has increased communication between parents and teachers, and the parent resource center has made parents feel more welcome and more connected to the school and their community.

Getting Started

- Make use of all channels of communication: NTouch, newsletters, automated phone system, text messaging (also available through NTouch), websites, and the District's Communications and Community Relations Office.

- Identify parents, community members, local organizations, and businesses that can help strengthen home-school communication; remember the District's business partnership program and the resources this office offers.

- Make sure all information is communicated in languages and formats to reach all parents.

- Sponsor events that allow educators and parents to interact socially, in addition to parent-teacher conferences and regular school meetings.

What School Leaders and Staff Can Do

1. Map the school's parent-teacher contacts: How often do teachers communicate with families, what are the main topics, and when do they have face-to-face contact?

2. Work with parent groups to establish guidelines for regular communication between home and school (e.g., monthly calls from teachers to parents, home visits, weekly newsletters, NTouch communications).

3. Engage school staff, community members, and parents in developing a parent handbook.

4. Request training and proficiently use the district and school-wide NTouch parent notification system. Request that parents register for your school's NTouch communications and offer assistance on how to use this system.

5. Establish a method for parents to review their student's work on a regular basis. Allow for parent comments.

6. Publicize the hours when administrators and teachers are available for parent visits and any procedures for contacting teachers on the telephone or in writing.

Suggestions to Share With Parent Groups/Leaders

1. Design and print "happy grams" as an easy way for teachers to regularly report positive behavior and/or achievements to parents.

2. Consider using color-coded lines on hallway walls or footprints on floors, to help direct parents to important places like the school office, parent resource center, and library.

3. Include a two-way communication mechanism, such as a question-and-answer section or mini survey, in school newsletters.

4. Distribute calendars so parents can record upcoming events, assignments, and dates to check with teachers on their children's progress.

5. Role-play a parent-teacher conference for families and school staff, demonstrating effective ways for parents and teachers to share information and plan for the future.

Connecting Families and Schools: Sacramento ACT (2005), a case study published by the Center for Community Change as part of An Action Guide for Education Organizing, tells the story of the Sacramento Area Congregations Together (ACT) home visiting program, which helps schools reach out to families. Go to www.cccfiles.org/issues/education/actionguide/.

Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement: Concrete Understandings and Basic Strategies, by A. Lin Goodwin and Sabrina Hope King (Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2002), offers concrete strategies for involving parents of diverse cultural backgrounds. Find it at www.eric.ed.gov.

The Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) of the Harvard Family Research Project provides back is- sues of its electronic newsletters, many of which address issues of diversity, at www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/.

The National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University publishes the Type 2 newsletter twice a year. Named after the second of six types of family involvement-communicating-it shares examples of best practices as well as solutions to challenges. Go to www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/type2/index.htm.

Parents and Teachers Talking Together: A Handbook for Facilitators (2003) outlines a discussion process developed by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in Kentucky. It includes a series of questions for parents and teachers to discuss, centered around the two main questions "What do we want for our students?" and "What do we need to do to get what we want?" Order the guide in the Center for Parent Leader- ship (CPL) Publications section at www.prichardcommittee.org.

Reaching Out to Diverse Populations: What Can Schools Do to Foster Family-School Connections?, by Chris Ferguson (Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2005), recommends that schools build on cultural values, stress personal contact, foster communication, and offer accommodations such as child care, translation, and transportation. Read more at www.sedl.org/connections/research-briefs.html.

Building Trusting Relationships

The site invests in building trusting relationships so that families and programs/schools partner about the education outcomes for children and youth.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

1. What do trusting relationships look like in your program/district/school?

Our site and teachers do not share with families, the school accountability committee (SAC) or the PTA/PTO information about the organization's improvement goals or whether they are meeting them. There is no person at the site who can help families in need of economic, health, or other kinds of social supports. The teachers and staff at this site are afraid to talk honestly with families if their child is having academic or behavioral problems.	Not Working on This
At our site, staff and teachers ask the SAC or PTA/PTO to help implement practices the administration and staff feel are needed. There is a staff member (counselor or family liaison) that is responsible for working with students and families who may need economic, health, or other social supports. Several teachers and staff avoid talking honestly with families if their child is having academic or behavioral problems because they are afraid of the families' reaction.	Early/Developing Stage
Our site shares data with families about their child's development and/or performance and includes families in generating ways to help their child if he/she is developmentally behind. We include the SAC and PTA/PTO in conversations about performance in relation to our site's goals for instruction and enrollment, and ask the group to contribute ideas to help meet these goals. Most of the teachers and staff at this site talk honestly with families if their child is having academic or behavioral problems.	Proficient
The site shares data with all families about their child's development and/or performance and invites them to contribute ideas about how to support their child. Also, the site shares data with all families (not just the SAC and PTA/PTO) about overall levels of achievement and discipline and engages them in multiple conversations about setting goals, ways to improve student outcomes, and overall site performance. Student performance and attendance rates are presented to families broken down by race, gender, and other student/family characteristics in order to emphasize the goals of equity and social justice. The teachers and staff at this site try to have early and honest conversations with families about academic or behavioral challenges so that everyone can support the child.	Excelling

Building Trusting Relationships

The site invests in building trusting relationships so that families and programs/schools partner about the education outcomes for children and youth.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

2. How are you ensuring effective use of two-way communication with your families to sustain positive relationships?

Our site sends out general announcements to families about events, policies, student progress reports, and calendar notifications to families en masse using flyers, robocalls, and posting on our website. We have routine family events like back-to-school nights and parent-teacher conferences where the agenda is set and teachers feel pressure to get through the evening or conference on time and, therefore, cannot leave time for questions.	Not Working on This
Our site sends out general announcements to families about site events, policies, student progress reports, and calendar notifications using flyers, robocalls, and our website. Teachers also send home information about site events directly to families using e-mail or text messaging. E-mail addresses of teachers and administrators are easy to find on the site website and/or electronic gradebook (AKA, parent portal). Back-to School night and conferences have time for families to ask teachers questions. All communications with families are translated into the most prevalent languages spoken by families at the school.	Early/Developing Stage
Teachers occasionally send e-mail messages to families about their child's developmental and/or academic progress, as well as the lesson objectives and how classroom instruction will help children attain these. All family events provide families a way to share feedback on the event and time to do so. Families can provide input to the school through traditional parent groups (SAC/PTA/PTO) and via other means such as formal meetings with the principal or through solicitations using e-mail or paper-based strategies. All communications with families are translated into the most prevalent languages spoken by families at the site.	Proficient
Teachers at the site send e-mail messages to families at least every other week and encourage families to respond if they have questions or concerns. All family events such as Back-to-School Night, Conferences, and Family Nights have time for families to share their experiences and concerns built into the event. Families are asked what kind of programs they want, and this helps determine the activities that are planned. Family feedback and input is solicited from those who cannot attend site events. Feedback is used to improve site practice and plan for future actions.	Excelling

