

STRATEGY 1

School-Community Collaboration

WHAT IS SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION?

School-community collaboration can be defined as partnerships between schools and community individuals, businesses, and organizations that are leveraged to promote students' emotional, social and intellectual development (Sanders, 2001). These partnerships can differ in content and scope and can provide an array of resources and support for youth, such as after-school activities (e.g., tutoring, job shadowing, academic enrichment) and collaboration with specialized service agencies (e.g., health clinics and child-welfare agencies). Partnerships can be student centered, school centered, family centered, or community centered or can be a combination of multiple partnerships (Sanders, 2006). There is no "one size fits all" formula for effective school-community collaboration, though research suggests that a willingness among partners to work together and share responsibility to meet the needs of the students can lead to a successful and effective partnership (Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2004).

WHY IS SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IMPORTANT?

Emerging research suggests a positive correlation between school-community collaboration and student learning. Researchers maintain that community involvement is important because schools alone cannot ameliorate educational outcomes for students (Sanders, 2001). Because schools cannot provide youth with

all the necessary resources that they need in the 21st century, a school-community partnership can help leverage community resources to strengthen the social capital available to children (Sanders, 2006). A study by Epstein (1995) also suggests that the development of these alliances can benefit both the school and the community. Other benefits include building and maintaining healthy communities and providing youth with a richer and more authentic learning experience by augmenting connections to schools. Strengthening the connection between school and community and helping engage students in learning can help decrease dropout rates and increase attendance rates among youth (Mastro & Jalloh, 2005).

WHAT ARE BEST PRACTICES IN SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION?

- Create schools that are well organized and goal oriented in order to increase the chances of attracting potential community partners.
- Ensure that community partners are part of a school's overall strategy to support a student-centered learning environment that highly values student success and achievement.
- Develop effective community partnership teams to achieve schoolwide goals.
- Include parents, teachers, administrators, and community representatives on school-community partnership teams to come together as a group to plan and implement partnership activities.

- Ensure the presence of strong principal leadership, a critical component of successful school-community collaborations, by having principals model an openness to parent and community involvement, establish dialogue among school personnel and the community, and support others in the collaboration efforts.
- Obtain external support from state and district offices that encourage school-community collaboration to promote schools' efforts for maintaining and increasing community involvement.

REFERENCES

- Anderson-Butcher, D., & Ashton, D. (2004). Innovative models of collaboration to serve children, youth, families, and communities. *Children & Schools, 1*(26), 39–53.
- Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(9), 701–712.
- Mastro, E., & Jalloh, M. G. (2005). *Enhancing service through effective school/community collaboration* (Practice Matters). Ithaca, NY: ACT for Youth.
- Sanders, M. G. (2001). The role of "community" in comprehensive school, family, and community partnership programs. *Elementary School Journal, 102*(1), 19–34.
- Sanders, M. G. (2006). *Building school-community partnerships: Collaboration for student success*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.