



Comprehensive Family Partnerships

Instructional Leadership Academy

May 13, 2008



Family partnerships in Context

A New Wave of Evidence—In Short

The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more. How are the many ways that families are engaged in their children's education related to achievement? Many studies found that students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, were more likely to:

- earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs.
- be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits.
- attend school regularly.
- have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school.
- graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

What schools must do to garner the power of family partnerships—In Short

Research has revealed that a school must take the lead in developing meaningful family-school partnerships. The most successful model is the creation of an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) - this is a team composed of parents, teachers and administrators who collectively develop and sustain school-community partnerships.





What came first- the chicken or the egg?

Often school administrators receive conflicting messages on family partnerships. On the one hand, we ask you to develop activities and policies in conjunction with the families you serve and at the same time we also tell you that this conversation must be lead or started by the school staff. The truth is that both messages are correct, but they are sequential.

Before you invite families to engage with your school, the policies and procedures at your site must reflect this desire- lets call this ***“the foundational components”*** for family partnerships. For the most part, analyzing and implementing policies to establish the foundational components can be done before engaging with families. These foundational components will be refined once your families and your school staff have a venue to work together towards a common goal. But you can not invite families to enter into partnership if you have not taken the time to ***“clean house.”***

After you have set some or all of the foundational standards that you can, it is then wise and most effective to purposefully engage families to work with your school. The best model to successfully engage families is through the creation of the ATP and using the Six Types of parental involvement framework. ***Indeed there is no getting away from the fact that a small group of people is required to implement meaningful partnership.*** When you think of the alternatives (principal responsible for everything that happens at the site, parent clubs/PTAs developing yearly to-do lists that may or may not have any direct relation to the school goals, families confused on how to best support their children, finishing the school year unable to determine if families did all they could to support their children's' education., etc.), there is no better way then the ATP.

Six Types of Involvement: Keys to Successful Partnerships

 Type 1	<u>Parenting</u> Assist families with parenting skills and setting home conditions to support children as students. Also, assist schools to better understand families.
 Type 2	<u>Communicating</u> Conduct effective communications from school-to-home and from home-to-school about school programs and student progress.
 Type 3	<u>Volunteering</u> Organize volunteers and audiences to support the school and students. Provide volunteer opportunities in various locations and at various times.
 Type 4	<u>Learning at Home</u> Involve families with their children on homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions.
 Type 5	<u>Decision Making</u> Include families as participants in school decisions, and develop parent leaders and representatives.
 Type 6	<u>Collaborating with the Community</u> Coordinate resources and services from the community for families, students, and the school, and provide services to the community.

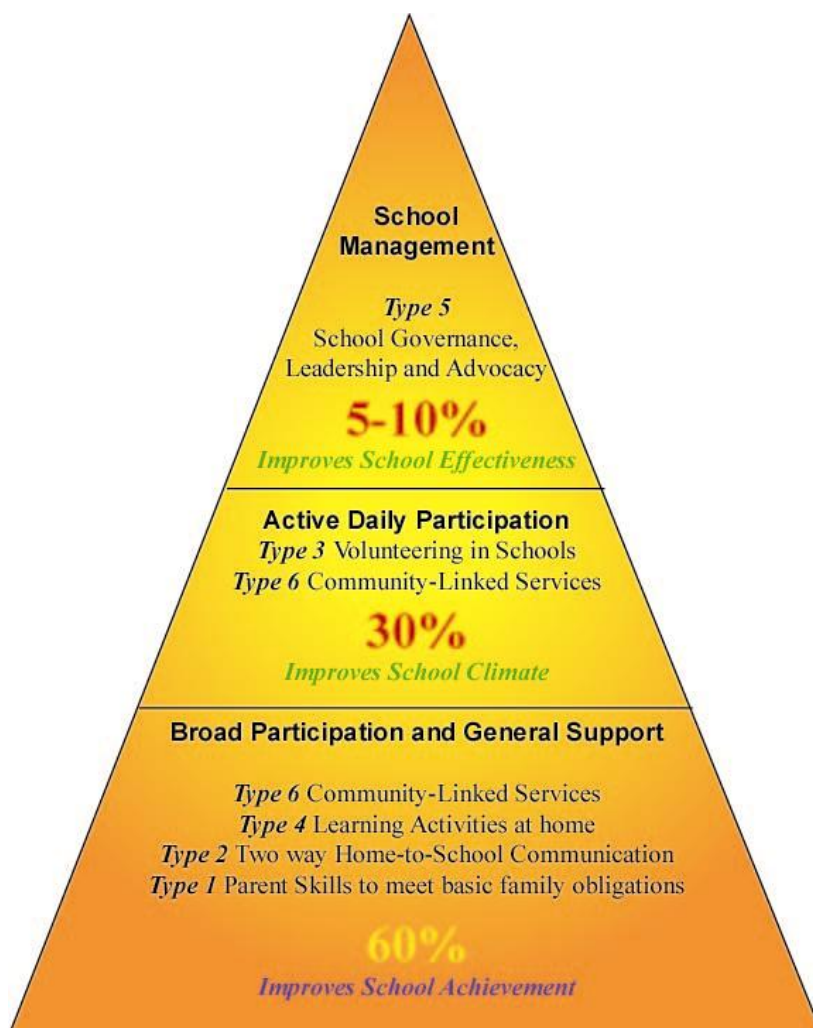
Epstein, et. al. 2002. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, Second Edition.*

