

FY16 Best Practice Summary Partnerships

Parent Mentors are successful in working with all stakeholders and families in building partnerships which lead to positive outcomes for students. Parent Mentors encourage families to have an active role in pursuing partnerships with their child's teachers, their child's IEP teams, post-secondary agencies, business owners, mentors, and others who will impact their child's path to graduation and beyond.

Evidence Statements: *When teachers reach out to parents, students make more progress in both reading and math, researchers studying schools in low-income neighborhoods found student performance improved 40 to 50 percent faster if teachers did these three things: 1. Met face-to-face with each family at the beginning of the year to build relationships 2. Sent families materials each week on ways to help their children at home 3. Telephoned parents routinely with news about how their children were doing, not just if there were problems. Source: PTA Standards Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation. Source: PTA Standards When parents understand the vital role that accommodations play in the success of their child's classroom education, then they can partner with the IEP team to discuss if the implementations are working successfully. Source: Epstein When parents have access to information and understand what their child is learning, then they are prepared to encourage their child to invest in a regular education diploma. Source: Epstein*

Objective: Improve school/family/community partnerships to impact student success

Vital Behaviors:

1. Teacher and family will discuss child's progress report regularly
2. Family and student will use provided exercises to practice at home regularly, reporting efforts using preferred communication method
3. Family will plan and utilize a regular positive communication plan with their child's teachers
4. Family will participate as a team member of a school-family-community team and partner to discuss and plan actions to improve student outcomes
5. Family will utilize conversation starters or communication guide to have ongoing conversations with student or other partners
6. Family and student will utilize resources and supports in order to make connections to improve academic or post-secondary outcomes

28 Parent Mentors in FY16 engaged families in order to improve school/family/community partnerships and reported their efforts in their accountability reporting.

253 Families and their partners were targeted in initiatives related to building partnerships in FY16.

79% of Parent Mentors met their end of the year goal related to building partnerships in FY16.

Parent Mentors encourage partnerships by supporting families:

- Increase two-way communication with teachers and IEP team members
- Become meaningful members of decision making teams
- Plan events which build capacity in their school or system
- Learn the IEP process and content in order to improve goal achievement
- Providing coaching and tools to support family engagement in variety of settings
- Explore transition and employment options
- Gain access to resources and supports
- Stay informed about programs that give their student experience and opportunities

Parent Mentors encourage partnerships by supporting teachers and school staff:

- Train and support families

- Gain materials and tools to share with families and students
- Begin and maintain two-way communication plans with families

Parent Mentors promoting partnerships reported these challenges and solutions:

- Families not attending meetings or trainings were offered options for receiving material and supports
- While seeking buy-in of partners it was important to provide feedback often to keep everyone informed
- Low expectations were replaced with empowerment as students gained new skills
- Overcoming barriers of previous negative communication between school and home occurred when an effective communication plan was used by teacher and parent in partnership

Partnerships that showed success while promoting participation during IEP meetings and in meeting IEP or transition goals as part of the IEP process had the following outcomes:

- Improved academic, behavior, and attendance
- Improved communication between teachers and families
- Increased student confidence and empowerment
- Family prepared to participate meaningfully in IEP meetings
- Students' self-advocacy and self-determination skills improved
- Students meeting and reporting achievement of goals

Partnerships that showed success while promoting increased knowledge, skills, and abilities had the following outcomes:

- Patterns established to practice skills to improve abilities and meet goals
- Data used and understood by families and other stakeholders
- Completed paperwork for entrance and exploration of career and college opportunities
- Connections utilized for interning and volunteering opportunities
- College entrance test passed and applications completed prior to enrollment
- Improved business and agency connections among all partners
- Seeking of higher education even from parents who lacked a high school diploma

It is the recommendation of Parent Mentors who have focused on improving partnerships among stakeholders that you:

- Start early in the year building relationships with families, school personnel, and community members
- Seek buy-in of essential partners to work with you and the families that need support
- Plan face-to-face or one-on-one meetings to identify needs and discuss solutions with hard to engage families
- Offer online training opportunities as an option for families unable to attend trainings
- Work with businesses or agencies to bring testing or meeting opportunities to familiar settings
- Listen to feedback and follow-up often
- Set clear expectation so that families you are working with understand the commitment involved in learning a new skill and accomplishing goals that you will support them in accomplishing
- When seeking families for teams consider those with similar interests but having different abilities