



Minnesota Association of Administrators  
of State & Federal Education Programs  
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## Objectives

- Provide an overview of the Partnering for School Success project
- Review cultural recommendations based on focus group results
- Offer practical ideas for parents based on six factors which help children learn
- Discuss Parent-School Partnerships

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## What do you think parent involvement means?

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## Partnering for School Success – Parent Involvement Project

- University of MN Extension
- University's Children, Youth and Family Consortium
- Funding through McKnight Foundation and Extension

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## Partnering for School Success – Parent Involvement Project

- Research & literature review
- Focus groups to provide input for cultural differences
- Education & Awareness
- Parent-School Partnerships
  - 5 pilots throughout Minnesota
  - regional trainings

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## Research on parent involvement

- Identified environmental influences associated with more successful school learning K-12.
- Identified indicators of better school adjustment: improved attendance, fewer suspensions, increased classroom participation, better social skills, fewer behavioral referrals, improved self-esteem.
- Secondary level indicators included: enrollment in more challenging academic programs, more classes passed & credits earned, higher graduation rates, post secondary education, & avoiding high-risk behaviors.



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## School practices for reaching uninvolved families include:

- Identify families excluded from current family outreach activities.
- Keep interaction focused on genuine interest in improving child's school success and experience.
- Link parents' efforts to their goals for children's education.
- Make regular, ongoing contact and invitations for partnering



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## Six Factors

Expectations	Support
Structure	Relationships
Learning	Modeling



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## First - Initial Focus Groups

### Next - Cultural Guide Process

- Worked with cultural guides who led process for focus groups with cultural groups: two with parents and one with service providers working in the respective communities.
- Questions:
  - cultural values and expectations around school success,
  - what parents do to promote school success,
  - relationships and communications with schools/teachers,
  - what is needed to better support their children's school success,
  - value of 6 factors, missing factors.



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EDUCACIÓN,  
NUESTRA MEJOR  
HERENCIA



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## Latino: themes

- Language & communication
- Parenting self efficacy
- Social class
- Success
- Expectations, hopes and dreams
- Navigating the system
- Gender roles
- Immigration
- Equality / discrimination



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## Language & Communication

- Language part of cultural identity
  - Parents want children to learn Spanish
  - Parents look for support in community; learn English (Mps 9, 17-24)
  - Variations of Spanish speaking cultures/ language (Mps 8, 14-17)
- Communication
  - Need interpreters, bilingual materials/homework (Mps. 2/27-30)
  - Use of interpreters and mediators (for children with disabilities) helps (Mps 10, 14-18; 11, 13-19; Providers)
  - Students interpret, don't always tell truth to parents about what happens at school (Dodge 31, 10-21)

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## Self-efficacy & Self-esteem

- Parenting bicultural children
  - Using practices from home country; role of school and educators.
  - Parents interested in parenting classes.
  - Want to be involved in children's success, but don't know how.
- Parent's self-esteem
  - Negative tone about capabilities.
  - Children ashamed because they are Latinos; parent does not speak English.

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## Latino suggestions:

- List of community resources, opportunities; scholarships for higher education
- Bilingual Liaison or Advocate - speaks English and knows diversity of Latino cultures.
- Materials culturally appropriate, motivates people; include audio and visual components.
- Workshops on leadership; how to increase trust and self esteem.
- Encourage children to have physical activity.
- Next steps: develop series of 8 lessons on the 6 factors, navigating the system, self efficacy.
- Bookmark and workbook in Spanish.

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## AFRICAN AMERICAN

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## Themes from African American focus groups

- Future - finish high school, higher education
- What parents and educational system could do differently
- Expectations from educational system
- Challenges for parents to support kids; barriers
- Parent/educator relationship
- More diverse staff and curriculum; culturally sensitive educators
- Respect
- More access to learn other languages

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## African American challenges & barriers

- Socio economic status – affordable after school programs
- Condensing communication/language 'over the head'
- No respect
- Educators not trained to deal with kids with different needs or different cultures
- Parents' bad experiences with educational system
- Lack of culturally inclusive curricula
- Parents' lack of time
- Lack of communication between parents/ educators

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### What could be done differently:

- Improve value of cultural differences
- Better diagnosis/treatment of ADHD
- Push and motivate children more
- More parent participation
- More African American educators
- Curriculums more inclusive, creative, culturally sensitive
- Cultural sensitivity training for educators
- African American children not perceived as "problems"



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### Current Work with Cultural Guides

- Similar process
- Among parents and service providers
- Somali parents and service providers
- Some similar themes emerging



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PARENTING FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

### Six factors:

- Expectations
- Structure
- Learning
- Support
- Relationships
- Modeling



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### Expectations

Children learn better when parents and other adults have clear and reasonable expectations

- High
- Clear
- Realistic
- Challenging



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### Structure

Children learn better when parents provide a regular routine and monitor their children's activities.