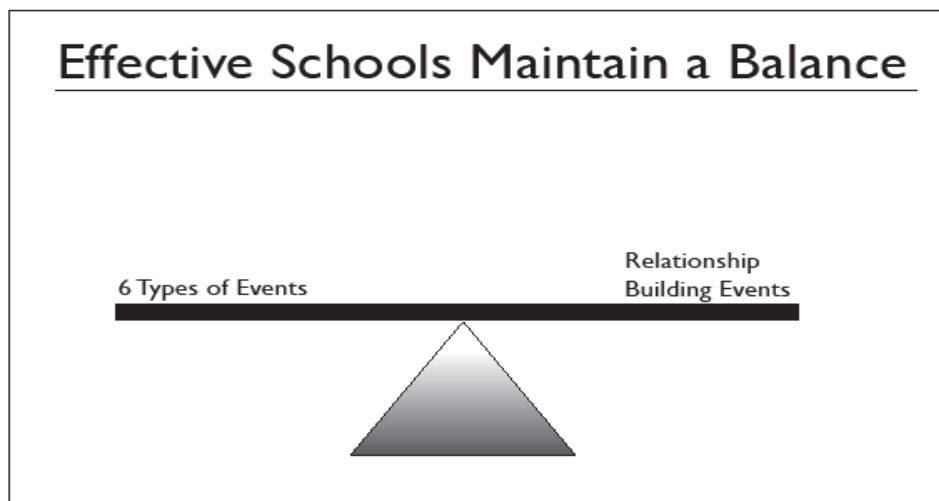
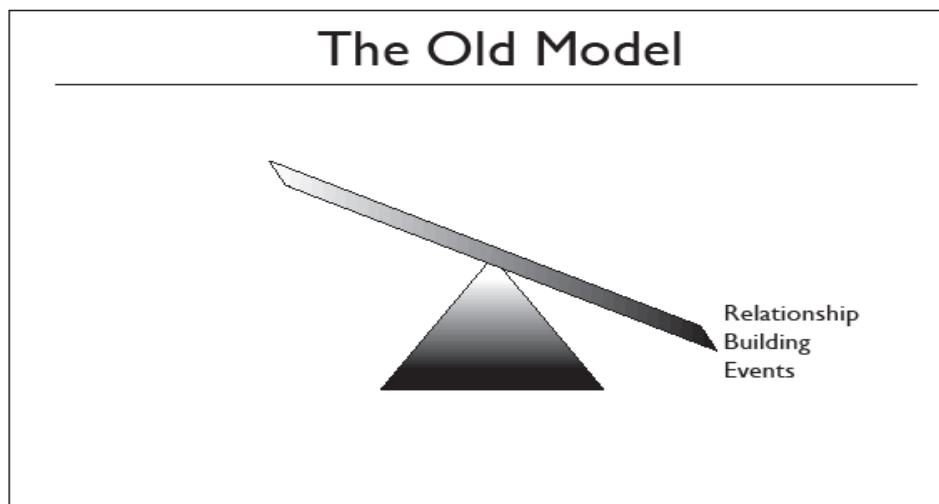