Building Trusting Relationships

The site invests in building trusting relationships so that families and programs/schools partner about the education outcomes for children and youth.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

3. How do you leverage relationships with families to achieve your program/school goals?

Our site and teachers do not include families in efforts to improve school outcomes or to reach school goals for students. Improvement efforts are focused on classroom instruction or providing additional supports during the school day. Families are asked to help the site primarily by supporting fundraisers, volunteering in classrooms or the office, and attending sporting and performing arts events.	Not Working on This
The site and teachers ask families to support the site by helping plan and contribute beyond fundraising, volunteering on-site, or attending sporting and performing arts events, and includes activities like multicultural nights or other at-school events. Improvement efforts include a focus on developing a welcoming climate for families.	Early/Developing Stage
We survey families and ask about their own lives, cultures, and ways (funds of knowledge) they would feel comfortable helping or contributing to the site and/or their child's education. Families are asked to sit on site committees and advocate on behalf of families.	Proficient
Educators get to know their students' families and make sure they know how to contact the teacher. Families are encouraged to ask teachers about their child's development or learning. Sites train families in effective leadership and ask them to discuss site goals, plan family engagement practices, and serve as ambassadors to the community. Families are given leadership roles in the partnership work and may help teachers with instruction in the classroom.	Excelling

STANDARD 3
SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Engaging families in their children's learning can have a powerful impact on student success, not just in school, but also throughout life. The **number one goal** in Colorado Springs School District 11's business plan is to demonstrate improvement of student achievement. When families are involved both at home and at school, students earn higher grades and test scores, come to school more regularly, like school more, behave better, and are more likely to graduate and go on to post-secondary education. However, to become engaged in ways that boost achievement, many families will need information, encouragement, and support from school staff and parent groups.

For this standard, there are two goals. The first is **sharing information about student progress**. Families should be kept fully informed of how their children are doing in school, as well as how the entire school is progressing. How do the school and parent group ensure that parents and teachers communicate about student progress, beyond conferences and report cards? What opportunities do parents have to learn what good work looks like for their child's age and grade? How does the school use standardized test results to inform parents of which student skills need strengthening? How do the school and parent group report on school progress to the community?

The second goal for this standard is **supporting learning by engaging families**. Families should have opportunities to learn how to be active participants in their children's learning at home and at school. Are families invited to observe their children's classrooms? In what ways do school staff develop families' capacity to strengthen learning at home? How are families connected with opportunities for after-school learning?

Students with Highly Involved Parents Do Better in School

Combining data from 77 studies, Professor of Education Bill Jeynes found that the achievement scores of children with highly involved parents were higher than those of children with less involved parents. This finding held across all ages and ethnic groups and all measures of achievement, including grades, test scores, and teacher ratings. Forms of involvement that required considerably more time, such as reading, expressing high expectations, and communicating with one's child, had a greater impact than setting rules and attending school activities.

William H. Jeynes, Parental Involvement and Student Achievement: A Meta-Analysis, Family Involvement Research Digest (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project, 2005),

The Challenge

Fremont High School in Sunnyvale, California, is in a fairly affluent school district, but its own student body is economically diverse, and many students lack academic support at home. Approximately 28 percent of the students are English language learners, and there is a high student turnover. These factors contributed to the school having the lowest test scores in the district.

The Action

To raise student achievement, the school's PTSA and National Honor Society collaborated to launch the Students for Success Tutoring Club. Four days a week, students can stop in to receive free peer tutoring in any key subject, including all levels of math, literature, social studies, science, and foreign language. Help is also provided for standardized-test preparation. Students may be referred for tutoring by their teachers or stop in on their own for help with homework or to study with friends. At any given time, 15 to 25 tutors are available. Supervision is provided by a combination of PTSA volunteers and paid staff. Attendance is voluntary and flexible, and incentives are offered.

The Impact

During the first year of the program, 109 National Honor Society peer tutors and 550 registered students participated. On average, 130 students stopped in each day. Approximately 50 percent of the students who regularly attended improved by at least one letter grade by the end of the first semester. Not only that, but the partnership between the school, the PTSA, and the National Honor Society has made the library-the place where tutoring sessions are held—a cool place to be, and has helped restore a sense of pride in Fremont High School.

Tips for Success

Interactive homework can build students' confidence by prompting them to share their work and ideas with family members. When parents and children are encouraged to talk regularly about schoolwork, parents learn more about what's happening in class. Interactive homework also facilitates communication between parents and teachers about children's work, progress, or problems.

Studies of a program called Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS), in which teachers design weekly homework that calls for children to talk to someone at home about the task assigned, have found that students' writing skills, grades, and test scores improved with the program. Parents talk with and support their children, but don't teach or do the assignments.

Frances L. Van Voorhis, "Interactive Science Homework: An Experiment in Home and School Connections," NASSP Bulletin 85, no. 627 (2001): 20-32.
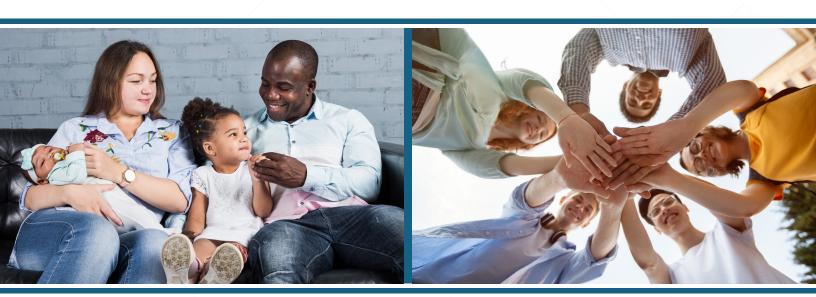
Getting Started

- Start with the end in mind. Determine what parents need to know and need to be able to do to support their children's academic success. Also determine how family and community engagement can support school goals (especially within the Unified School Improvement Plan).

