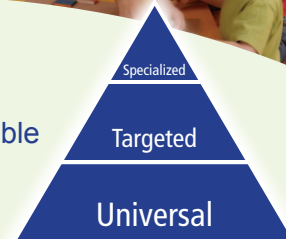


Positive Parental Partnerships



For all children, including children with disabilities, parents can be an invaluable resource to teachers, providing them with information about their child and what works best in terms of learning and positive behaviour support.



Parental involvement in their children's education is associated with better achievement, greater completion of activities assigned to be done at home, increased ability to self-regulate behaviour, and higher levels of social skills. Joyce Epstein of John Hopkins University has written about the importance of school-family-community partnerships, and provides these ideas for creating positive partnerships with parents.

Parenting

A school can support the parenting role by providing a place in the school where parents are welcome to sit down together, have a cup of tea or coffee, and meet with other parents. This is an excellent place to collect and display information about community resources and groups that may be of interest to parents.

Collaboration with the community

Schools can provide links for communities to help families. For example, school supplies donated by community members can be distributed through schools to students who need them.

Communication

Schools can communicate with groups of parents through websites, class emails, or using district software. Communication with individual parents is best face-to-face to ensure that nonverbal cues are attended to. We know that 80% of communication is nonverbal, and only 20% is based on the words that are spoken. Telephone conversations, daily communication books sent back and forth with the students, or individual emails are also useful tools.

Volunteering

Research shows that parent involvement has positive impact on student achievement. If both parents are working, their volunteer work may not be in school; volunteering includes helping children at home with their learning or homework.

Learning at home

Parents are the first teachers of their children, and this role continues after children begin formal instruction at school. Parents are actively teaching attitudes, beliefs, values and skills. They provide experiences that schools cannot. Parents often have developed extensive activities through which they support their child's development in the area of disability.

Decision making

All parents can be involved in School Councils, which offer advice and assistance in the areas of school policies and practices.



Epstein, Joyce L., et al. (2002). *School, Family and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.