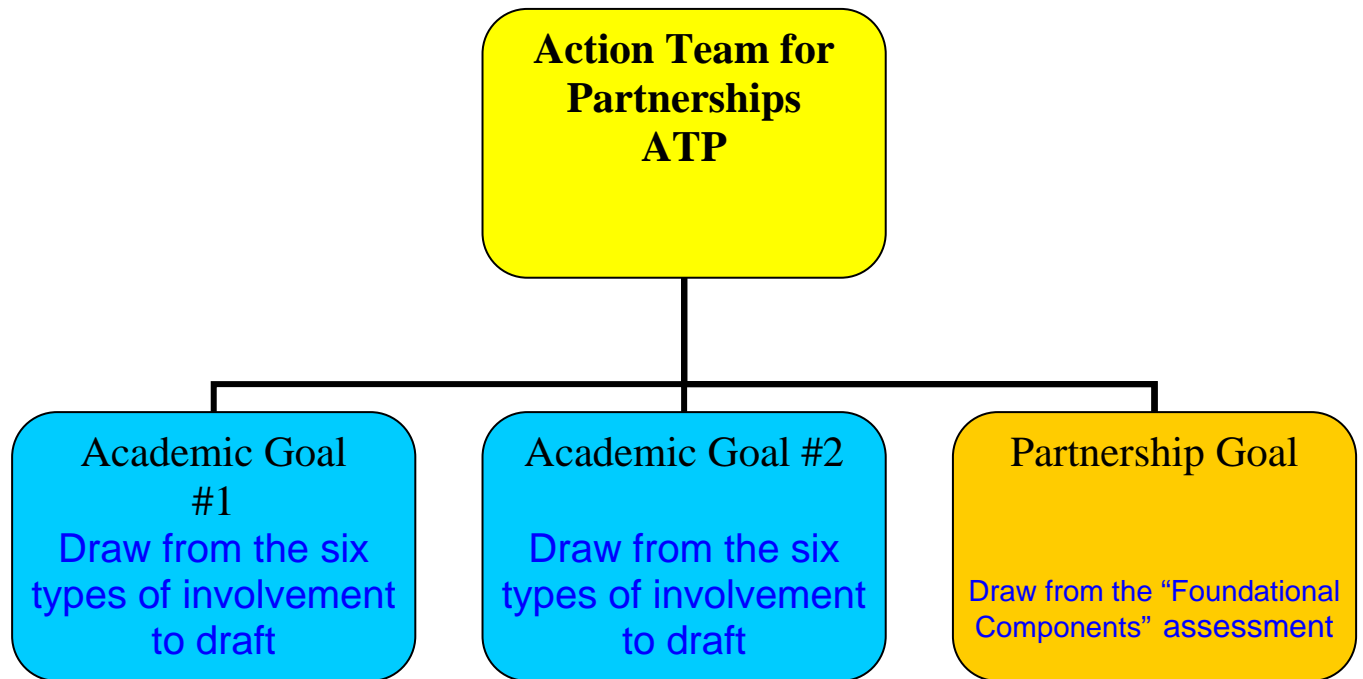
Putting it in Perspective