- Link all events to student learning, including those activities focused on making all families feel welcome.

What School Leaders and Staff Can Do

1. Ask parents to take an active role in reviewing student portfolios.

2. At a "Parents Make the Difference" evening, give parents an overview of what students are learning, how students are assessed, what parents should expect, and how parents can help.

3. Institute student-led parent-teacher conferences.

4. Develop a family-school compact focused on student achievement.

5. Make it a policy that teachers send home materials at least once a month, such as interactive homework assignments to help families work with their children.

Suggestions to Share With Parent Groups/Leaders

1. Create a checklist and tip sheets for effective parent-teacher conferences.

2. Work with school leadership to conduct workshops on interpreting standardized test data.

3. Invite teachers and professionals from the community to speak at meetings on various topics.

4. Provide workshops for parents and students on topics such as study skills, individual curriculum areas, and college and career planning.

5. Provide parent involvement tips and suggestions through signs at the school, articles in the newsletters, and as a regular section on the school's web page.

All Kinds of Minds offers a parent toolkit to provide a better understanding of learning processes and strategies for mathematics, reading, and writing. Go to www.allkindsofminds.org.

Conway Middle School Student-Led Conferences (2001), from the Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools in cooperation with the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence and Louisville, Kentucky's Conway Middle School, outlines the purpose and roles of student-led conferences for students, parents, and teachers. Find the guide in the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL) section under Parent Resources at www.prichardcommittee.org.

The **Education Trust** works for the high academic achievement of all students and offers resources that link parent involvement to student learning. Click on the Parents and Community tab at www2.edtrust.org.

The **Florida Partnership for Family Involvement in Education** offers tip sheets for parents on getting involved in their children's education and achievement. Go to www.floridapartnership.usf.edu/resources.html.

The **National Network of Partnership Schools** at Johns Hopkins University offers Promising Partnership Practices, a collection of family-school-community partnership practices that support children's learning from preschool through high school. Learn more at www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/PPP/2008/index.htm.

A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement, by Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp (Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002), reviews the research regarding family-school partnerships and student achievement. Read it at www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf.

PTA provides many resources to help schools and parents support student success. Check out PTA.org, particularly the Topics and Programs tabs.

TIPS: Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork, developed by the National Network of Partnership Schools, is a program for interactive homework. It makes learning a partnership between the student, family, and teacher. Learn more at www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/tips/index.htm.

Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) includes several parent involvement requirements. For an overview of these requirements, see *No Child Left Behind: What's in It for Parents*, by Anne T. Henderson (Parent Leadership Associates, 2002), available in English and Spanish in the Center for Parent Leadership (CPL) section under CPL Publications at www.prichardcommittee.org.

Design Capacity Building Opportunities

Capacity building opportunities for staff and families promote shared leadership about educational outcomes for children and youth.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

1. How do you use the context expertise of families to better your content expertise?

Site decisions are driven almost entirely by district or state accountability or early childhood licensure guidelines for instruction and student achievement. Our site implements only the district-driven curriculum to organize lesson plans and deliver instruction and/or does not use a curriculum.	Not Working on This
Site decisions are driven mostly by district or state accountability or early childhood licensure guidelines for instruction and student achievement, but we consider how to communicate with families and how different families might respond before we implement anything. Our site implements curriculum and teachers create lesson plans with families in mind. Materials that match families' cultural and ethnic background are considered in teachers' lesson plans.	Early/Developing Stage
Site decisions and leadership consider the family and community needs when establishing policy. Our site engages with families and community partners to review the extent cultural, ethnic, and community assets are included in lesson plans and curricula.	Proficient
Site decisions and leadership invite family and community members into the process of making policy decisions. Our site infuses family and community expertise and "funds of knowledge" into lesson plans and the overall curricular approach.	Excelling

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Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

2. How are you utilizing the assets of your families in your programs/schools?

FSCP practices are decided, planned, and implemented by site staff or teachers without family input. Events are typically presentations intended to inform families about site procedures or system policies.	Not Working on This
FSCP practices are used to support student learning and development by encouraging families to raise funds and volunteer in the classroom or office. Families are encouraged to monitor homework and interventions and support their children's learning from home. Community business partners typically provide meals at partnership events.	Early/Developing Stage
FSCP practices are used to support student learning and safety outcomes. The site provides opportunities for families to provide input into the FSCP programing and learn effective ways to support their children at home and outside of the building.	Proficient
Family and community partners serve as co-leaders with site staff in the site's implementation of FSCP program practices. Local family and community businesses are used to help provide food and instructional resources to support instructional practices with children. Families are asked to educate teachers about their own family traditions, routines, and community strengths.	Excelling

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Capacity building opportunities for staff and families promote shared leadership about educational outcomes for children and youth.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

3. How are you using FSCP as a school improvement strategy?

FSCP is not a part of our site improvement strategy and is not mentioned in our Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)/annual reports. Professional development is focused on instructional delivery to students and/or classroom management strategies.	Not Working on This
Our site leaders include FSCP practices as required parts of the site's UIP. We provide professional development about how to implement FSCP practices and/or programs. Data are collected from 25-50% of families about their satisfaction with the site.	Early/Developing Stage
In addition to including FSCP in our site's UIP, we have professional development training about FSCP practices and programs that promote equity and improve student outcomes. Data are collected from more than 50% of families about community needs and their satisfaction with the site.	Proficient
In addition to including FSCP in the site's UIP, professional development training is conducted about using FSCP to promote equity and improve children's outcomes. The training is utilized to help develop our improvement plans. Also, data are collected from more than 70% of families about community needs and satisfaction with the site.	Excelling

STANDARD 4
SPEAKING UP FOR EVERY CHILD

Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

All children need an advocate-someone to speak out and stand up for them. Most likely that "someone" will be a parent, guardian, or close family member. Students whose families don't know how to advocate effectively and constructively are at a real disadvantage. School staff and parent groups can make a critical contribution by ensuring all students have an advocate-whether it's a family member, teacher, or community volunteer-and by offering opportunities for parents and community members to learn and practice the special set of skills that speaking up for children requires.

