

Policy Guidance for Position Statement on School-Family-Community Partnerships for Student Success

November 2009

The Connecticut State Board of Education in its 2009 *Position Statement on School-Family-Community Partnerships for Student Success* calls for a shared responsibility among three equal partners to support students' success in school and through life. This document is intended to offer additional guidance to the Position Statement.

To develop effective school-family-community partnership programs, state, district and school leaders, along with parents, community leaders and students, must identify goals for their collaboration. Each member of the team has an important role to play and unique contributions to make to the partnership.

State Department of Education Responsibilities

Develop and promote school-family-community partnership programs that contribute to success for all students.

- Provide resources and technical assistance to school districts to help them implement programs of partnership, in accordance with this policy statement. This leadership includes promoting the six standards of family engagement and the full involvement of all major partners.
- Expand the message from a focus on parenting to emphasize the shared responsibility of families, schools and communities to create pathways for family engagement to support student achievement.
- Hold public forums, summits and other meetings to solicit ideas from parents, educators and others about how families, schools and communities can work together to support student learning.

Coordinate and strengthen the family and community engagement components of all major state and federal programs.

- Identify all state and federal programs that have family and community engagement requirements and assess their implementation and effectiveness.
- Collect and disseminate information about current research, best practice and model policies and programs.

School Districts' Responsibilities

Create a culture of partnership.

- The district must make family engagement a priority, set clear goals for school-family-community partnerships that all schools are expected to meet and monitor progress on those goals.
- The school board should establish policies that support partnerships, such as making school facilities available to the community and families and creating roles for businesses and community organizations.

Connect school-family-community partnerships directly to the district's improvement initiative.

- The district should designate a senior level administrator responsible for school-family-community partnerships to provide leadership for program implementation, coordination and accountability.
- The district should guide all schools to develop and implement a systematic and effective plan for engaging families in improving student achievement that aligns with school and district improvement plans.

Organize district resources to create a structure of support so that all schools can and will establish and sustain strong partnerships.

- The district should develop structures to implement fully the six standards of family engagement and monitor progress to determine which practices produce the best results.
- The district should provide training and support for teachers, administrators, other staff members and families in developing partnership skills, especially understanding and appreciating diversity, developing skills to work with people from different backgrounds and linking programs and activities to student learning.
- The district should provide learning and development opportunities for families such as parent leadership and advocacy training, adult education, literacy and English language instruction so that parents may be full partners in their children's education.
- The district should prioritize engagement of parents of school age children who may need English as a Second Language program and high school completion programs such as GED test preparation.

Schools' Responsibilities

Welcome all family and community members to the school.

- The principal should consistently demonstrate commitment to families and expect and support all staff to create a respectful, inclusive and family-friendly environment.
- School staff should make every effort to build trusting, relevant relationships among families, staff and community members.

Engage families and community members in a systematic way to help the school meet its student achievement goals.

- All family engagement programs and activities should be linked to student learning so that families can understand what their children are learning in class and gain skills to help them at home.
- Teachers should learn and practice effective, research-based strategies linking family engagement to student success.

Communicate regularly with families about student learning.

- The school should use many two-way pathways for communication, in everyday language that is translated into families' home languages.
- Schools should make it easy for any family to communicate with teachers, the principal and other administrators.

Encourage families to be advocates for their own and others' children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to meaningful learning opportunities.

- Give families information about how the school system works and how to raise questions or concerns.
- Give families information and support to monitor their children's progress and guide them toward their goals, including college.
- Promote opportunities for families to take part in learning and development programs related to leadership, advocacy and adult education including literacy and English language instruction.

Make families and school staff equal partners in decisions that affect children and families.

- A school council or other decision-making group should include families and give them a voice in major decisions, including principal selection.
- Every school should have a strong, broad-based parent organization that can advocate on behalf of families and children.

Collaborate with community organizations to connect students, families and staff to expand learning opportunities, community services and civic participation.

- School staff should work closely with community organizations, businesses and institutes of higher education to make resources available and turn the school into a hub of community life.

Families' Responsibilities

Create a home environment that promotes learning and holds children to high expectations.

- Engage in family reading activities and support homework. Emphasize the value of education and hard work. Talk to children about school and help them think about and plan for their future.

Build a relationship with children's teachers.

- Let teachers know families want to work with them as a partner to ensure children's success. Ask teachers to keep families informed about children's progress.

Take advantage of the opportunities the school and district provide.

- Join the parent organization and seek out ways to contribute at home or at school. Attend meetings and get to know school staff.
- Engage in parent leadership and family literacy programs that build parents' own skills and knowledge.

Make sure children go to school every day and closely monitor how they are doing in school.

- If a child is struggling or falling behind, contact the teacher or a counselor and insist on getting help.
- Make sure children are taking challenging classes or programs. Ask teachers or counselors for help if children need it to succeed. Learn about what students must do to graduate on time and be ready for college.

Community Leaders' Responsibilities

Work with the district to create community schools that provide integrated family support services.

- Survey families and staff at each school to find out their interests and needs. Respond by mapping the assets in the community, building upon existing resources and co-locating social and health services in schools.

Form a network of organizations that can partner with schools to strengthen families and support student success.

- Community members and employees can: serve as volunteers, role models and mentors; give students individual attention; and demonstrate the value the community places on education. Businesses can sponsor partnership activities and encourage employees to play an active role. Libraries, museums, colleges and cultural agencies can reduce fees and make special programs available for families.

Students' Responsibilities (as developmentally appropriate)

Take responsibility for learning.

- Students are entitled to a free public education and should take full advantage, asking for help when needed.
- Take initiative to find and explore new areas of learning that are of personal interest.

Form a student organization at school.

- Let the teachers and principal know what is working well in the school and how it could be better.

Join the school improvement team.

- Ask the principal and teachers for student-led conferences where students can display work, explain what has been learned and discuss what students want and will need to learn.

Plan for your future and think carefully about goals in life.

- Discuss ideas with family, teachers, counselors and other adults. Find out how to reach those goals.