



Supporting Parent, Family and Community Involvement in Your School

The family makes critical contributions to a child's achievement from early childhood through high school. Talking and playing with infants, reading bedtime stories with toddlers, playing math and reading games with elementary school students, helping middle school students with their homework, and establishing appropriate boundaries for teenagers are foundations for success in school. Many families, however, require assistance in providing these basics of a supportive home learning environment.

When parents, families, and members of the community are involved with schools, all children benefit. Adult participation sends the message that school is important and the work children do there is worthy of adult attention. Many people, however, do not feel welcome at school. They may want to volunteer, but don't know how to begin. They may believe that children and teachers do not want them there, or they may not know how to fit one more activity into an already tight schedule. These situations present perfect opportunities for schools to reach out and provide avenues for parents, family members and others to provide support.

Six Major Types of Partnerships

Between Schools, Families, and Communities

The Six Types of Partnerships Framework, developed by Joyce Epstein (1995) and her colleagues at Johns Hopkins University, is a useful model for analyzing and designing family-involvement programs. This framework describes the general categories of partnerships that exist between schools, families, and communities. They are:

- **Parenting:** Helping families establish home environments to support children as learners
- **Communications:** The use of effective forms for school-to-home & home-to-school communications
- **Volunteering:** The recruitment and organization of the school's volunteer program
- **Learning at Home:** Helping families assist their children with homework and recognizing other learning at home opportunities
- **Decision-making:** Including parents, students, and community members in the school decision making process
- **Collaborating with the Community:** The identification and integration of resources and services from the community

The Advantages of enhancing communication with families are:

- **A feeling of community:** Parents feel that they are part of the school community, as they are kept aware of school events and other important school information.
- **Clear information:** Parents learn about the school's curriculum, assessments, achievement levels and reporting methods.
- **Parents receive information about how to support their children:** Parents have the information they need to help their children thrive and achieve. When families are happy, children tend to do better in school.
- **Relationships are developed:** When schools and families share information and strategies, everyone feels connected to the school community.
- **Positive outcomes:** School staff realize the positive ways that parents contribute to student success.

Written by Deborah Davis, June 2000

Contributed by Redbricks Teachers' - Shuchita, Bhumi and Drashti