Advocates often address issues affecting groups of children, but every child also needs someone who will step in and look out for him or her as an individual. To be a strong advocate for a child, a person should know the child well, talk to him or her often, and deeply want him or her to succeed.

Here are some of the things an advocate does for a student:

- Sets high expectations and monitors progress
- Helps the student set goals and plan for the future
- Steers the student through the school system, selecting courses that match his or her goals
- Intervenes if the student has a problem or is being treated unfairly
- Makes sure the student gets assistance, such as tutoring, medical attention, or counseling, when needed
- Monitors out-of-school time and makes sure it is spent in constructive, enriching activities.

The first goal for speaking up for every child is **understanding how the school system works**. Parents must know how the local school and district operate and how to raise questions or concerns about school and district programs, policies, and activities. They also must understand their rights and responsibilities under federal and state law and local ordinances and policies. Do parents know what school and district staff do, who to contact about what, and where to get this information? Are parents aware that federal and state laws mandate that schools involve and inform parents, and that by federal law children have a right to qualified teachers? Does the school provide information to families about tutoring and other support services for their children? Do parents know how to get a problem resolved, and how to appeal a decision they don't agree with?

"Teachers need parents to know how to 'press for success' -both with their
children and with their children's teachers. Asking good questions and showing genuine interest in student performance communicates a sense of urgency and shared responsibility for student progress. This can re-energize teachers and keep them from becoming complacent or lackadaisical about student progress."

- Melissa Whipple, Parent Academic Liaison Program coordinator, San Diego Unified School District, quoted in Anne T. Henderson and others, Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships (New York: The New Press, 2007}, 154.

The second goal for this standard is **empowering families to support their own and other children's success in school**. Parents must be prepared to monitor students' progress and guide them toward their goals so they graduate from high school ready for postsecondary education and a career. Are parents offered workshops and other information sessions to help them learn how to ask the right questions and make the best choices for their children's education? How often do counselors and/or advisors meet with each student and family to map out a plan for the student's future, including the opportunity to go to college or technical school? Does the school work with PTA/parent group leaders to welcome and orient students and families new to the school or starting a new grade? Does the school or PTA/parent group invite local officials running for office to speak on issues that will impact education?

Characterizing Families' Levels of Advocacy

A case study of how African American and Latino families attempted to steer their high school students toward postsecondary education showed the families falling into one of three groups:

1. Moral supporters: These families, the least active, had little knowledge of the school system and a style that was "hands-off, but encouraging." They trusted the system to serve their children well.
2. Ambivalent companions: These families supported their children through encouragement, close communication, and occasional action.
3. Struggling advocates: These families, the most active, monitored their children's activities, questioned school staff, and took part in college prep events. They strongly believed that families must guide and support their students if they are to succeed, and expressed less trust in the system. Only this group was willing to persist even when rebuffed.

The study recommends that schools and supporting groups give families timely information that clearly targets their needs in supporting their children.

Susan Auerbach1 "From Moral Supporters to Struggling Advocates: Reconceptualizing Parent Roles In Education Through the Experience of Working-Class Families of Color," Urban Education 42, no. 3 (2007): 2S0·83.

The Challenge

With the student-to-teacher ratio at 27:1 (despite a school board policy of a 22:1 maximum), the teachers at Appoquinimink Early Childhood Center in Middletown, Delaware, found themselves struggling to fully meet the needs of their students. Many of the students, with and without special needs, required small-group and individual attention to catch up to the expectations for kindergarten students. But the school was busting at the seams with no space to add a new classroom.

The Action

The local PTA informed the families of all students about the effect high student-to-teacher ratios had on student achievement, and notified school district authorities of the situation. In partnership with families and school staff, the PTA then explored possible solutions and presented a proposal to the school board.

The Impact

Parents identified a problem affecting their children's education, collaborated with other parents and teachers under a common goal, and helped develop and present a solution to an established group able to effect change. They saw their efforts pay off in the growth of their children. The school board allocated funds to hire paraprofessionals for every affected classroom in both of the district's kindergarten centers, ensuring students received the guidance and attention they needed to succeed.

Getting Started

- Review the District 11 policy on parent involvement (Policy KB) found at this link:
https://www.d11.org/cms/lib/CO02201641/Centricity/domain/69/SectionK/KB.pdf

- Make sure your school is doing things to support this policy and that the needs of your school community are being met through this policy.

- Include a mini-poll (one question) in each school newsletter or post it on your school website. Over the course of the year, cover a wide range of issues affecting students and the school. Use the parent feedback in making school and program decisions.

What School Leaders and Staff Can Do

1. Frequently share the school's policy and procedures for resolving parent concerns. Cover how to define the problem, whom to approach first, how to develop solutions, and so forth. Encourage parents to address problems early.
2. Develop a Parent Bill of Rights.
3. Provide a school handbook, workshops, and/or web-based materials to explain all school policies and procedures to families.
4. Share with Executive Directors any successful changes in the school that resulted from parent initiation and involvement.
5. Facilitate parent participation in school and district committees, and other community groups.

Suggestions to Share With Parent Groups/Leaders

1. Plan workshops on how to ask the right questions about children's progress and placement.
2. In collaboration with school staff, provide information sessions about programs for gifted and talented students. Reach out to underrepresented populations to ensure access and equity for all students.
3. Involve parents in ongoing training on topics such as being an effective advocate, identifying and supporting learning styles, resolving difficulties, and fostering student achievement.
4. Match new families at the school with a buddy family to show them the ropes.

Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships, by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (New York: The New Press, 2007), includes a chapter on supporting advocacy (chapter 7), with a checklist to help evaluate how well your school supports parents as advocates. Go to www.thenewpress.com/bakesale.

The **Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA)** offers professional development and training for educators and parents and has a package of bilingual materials to help Latino families plan for college. Check out these resources at www.idra.org.

The Kentucky Department of Education's Individual Graduation Plan resources help students set learning goals based on academic and career interests. Download the materials at www.kde.state.ky.us/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Career+and+ Technical +Education/Individual+Learning+Plan/.

Making the Most of Middle School: A Field Guide for Parents and Others, by Anthony W. Jackson and P. Gayle Andrews with Holly Holland and Priscilla Pardini (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004), gives parents practical advice about young adolescents. It is available for order at http://store.tcpress.com/080774476X.shtm1.