60% of families are interested in types 1, 2, 4 and 6, and that's a great thing! Of all the types, research shows that Type 2 and Type 4 are the most critical.

30% of families are able to physically volunteer. Think about it, in an average elementary school of say 500 students we are talking on average about 385 families (lets say for the sake of this example that not all of these families are comprised of two parents-- that would give us around **500** adults). Should a school be designed to utilize an additional 500 adults? It can be done, but remember that on-site volunteerism, though appreciated and helpful, is not the most important of all the types. The truth is that volunteerism is a *byproduct* of a healthy school. However, if you think having volunteers in the school is a key priority for your school, there are many models to organize volunteers, but it does require time and attention.

5-10% of families are interested in what we call governance (Type 5). Remember that in any group, only a few members of it are interested in participating in governance. For example, not every teacher is interested in being a union representative, and not every resident in Richmond wants or cares to be a city council person. When you look at your governance groups (SSC, SAC, GATE, ELAC etc) remember that only a few parents are interested in these conversations.





“The Foundational Components”



Component A: The Physical Environment

The physical appearance of the facility is an essential element in creating a welcoming atmosphere.

- ☐ There are clear directions from all entrances to the main door.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ The hours that the building and office are open are clearly noted on the front door.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Signs giving clear directions to the main office are posted near the front entrance and at other entrances.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ A welcome sign is displayed near the entrance in more than one language
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ There are friendly, clear instructions for all visitors to sign in at the office and obtain a building pass.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ A guest book is kept in the main office for guests to sign when they come into the school.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ When entering the school, visitors can pick up a badge that says “Parent” or “Volunteer”. Rather than visitor, indicating that the school considers them to be especially important.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ There is a school directory near the front entrance
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ A school map is displayed near the entrance that highlights frequently requested locations.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ There is a bulletin board on which parents can post and receive news and announcements. Other bulletin boards thank volunteers, the PTA, and community members for their contributions.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Pictures, photos, bulletin boards, showcases, and displays reflect the faces of the school’s children and their families, including cultural, racial, and linguistic diversity and a variety of family structures.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Bulletin Boards and displays throughout the building are student-oriented, colorful, and well-maintained.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ There is a place where visitors can comfortably sit to chat, read available resources, prepare materials for teachers, etc.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard

Component B: School-wide Practices and Policies



School-wide practices and policies can enhance or undermine a welcoming atmosphere.

- ☐ A “joining process” welcomes families to the school, offers tours, makes bilingual speakers available, and introduces them to the staff and other families.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ There is a comfortable family resource room stocked with books, games and education information that families can borrow and where parents can meet.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Do you provide information packets for new families?
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Do teachers call each student’s family early in the school year to report something positive?
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Does your school provide informal/social occasions when parents and staff can get to know each other during the school year?
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Families learn how the school system works and how to be an effective advocate for their child.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Teachers learn about effective approaches to working families of diverse cultural backgrounds.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ The school reaches out to identify and draw in local community resources that can assist staff and families.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Alternative communication methods are used with parents speaking limited English in order for them to understand the curriculum and participate in activities?
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Information about school and classroom policies, school rules, parent-teacher conferences, and bus and lunch schedules available to parents in their languages?
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Do you assist parents in choosing appropriate educational programs for their children?
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard

- ☐ What resources do you have available for parents to gain access to information about events and curricula?
 - ☐ Voice mailboxes
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
 - ☐ Homework hotline
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
 - ☐ Videos
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Articles in the school newsletter and on the Web site discuss what students are doing in class and include tips on helping at home.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ The school offers regular workshop and other informational sessions that help families understand how children learn and are being taught.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ The school's curriculum reflects cultures of families, and there are books and materials about families' cultures in classrooms and the library/media center.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Is special attention paid to pronouncing parents' names correctly?
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Do you have a resource file of bilingual speakers in the school who can be called upon to translate or become a "buddy family" if needed?
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Are parent leaders kept informed about important school matters and encouraged to form a parent network to pass the word?
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Does the community use the school for planned events?
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ You invite the community to participate in the school in specific ways.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard

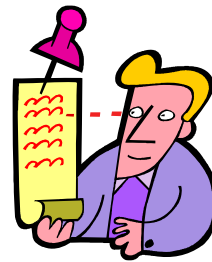
Component **C**: Welcoming School Staff



The attitudes of the staff members are an essential element in strengthening family and community partnerships.

- ☐ The office staff greets visitors *quickly* with a smile and in a friendly, courteous way. Staff, teachers, and students answer the telephone in a friendly, professional way.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Prompt attention is given to telephone calls and messages, inviting two-way communication.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ When a person with limited English proficiency calls, the staff member answering the phone is very patient and attempts to find someone who can speak his/her language or refers him/her to a phone number or person who can help.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ There is a suggestion box where parents and other visitors can contribute ideas.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Staff members passing in the hall acknowledge visitors with a smile, a nod or a hello.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily[] This will take time [] This will be hard

Component D: Written and other Media Materials



A more welcoming atmosphere is created when the printed materials sent home from the school are clear, understandable, and meaningful to parents and others reading them.

