



Handouts to Accompany
**The Power of Partnerships:
How To Create Meaningful Connections with Parents**

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Communication Practices to Encourage Partnerships with Families

- ***Ask open ended questions as a form of structuring “help.”***
 - Cannot be answered “yes” or “no” or with a one-word response. Usually elicits a more elaborate response. Examples are:
 - “What is it you want to see for your child?”
 - “What do you hope for your child?”
 - “How can we work together so that your child can accomplish this?”
- ***Actively listen to families’ needs, goals, desires and communicate that understanding.***
 - Repeat in your own words or those of the parent what the parent says as a way of letting them know you are listening to them and hearing them.
 - Responding as an attentive and interested partner to encourage ongoing dialogue. Some examples include:
 - “So you are saying that nighttime is particularly difficult for your family.”
 - “So you would like to see Jorge use words to name objects.”
 - Often nonverbal actions such as nodding and using good eye contact shows active listening.
- ***Remain focused and provide structure to the dialogue.***
 - Remain focused and help parent stay focused on the main needs or concerns.
 - Assure an understanding of what the parent tells you so that you have a shared conversation. Examples are:
 - “Are you saying you want him walking more or that you are concerned that when he is independently walking he may hurt himself?”
 - “Tell me what you mean by...”
- ***Affirm parents’ competence.***
 - Communicate belief and trust in parent’s abilities; show value for them as a partner and capable parent.
 - Comment on what the parents have done to support their child thus far.
 - Notice beautiful moments between the parents and child. Examples are:
 - “Look how nicely your child responded when you hugged her!”
 - “You can really read your child’s cues. He seemed pleased when you picked him up!”
 - “What a warm smile! He just cooed when he saw you smile.”
 - “I think your idea to try tooth-brushing during bath time is what made Jorge enjoy it so much.”

Solving Problems and Managing Conflict with Families

Problem Solving Strategies with Families

- Identify the desired outcome or goal
- Explore values and perspectives around the goal
- Discuss factors that enhance or impede goal attainment
- Explore alternatives or options for achieving goal
- Develop a plan
- Evaluate movement toward goal



Four Elements for Managing Conflict

1. Separate the person from the issue
 - ✓ *Competitive approach*: “me vs. you” – results in win/lose situation
 - ✓ *Cooperative approach*: “we vs. the problem” – promotes win/win result
2. Focus on mutual interests
 - ✓ Positive educational outcomes for students are at the center of the relationship, and should remain the focus of communications
3. Explore several options prior to making decisions
 - ✓ Ensures that a reasonable amount of information is brought to the table
4. Base decisions on objective information
 - ✓ Minimizes potential for emotionally laden decisions

**Program Self-Evaluation:
Approach, Attitudes, Atmosphere and Actions for Family-School Partnerships^{1,2}**

The program self-evaluation measure serves as a needs assessment to determine programs' thoughts and practices regarding family engagement. This tool is not evaluative; rather, its purpose is to facilitate self-reflection on current practices. For each item, please choose the number that best reflects how well you currently achieve the following partnership objectives and strategies. Use your ratings to begin a process to identify your program's strengths, areas for improvement, priorities, and specific plans to strengthen family-school partnerships. Consider using areas of strength (4's & 5's) to target areas in need of improvement (1's & 2's).

Communication <i>How well do staff members demonstrate the following:</i>	Very Poorly	Poorly	Okay	Pretty Well	Very Well
1. Make validating statements regarding parents' efforts and strengths (e.g., skills, knowledge, resources).	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provide parents with developmental and other information that helps them make decisions about their children.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Provide examples or demonstrations for parents.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Engage parents in frequent and open two-way information sharing.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Work with parents to set mutual goals for their child's development.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Ask parents about their efforts to meet child and family goals, including successes and difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Communicate with parents about the academic, behavior, and social performance of their child.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Give parents adequate information about curriculum; provide parents with daily information about what their children do in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Convey (in a sincere manner) admiration and/or recognition to the family regarding what they have accomplished to date.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Comment to the parents about the strengths, accomplishments, or positive aspects of the child.	1	2	3	4	5

11. Allow and encourage parents to ask questions about staff practices.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Encourage parents to tell them what the child is doing at home and what parents are working on with the child at home.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Help families feel they can make a positive difference in their children's lives.	1	2	3	4	5
Belief about family engagement <i>How well do staff members demonstrate the following:</i>	Very Poorly	Poorly	Okay	Pretty Well	Very Well
14. Acknowledge parent's role in helping their child learn; communicate to parents they are important in their child's education.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Incorporate family strengths and resources in the supports offered.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Consider the parents as co-teachers regarding their child's education.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Demonstrate attitudes that reflect the belief that all families have strengths that can be utilized to assist their child.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Work together with parents to generate options for intervention strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Convey the message that parents are experts concerning their own children.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Break barriers to participation by providing childcare, language translation, written information in home language, home visiting, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Family values and practices <i>How well do staff members demonstrate the following:</i>	Very Poorly	Poorly	Okay	Pretty Well	Very Well
21. Communicate with families in their preferred format.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Provide materials that incorporate family interests.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Provide reading materials at the parent's reading level.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Offer parents' opportunities to problem-solve and make joint decisions both staff and parents are comfortable with.	1	2	3	4	5