Speaking Up/ A Parent Guide to Advocating for Students in Public Schools (Burnaby, British Columbia: BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, 2008) offers practical advice on how to resolve problems. Go to www.bccpac.bc.ca/advocacyproject/resources.aspx.

The Right Question Project provides training that emphasizes working together to name the information we want and need, formulate questions, reflect on the knowledge gained, and develop plans for advocacy and ac- countability. For parents the project emphasizes three roles: supporting children's education, monitoring their progress, and being an advocate of their needs. Learn more at www.rightquestion.org.

Working Together: A Guide to Positive Problem Solving for Schools, Families, and Communities (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2004) guides parents, educators, and community members in the cooperative problem-solving process of informal dispute resolution. Go to www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/problem_solving/index.html.

Building Trusting Relationships

The site invests in building trusting relationships so that families and programs/schools partner about the education outcomes for children and youth.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

1. What do trusting relationships look like in your program/district/school?

Our site and teachers do not share with families, the school accountability committee (SAC) or the PTA/PTO information about the organization's improvement goals or whether they are meeting them. There is no person at the site who can help families in need of economic, health, or other kinds of social supports. The teachers and staff at this site are afraid to talk honestly with families if their child is having academic or behavioral problems.	Not Working on This
At our site, staff and teachers ask the SAC or PTA/PTO to help implement practices the administration and staff feel are needed. There is a staff member (counselor or family liaison) that is responsible for working with students and families who may need economic, health, or other social supports. Several teachers and staff avoid talking honestly with families if their child is having academic or behavioral problems because they are afraid of the families' reaction.	Early/Developing Stage
Our site shares data with families about their child's development and/or performance and includes families in generating ways to help their child if he/she is developmentally behind. We include the SAC and PTA/PTO in conversations about performance in relation to our site's goals for instruction and enrollment, and ask the group to contribute ideas to help meet these goals. Most of the teachers and staff at this site talk honestly with families if their child is having academic or behavioral problems.	Proficient
The site shares data with all families about their child's development and/or performance and invites them to contribute ideas about how to support their child. Also, the site shares data with all families (not just the SAC and PTA/PTO) about overall levels of achievement and discipline and engages them in multiple conversations about setting goals, ways to improve student outcomes, and overall site performance. Student performance and attendance rates are presented to families broken down by race, gender, and other student/family characteristics in order to emphasize the goals of equity and social justice. The teachers and staff at this site try to have early and honest conversations with families about academic or behavioral challenges so that everyone can support the child.	Excelling

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Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

2. How are you ensuring effective use of two-way communication with your families to sustain positive relationships?

Our site sends out general announcements to families about events, policies, student progress reports, and calendar notifications to families en masse using flyers, robocalls, and posting on our website. We have routine family events like back-to-school nights and parent-teacher conferences where the agenda is set and teachers feel pressure to get through the evening or conference on time and, therefore, cannot leave time for questions.	Not Working on This
Our site sends out general announcements to families about site events, policies, student progress reports, and calendar notifications using flyers, robocalls, and our website. Teachers also send home information about site events directly to families using e-mail or text messaging. E-mail addresses of teachers and administrators are easy to find on the site website and/or electronic gradebook (AKA, parent portal). Back-to School night and conferences have time for families to ask teachers questions. All communications with families are translated into the most prevalent languages spoken by families at the school.	Early/Developing Stage
Teachers occasionally send e-mail messages to families about their child's developmental and/or academic progress, as well as the lesson objectives and how classroom instruction will help children attain these. All family events provide families a way to share feedback on the event and time to do so. Families can provide input to the school through traditional parent groups (SAC/PTA/PTO) and via other means such as formal meetings with the principal or through solicitations using e-mail or paper-based strategies. All communications with families are translated into the most prevalent languages spoken by families at the site.	Proficient
Teachers at the site send e-mail messages to families at least every other week and encourage families to respond if they have questions or concerns. All family events such as Back-to-School Night, Conferences, and Family Nights have time for families to share their experiences and concerns built into the event. Families are asked what kind of programs they want, and this helps determine the activities that are planned. Family feedback and input is solicited from those who cannot attend site events. Feedback is used to improve site practice and plan for future actions.	Excelling

Building Trusting Relationships

The site invests in building trusting relationships so that families and programs/schools partner about the education outcomes for children and youth.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

3. How do you leverage relationships with families to achieve your program/school goals?

Our site and teachers do not include families in efforts to improve school outcomes or to reach school goals for students. Improvement efforts are focused on classroom instruction or providing additional supports during the school day. Families are asked to help the site primarily by supporting fundraisers, volunteering in classrooms or the office, and attending sporting and performing arts events.	Not Working on This
The site and teachers ask families to support the site by helping plan and contribute beyond fundraising, volunteering on-site, or attending sporting and performing arts events, and includes activities like multicultural nights or other at-school events. Improvement efforts include a focus on developing a welcoming climate for families.	Early/Developing Stage
We survey families and ask about their own lives, cultures, and ways (funds of knowledge) they would feel comfortable helping or contributing to the site and/or their child's education. Families are asked to sit on site committees and advocate on behalf of families.	Proficient
Educators get to know their students' families and make sure they know how to contact the teacher. Families are encouraged to ask teachers about their child's development or learning. Sites train families in effective leadership and ask them to discuss site goals, plan family engagement practices, and serve as ambassadors to the community. Families are given leadership roles in the partnership work and may help teachers with instruction in the classroom.	Excelling

Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

In a true partnership, all parties have an equal say in important decisions. This is what it means to share power. The lessons we teach our students about democracy in social studies class should come alive in our schools. If families, students, teachers, other school staff, and community members can speak their concerns, take part in elections and other decision-making processes, and meet openly to debate important questions, they will be actively practicing democracy.

For the standard of sharing power there are two goals. The first goal is **strengthening the family's voice in shared decision making**. Families must be full partners in making decisions on issues affecting their children, both at school and within the local community. Do families sit at the table or have a vote when decisions that touch their children are being made? What governance structures exist to discuss and weigh issues of equity, such as which children are eligible for the gifted program? How do the school council and parent groups develop and support new leaders among parents?