- ☐ All printed materials are clear and understandable to someone who is new to the school.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ The printed materials are free of educational jargon.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ A variety of school programs are highlighted, including special education, music programs, general education, English as a Second Language, etc.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ There is obvious collaboration with the school's PTA and other parent groups.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ There is obvious collaboration with the community.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Photographs and articles in the publications mirror the diversity of the student body.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Parent and community volunteers are recognized.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ New students and their families are officially welcomed.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Articles about staff members, volunteers, students, and their families appear in the publications.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ The school provides a comprehensive Parent Handbook to all families.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ A directory of resources and services available at the school are provided to families.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard

- ☐ Student work is highlighted in the publications.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Acronyms are explained (such as PTA means parent teacher association).
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ The school's educational and extra-curricular programs are explained.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ Translated publications are readily available and distributed to families who have been identified as needing them.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard
- ☐ The school continues to explore other communication media to reach families.
[] Already doing this [] Could do this easily [] This will take time [] This will be hard

Which of the statements that you have identified as “***Could do this easily***” are you most interested in implementing in 2008-2009?

The physical environment	
School Wide Practices and Policies	
Welcoming School Staff	
Written and other media materials	

My partnership goal in 2008-2009 will be:

Title I Parental Involvement Check List

Title I Schools Only			
	Things to remember	What will you do in 08-09	DATES
Policy	Must be updated annually		
Compact	Must be updated yearly		
Title I Parent Meeting Date	Must be conducted yearly		
Assist parents in understanding: - Academic content and achievement standards and assessments	Must be conducted yearly with an intent to reach all families		
Provide materials and training to help parents work with their children to improve achievement	Must be conducted yearly with an intent to reach all families		
Provide a description and explanation of the curriculum, the academic assessments used to measure student progress, and proficiently levels students are expected to reach.	Must be conducted yearly with an intent to reach all families		
Educate staff in the value of parent contributions and how to work with parents as equal partners (this is a shared responsibility with LEA and Schools).	Must be conducted yearly with an intent to reach all families		

School Goals and Results of Partnerships # 1

HOW MIGHT THE SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT HELP YOUR SCHOOL REACH ITS GOALS?

ONE ☆ MAJOR ☆ GOAL THAT OUR SCHOOL HAS SET IS:

MEASURABLE RESULTS: How will you know if your school reaches THIS goal? What measures (e.g., tests, surveys, portfolios, interviews, attendance lists) will your school use to evaluate and document progress?_____

PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES: Identify specific partnership activities that directly link to the goal. Some goals will be helped by practices from all six types of involvement; others may be helped by practices from just three or four types. Fill in family and community involvement activities only if they will help reach THIS goal.

Activities to help reach THIS goal

Type 1 -
Parenting_____

Type 2 –
Communicating_____

Type 3 –
Volunteering_____

Type 4 – **Learning at
Home**_____

Type 5 – **Decision
Making**_____

Type 6 – **Collaborating With the
Community**_____

School Goals and Results of Partnerships # 2

HOW MIGHT THE SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT HELP YOUR SCHOOL REACH ITS GOALS?

ONE ☆ MAJOR ☆ GOAL THAT OUR SCHOOL HAS SET IS:

MEASURABLE RESULTS: How will you know if your school reaches THIS goal? What measures (e.g., tests, surveys, portfolios, interviews, attendance lists) will your school use to evaluate and document progress?_____

PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES: Identify specific partnership activities that directly link to the goal. Some goals will be helped by practices from all six types of involvement; others may be helped by practices from just three or four types. Fill in family and community involvement activities only if they will help reach THIS goal.

Activities to help reach THIS goal

Type 1 -
Parenting_____

Type 2 –
Communicating_____

Type 3 –
Volunteering_____

Type 4 – **Learning at
Home**_____

Type 5 – **Decision
Making**_____

Type 6 – **Collaborating With the
Community**_____