25. Ask the family about their observations, opinions, or beliefs regarding their child's developmental status or potential before offering their own.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Convey a sense of respect and acceptance of parents' opinions, feelings, priorities, lifestyle, etc., even when they are in conflict with their own.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Listen to parents and provide the minimum amount of structure (e.g., questions) necessary for the parents to provide information.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Offer opinions and recommendations regarding the child's needs and interventions in a way that allows parents to disagree without feeling guilty or in conflict.	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural awareness and sensitivity <i>How well do staff members demonstrate the following:</i>	Very Poorly	Poorly	Okay	Pretty Well	Very Well
29. Communicate and provide materials in the families' native language.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Use activities that incorporate different types of families (single-parent, grandparent guardians) reflective of those in classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Have an understanding of, are open to, and respect the culture and value system of families they serve.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Make special efforts to reach families from all racial, cultural, and language groups.	1	2	3	4	5
Invitations to parents <i>How well do staff members demonstrate the following:</i>	Very Poorly	Poorly	Okay	Pretty Well	Very Well
33. Frequently invite parents to participate in their child's learning at home and at school.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Provide opportunities for parents to actively participate in classroom activities.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Make parents feel comfortable being in the classroom (e.g. wanted, useful, belong there).	1	2	3	4	5

36. Provide materials that are family friendly and include information and instructions that help families expand on the school curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Provide parents with avenues to explore learning with their children in the school environment.	1	2	3	4	5

Notes:

¹ Certain items adapted from measures previously developed and available from the following sources:

Berla, N., Garlington, J., & Henderson, A. *Taking stock: The inventory for family, community, and school support for student achievement.* Washington, D.C. : National Committee for Citizens in Education.

McWilliam, P. J., & Winton, P. (1991). *Brass tacks: A self-rating of family-centered practices.* Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Murphy, D. L., Lee, M. I., Turbiville, V., Turnbull, A.P., & Summers, J. A. (1991). *Family-centered program rating scale.* Lawrence, KS: Beach Center on Families and Disability, University of Kansas.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Child, Family, and Community Program. *Guidelines for family-friendly schools self-assessment.*

² The development of this self-evaluation form was supported by a grant awarded to Susan Sheridan, Lisa Knoche and Judy Carta (Grant #R324A090075) by the Institute of Education Sciences. Permission is granted for its use in program development and planning purposes; please do not duplicate in a public forum without permission from Susan Sheridan at ssheridan2@unl.edu.



COLLABORATIVE HOME VISIT GUIDE

Child's Name:

Child Age:

Parent's Name:

Date of Contact:

Teacher's Name:

I. Opening: Establishing the Partnership

- Engage in mutual social talk with parent/family.*

Discuss Child's Strengths/Concerns

- Share what has gone well, the child's strengths, what he/she enjoys.*
- Focus discussion on child's on-going learning.*
- Ask about any concerns and what has been tried.*
- Actively listen for possible priorities for the visit.*

Discuss Observations since Last Visit

- Discuss family observations of learning opportunities and child development since the last visit. Ask open ended questions.*
- Reflect on the past plan: What did we do? How did it go?*
- Jointly decide whether to continue with the same goals and/or strategies, or select new ones for this visit.*

Establish Purpose/Design for Visit

- ↑ *Explain your ideas for the home visit and why.*
- ↑ *Ask parents if they have other ideas.*
- ↑ *Seek agreement and explain parent –child-teacher roles.*

Notes :

Pre-plan:

Home visit:

(over)

II. Main Agenda

Engage Parent and Child in Interactive Activity

Observe the Parent-Child Dyad/Interaction –

Watch for and comment on parent skills:

- Set the stage for a dyadic interaction.*
- Establish self as an interested partner with child.*
- Take interactive turns with child.*
- Follow and match child's interests and actions.*
- Challenge and support child's actions and attempts.*

Support the Dyad through Triadic Strategies

- Assure that a dyadic context is set up.*
- Affirm the parent's competence during interactions.*
- Focus the parent's attention on what the child does.*
- Provide developmental information.*
- Brainstorm with parents additional ideas*
- Model/demonstrate a strategy or interaction if necessary.*
- Provide parent with suggestions if necessary.*

III. Closing: Action Planning

Reflect on Visit

- Discuss what went well. Are there any questions?*
- Encourage the parent to problem-solve/brainstorm new possibilities for child.*

Develop Home-School Plan

Develop or review last plan – continue or start new plan?

- Jointly select strategies that are effective at helping the child meet goal.*
- Identify possible learning opportunities for child during daily routines, give parents ideas.*
- Develop a coordinated plan across home and school.*
- Discuss when, where, and who will be responsible for plan.*
- Complete home-school plan and leave a copy for the parent.*

Discuss Possible Ideas for Next Visit

(Please attach form to Home Visit Report)

Notes :

HOME- SCHOOL PLAN

Child Name: _____

Date: _____

GOAL:

At home we will...

*As partners
at home and school we will...*

At school we will...

Notes and Observations:

Additional Resources for:

The Power of Partnerships: How to Create Meaningful Connections with Parents

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