The second goal for this standard is building families' social and political connections. Every school should have a strong, broad-based parent organization that offers families and school staff regular opportunities to network and discuss concerns with each other and with school leaders, public officials, and business and community leaders. In what ways do the school and parent group connect families to local officials? How do school and parent leaders make sure the parent organization truly represents all families in both its membership and its leadership?

Organized Parents, Power Change

Community organizing involves recruiting, engaging, and training parents, young people, and community residents to push for reforms in the education system. Many organizing groups start with local public schools, building a strong, broad-based parent organization that focuses on improving school quality and getting a fair share of district resources. A study of community organizing in eight cities around the country found that these efforts had substantial impact on school reform. They:

- Contributed to improved school-community relationships, parent involvement, sense of community, and teacher morale
- Stimulated changes that led to improved student test scores, attendance, graduation rates, and college aspirations
- Influenced district policy and flow of resources to improve low-performing schools
- Developed the capacity of parents, students, and community members to advocate change at the district level, build effective organizations in their schools and communities, and use research and data to present proposals.

Kavitha Mediratta and others, Organized Communities, Stronger Schools: A Preview of Research Findings (Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, 2008).

The Challenge

To better serve children and youth, California's San Ramon Valley Council of PTAs knew it needed to build its local units' capacity to effectively inform and influence policies and practices in their schools.

The Action

The council began by equipping its units with knowledge. Through advocacy trainings at all of its 31 local PTAs, the San Ramon Valley Council of PTAs built leadership skills and made sure parents understood the laws and regulations governing their schools. Representatives from these units now visit state, county, and city legislators several times a year, and have sent more than 15,000 letters through their advocacy campaigns. And because of a candidates' forum organized by the council, community members were able to make educated choices in the school board election.

The council also takes a leading role in being an advocate for students. At the district level it influenced the creation of a more parent-friendly, individualized education plan for students receiving special education services. In addition, it coordinates an annual trip with three other councils to Sacramento (the state capital) and has lobbied for full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The Impact

PTA leaders in the San Ramon Valley obtained an extra $2.3 million for their school district and an additional $350 million in education funding for the rest of the state for a single budget year.

Getting Started

- Identify all the ways your school can include and consult parents in decisions that affect the school community.

- Make sure the parent group membership and leadership is reflective of the school community.

- Consider programs and activities that develop social and political connections.

What School Leaders and Staff Can Do

1. Conduct an annual survey and/or focus groups to get the input of parents on current and potential school programs.

2. At a parent group meeting, discuss the school's scores on state tests and describe the school's plans to improve.

3. Sponsor a school accountability meeting at which school officials describe school programs, services, and performance data.

4. Make sure the parents on the school improvement team represent the diverse population of the school.

5. Invite parents to share concerns and ideas by having a suggestion box in the front office, and be personally accessible to all parents.

Suggestions to Share With Parent Groups/Leaders

1. Working in partnership with the principal, identify ways the parent group can support one or more goals of the Unified School Improvement Plan (USIP).

2. Host a voter registration drive.

3. Host a forum for candidates running for public office; focus questions on issues that affect children, families, and education.

4. Work with students, parents, teachers, school and community leaders, and businesses to develop a parent/family involvement policy that establishes the foundation for involvement programs in our community.

5. Get to know elected officials at all levels of government, as they influence public policy decisions related to children and education.

Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships, by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (New York: The New Press, 2007), includes a school climate survey that can be an excellent action research project. Download the survey and other sample tools from the book for free at www.thenewpress.com/bakesale.

The Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, developed by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, is a parent leadership training program in education. It has graduated more than 1,500 parents across the state of Kentucky in the past 11 years. To learn how to start a program in your area, go to www.cipl.org.

National Issues Forums offers workshops and a starter kit on how to organize public forums on community issues and also helps sponsor forums. Learn more at www.nifi.org.

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Site decisions and leadership consider the family and community needs when establishing policy. Our site engages with families and community partners to review the extent cultural, ethnic, and community assets are included in lesson plans and curricula.	Proficient
Site decisions and leadership invite family and community members into the process of making policy decisions. Our site infuses family and community expertise and "funds of knowledge" into lesson plans and the overall curricular approach.	Excelling

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3. How are you using FSCP as a school improvement strategy?

FSCP is not a part of our site improvement strategy and is not mentioned in our Unified Improvement Plan (UIP)/annual reports. Professional development is focused on instructional delivery to students and/or classroom management strategies.	Not Working on This
Our site leaders include FSCP practices as required parts of the site's UIP. We provide professional development about how to implement FSCP practices and/or programs. Data are collected from 25-50% of families about their satisfaction with the site.	Early/Developing Stage
In addition to including FSCP in our site's UIP, we have professional development training about FSCP practices and programs that promote equity and improve student outcomes. Data are collected from more than 50% of families about community needs and their satisfaction with the site.	Proficient
In addition to including FSCP in the site's UIP, professional development training is conducted about using FSCP to promote equity and improve children's outcomes. The training is utilized to help develop our improvement plans. Also, data are collected from more than 70% of families about community needs and satisfaction with the site.	Excelling

STANDARD 6
COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY

Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Partnerships that connect a school with businesses, hospitals, colleges, service clubs, social service agencies, youth organizations, public housing projects, labor unions, tenant groups, churches, other faith-based organizations, and other community groups can turn a neighborhood into a thriving place to live, work, and raise a family. Many school districts are creating full-service community schools that offer one-stop resource centers for families and local residents. Schools are opening their doors and allowing their communities to use the library, kitchen, computer center, and meeting rooms. If school leaders are aware of what's happening in the community, they can apply school resources to problems that matter. For the standard of collaborating with community, there is one overriding goal: **connecting the school with community resources**. Parent and school leaders should work closely with neighborhood associations, government agencies, businesses, and institutions of higher education to strengthen the school. These collaborations should make resources available to students, school staff, and families and build a family friendly community. What links to community resources has the school forged? Have parents and families been part of that process? In what ways has support from community partners been organized? What are the plans to turn the school into a hub of community life? How do the partnerships with community groups strengthen families and support student success?

Complementary Learning

For children and young people to be successful from birth through adolescence, there must be an array of linked supports for learning all around them. The Harvard Family Research Project calls this network of supports "complementary learning." The connections should work together and be in place continuously, shifting over time as children mature. For more information and resources, go to www.hfrp.org.

Lessons from the 100 Best Communities

Each year America's Promise Alliance identifies the "100 Best Communities for Young People." In studying 25 former winners that emphasized family involvement, researchers from America's Promise Alliance identified several common best practices in developing family involvement programs and strategies. Those best practices include:

- Addressing the multiple needs of families-economic, health, educational, and parenting-to empower parents to support their children;
- Asking parents and children about community needs and possible solutions through surveys and community forums;
- Using data about the community and from performance evaluations to develop and revise programs; and
- Partnering with community organizations for infrastructural and financial support and leadership.

Jonathan F. Zaff and Danielle Butler, "Whole Children, Whole Families, Whole Communities," The Evaluation Exchange {Harvard Family Research Project) 14, nos. 1&2 (Spring 2008): 12.

The Challenge

Van Bokkelen Elementary School in Severn, Maryland, a Title I school where more than 80 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches, had become one of the worst performing schools in the state. It was even put on the state department of education's takeover list. What's more, parents seemed disconnected and mistrustful of the school.

The Action

Understanding that when parents and the community are involved, students do better in school, the Van Bokkelen Elementary PTA-a group small in numbers but big on commitment-began to question why more parents were not involved. What they found was that many of the families lived in poverty and faced a daily challenge in meeting the basic needs of their families. In addition, many parents, because of their circumstances, didn't feel they should be involved or that they were capable of making a contribution.

To help meet the needs of families, the PTA sought out community resources. Partnerships were formed with the YWCA, a community college, the American Red Cross, and the local Boys & Girls Club, to name a few. These partners helped parents obtain their GEDs, offered job-skills training, provided after-school enrichment and child-care programs, instituted a first-time home buyers program, and even gave down payment assistance to parents completing a financial education program-all at the school, which became the hub of the community.

The Impact

Van Bokkelen Elementary School transformed completely. As families started coming to the school for these supports and services, they began to feel better about themselves and the school, resulting in greater communication with teachers, the principal, and each other. Family members were better able to provide for their children and gained the confidence in themselves to become true partners in supporting their children's success in school. The school gained the families' trust. The best part was student achievement improved, with grades and test scores going up across the board.

Getting Started

- Work with District 11's partnership coordinator (volunteer services) to find out which existing partnerships may work well with your school.

- If you would like to establish a partnership that does not yet exist with an organization in our community, work with the District's partnership coordinator (volunteer services) to ensure the correct process is followed.

- Develop a shared vision among the partners with your school to determine what type of success the partnership will produce.

- Make sure partnership activities strengthen families and link to student learning.

What School Leaders and Staff Can Do

1. Sponsor an annual Give Back Day on which students go into the community to perform needed work or services.

2. Work with the District's partnership coordinator (volunteer services) to invite businesses to sponsor community resource workshops for teachers during the summer to help them learn about the educational, cultural, and business resources in the community.

3. Host a community breakfast at the school for local businesses and civic leaders.

Suggestions to Share With Parent Groups/Leaders

1. Working in partnership with the principal, identify ways the parent group can support one or more goals of the Unified School Improvement Plan (USIP).

2. Host a voter registration drive.

3. Host a forum for candidates running for public office; focus questions on issues that affect children, families, and education.

4. Work with students, parents, teachers, school and community leaders, and businesses to develop a parent/family involvement policy that establishes the foundation for involvement programs in our community.

5. Get to know elected officials at all levels of government, as they influence public policy decisions related to children and education.

Becoming a Community School, by Robert L. Ford· School Principal Claire Crane and several of her fellow educators (Dorchester, MA: Project for School Innovation, 2004), tells how this K-8 school in a poor Massachusetts neighborhood became a thriving hub for community activities. Find order information at www. psinnovation.org/order.

Community Engagement Review and Planning Guide-Field Test Version, by Rosana Rodriguez, Pam Mccollum, and Abelardo Villarreal (San Antonio, TX: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2002), is designed to help schools and universities plan and strengthen community engagement. It is available in English and Spanish at www.idra.org, under Publications.

Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center) helps communities bring individuals with different experiences and opinions together to talk about challenges facing their community, and to work together to create solutions to those challenges. Learn more at www.everyday-democracy.org.

School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action (Third Edition), by Joyce L. Epstein and others (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2008), provides detailed information on strengthening family-school partnerships for schools involved in the National Network of Partnership Schools and those who would like to join. Learn more at www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/publications/manual.htm.

The School-Family Connection: Looking at the Larger Picture, by Chris Ferguson (Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2008), is a review of current literature on family involvement that identifies important strategies for increasing family-school connections. Go to www.sedl.org/connections/ resources/sfclitrev.pdf.

Dedicate Necessary Resources

The site has and uses the necessary resources to integrate and elevate partnering practices to scale.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

1. How do you implement evidence-based practices to cultivate and sustain FSCP?

We do not implement evidence-based practices designed to strengthen or sustain FSCP. Activities that are implemented are those that are traditionally implemented (e.g., Back-to-School night and Parent-Teacher conferences), and in ways that have always been organized. There is no funding allocated for new FSCP activities or programing. There is not an individual or group coordinating FSCP practices throughout the site.	Not Working on This
Our FSCP practices are coordinated by a site/teacher leader, the school counselor, or a family liaison. Activities that are implemented are those that are traditionally implemented (e.g., Back-to-School night and Parent-Teacher conferences), but teachers are encouraged to think about and implement improvements. Most of the funding for FSCP activities comes from the PTA/PTO budget, not the school budget. FSCP activities may or may not be formally evaluated.	Early/Developing Stage
There is a team at our site that coordinates all FSCP programing and evaluation, and it has funding for their work. Members of the FSCP team are comprised of administrators, teachers, a diverse range of families, and community representatives. The team keeps a file or notebook of materials that describe how events or activities were organized and implemented. Activities that are implemented are those that are traditionally implemented (e.g., Back-to-School night and Parent-Teacher conferences), but teachers are encouraged to think about how they can support family engagement at home or outside of the site. Also, the team always conducts an evaluation of FSCP practices that it implemented.	Proficient
There is a team at our site that coordinates all FSCP programing and evaluation, and that has funding for their work. Members of the FSCP team are rotated every couple of years and are comprised of administrators, teachers, a diverse range of families, and community representatives. The team keeps a file or notebook of materials that describe how events or activities were organized and implemented. Also, the team always conducts an evaluation of each FSCP practice that is implemented and discusses how improvements can be made.	Excelling

Dedicate Necessary Resources

The site has and uses the necessary resources to integrate and elevate partnering practices to scale.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

2. Where are you now and where will you go (e.g., Evaluation and goal setting)?

We do not evaluate our FSCP events or program implementation nor do we set goals or establish an idea for what FSCP relationships will look like in the following site year. Time is not devoted to FSCP in our site staff or site improvement meetings.	Not Working on This
We evaluate our FSCP events, but not our program implementation or the extent to which we have a sitewide program. On occasion, time is provided during our staff or site improvement meetings to discuss FSCP. FSCP activities are the responsibility of the PTA/PTO. Progress on FSCP practices is measured in terms of family attendance.	Early/Developing Stage
We evaluate our FSCP events and the extent to which we have a sitewide program. Time is sometimes provided to discuss FSCP during our staff or site improvement meetings. FSCP activities are the shared responsibility of the PTA/PTO, SAC, and other site committees. Progress on FSCP is measured in terms of whether all groups of families are being reached. The site leader emphasizes to teachers and staff the importance of FSCP.	Proficient
The site FSCP team evaluates what the site and teachers are doing to implement FSCP practices aimed at improving student outcomes, as well as those designed to improve relationships among the site, families, and the community. Time is often provided at staff or site improvement meetings to discuss how our FSCP programing is contributing to site and student improvement. Each year, the FSCP team sets goals for the FSCP practices beyond those about attendance at events or activities. The site leader emphasizes to teachers the importance of FSCP and works to remove individuals who do not share this vision.	Excelling

Dedicate Necessary Resources

The site has and uses the necessary resources to integrate and elevate partnering practices to scale.

Reflection Question and Proficiency Ratings -

3. How will you continually improve your family partnerships through community-based resources

There is no team or person to establish or coordinate community partnerships. Data about the participation and impact of our community partnerships are not collected or examined.	Not Working on This
There is a person to establish and coordinate community partnerships, and the site collects data about the number of partnerships, as well as family/student participation.	Early/Developing Stage
There is a person or team to establish and coordinate community partnership programing. The site collects data about the number of partnerships, family/student participation, and the impact of these partnerships on academic, social-emotional, health, and financial needs of students and families.	Proficient
There is a team at our site that coordinates all community partnership programing and evaluation. The team collects data from families and community partners about the assets that exist in the community and discusses with them how community resources can help meet the academic, social-emotional, health, and financial needs of students and families. This process takes place annually.	Excelling

Family-School Partnership Action Plan – Template

School/Location: _____ Year: _____

Lead Person(s):_____

Standard: _____

Goal(s): _____

_____

Results (How will you know when your school reaches this goal? What does success look like?): _____

_____

_____

Activities, Practices, Policies	Persons Responsible, Including Lead(s)	Timeline	Resources and Funding (What do you need and who can supply it?)	Evaluation (How will you determine whether the activity achieved its desired effect?)

Family-School Partnership Action Plan – Sample

School/Location: Roundtree Elementary School, Anytown, State   **Year:** 2009–2010 school year

Lead Person(s): Frank Johnson, Standard 1 action team leader

Standard: Welcoming All Families into the School Community (Standard 1)

Goal(s): 1. When families walk into the school building, they feel the school is inviting and is a place where they "belong."

2. The school's policies and programs reflect, respect, and value the diversity of the families in the school community.

Results (How will you know when your school reaches this goal? What does success look like?): More families are participating in school-sponsored events; parents and teachers report increased communication between home and school; increase in volunteer hours; increased presence of principal during student drop-off and pick-up; improved student attendance/decrease in tardiness and absences.

Activities, Practices, Policies	Persons Responsible, Including Lead(s)*	Timeline	Resources and Funding (What do you need and who can supply it?)	Evaluation (How will you determine whether the activity achieved its desired effect?)
1. Hang welcome signs in all the languages spoken in the homes of the students.	School staff member, parents/family members	Start Aug. 1; Done by 1st day of school	Translators—bilingual or multilingual volunteers Signs—$___ from PTA/school funds; discount or donation from local print/copy shop	Applicable to all activities: • Feedback (formal end-of-year survey and informal comments) from family and community members • Improved family and community perception of the school • Increased presence of parents and family members in the school • Increased participation of families in school and PTA events
2. Work with the art, social studies, or history teachers to organize a classroom activity in which students make state and national flags representing their heritages; hang the flags in the school.	School staff member, parents/family members Coordinate with art/social studies/history teachers	Talk to teachers at start of school year; Create flags as fits with curriculum; Host event to unveil flag display	Art supplies—$___ from PTA/school funds, donations from community businesses/organizations Place to hang flags—e.g., cafeteria, multipurpose room, library, gym, halls	
3. Create reception area by school office for parents and other visitors, with comfortable chairs, reading materials, and access to coffee, tea, and water.	School office staff, parent/family member, community member Coordinate with PTA fundraising chair	Launch plan at start of school year; Funds by Nov.; Complete by start of 2nd semester	Furniture/accessories—$___ raised in special fundraiser, or furniture donated by families/businesses Space—near front office Beverages/cups/napkins—$___ from PTA funds; prepared by office staff	

4. Offer a wide range of volunteer opportunities—in classrooms/school, for PTA programs, and at home.	School staff member, teacher representative, parent/family member, community member Coordinate with PTA volunteer coordinator	List ready to go at Back-to-School night; Ongoing	Training for volunteers, depending on opportunity—PTA/school/community leaders	
5. Create a school policy that ensures that all families are able to participate in school activities/events, regardless of their ability to pay.	School staff member, parents/family members, community member Coordinate with principal (or designee), PTA fundraising chair	Ongoing	Funding to cover activity costs for all parents, or parents unable to pay—PTA fundraising (specify)	
6. Host at least two school events (fun or informational) each semester at community locations to increase access/participation.	School staff member, parents/family members, community member Coordinate with principal (or designee), PTA programs chair	Ongoing	Space—commitments from community partners (e.g., library, community center, neighborhood place of worship)	

* When filling out this action plan, be sure to record the names—not just titles—of the persons responsible. The descriptors given here are suggestions as to which stakeholders should be represented. The persons listed here will likely form the action team for the standard. Be sure to designate one person to be the lead on each activity.