- Routine
- Monitoring
- Expectation
- Balance



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### Learning

Students learn better when they have opportunities to learn outside of school.

- Positive learning experiences
- Everyday tasks
- Family experiences



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## Support

Children learn better when adults regularly give them verbal support and praise.

- Talk about school
- Keep in touch with teachers
- Praise



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## Relationships

Children learn better when they feel safe and accepted at home and at school.

- Warmth
- Respect
- Safe from emotional and physical violence



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## Modeling

Children learn better when adults in their lives read, study, ask questions, talk about education, set long term goals and get involved in their school.

- Value learning
- Talk about further education
- Practice positive parenting



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## Ways to model learning:

- Experience other cultures
- Stay connected to other parents and community
- Share and explain
- Model community involvement
- Handle difficult situations in constructive ways
- Admit when you are wrong



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## Parent-School Partnerships

Currently five parent-school pilots

- ✓ Administratively supported
- ✓ Similar numbers of parents and school staff
- ✓ Partnership approach with action plan

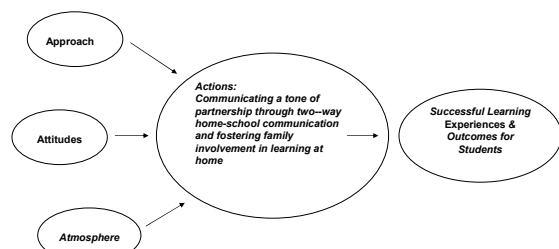
Regional trainings offered fall 2009



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## Pathway to Parent-School Partnerships



## Creating parent-school connections: Examples from **Four A's** Inventory

To what extent are these conditions present in our school community?

- **Approach** – Belief that parental involvement in school is very important.
- **Attitude** – Non-blaming, no-fault problem solving position in interactions with families.
- **Atmosphere** – Meaningful and flexible options for parents to be involved.
- **Actions** – Policies and practices support a shared responsibility for home and school.

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## Three practices for effective partnerships:

- Building trusting, collaborative relationships between school staff, parents, and community professionals;
- Being responsive to families' needs, class, cultural differences;
- Philosophy of partnership; power and responsibility shared.

Henderson and Mapp (2002)

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## All parents can connect with schools:

- Introduce yourself
- Attend events
- Show interest to the teacher
- Talk to child about schoolwork
- Talk to child about specific behaviors
- Maintain a problem solving attitude

Children do best when parents are connected to school in meaningful ways and when children know parents and teachers have regular contact with each other.

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ZITS JERRY SCOTT AND JIM BORGMAN



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## New Beliefs about Families

- All families have strengths.
- Parents can learn ways to help children if provided with opportunity and support.
- Parents have important information and perspectives about children needed by teachers.
- Schools and families influence each other.
- A no-fault orientation is necessary.

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## Barriers for Schools

### Structural Barriers

- Lack of funding for family outreach programs.
- Lack of training for educators on partnerships with families.
- Limited knowledge of data-based approaches.
- Time constraints.

### Psychological Barriers

- Ambiguous commitment to working with parents as partners.
- Use of negative communication about students' school performance & productivity.
- Stereotypic views about families.
- Doubts about abilities of families.
- Wary of interacting with families &/or fear of conflict.
- Narrow idea of roles families can play.

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## Barriers for Families

### Structural Barriers

- Lack of role models, information, knowledge, resources.
- Lack of supportive environment, resources.
- Economic, emotional, and time constraints.
- Child care, transportation.

### Psychological Barriers

- Feelings of inadequacy; low sense of self-efficacy.
- Adopting passive role by leaving education to schools.
- Language and cultural differences.
- Suspicion about treatment from educators.

Perceived lack of responsiveness to parental needs/desires.

Christenson & Sheridan (2001), Lontos (1992), Moles (1993), and Weiss & Edwards (1992)

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## Barriers for parent-school relationship

### Psychological Barriers

- Lack of belief in a partnership & its importance
- Blaming & labeling attitude the home-school atmosphere
- Misunderstanding differences in parent-educator perspectives
- Psychological/cultural differences lead to building walls
- Limiting observations of children to only one environment
- Assumption that parents & teachers must hold identical values/expectations.

### Structural Barriers

- Limited time for communication and meaningful dialogue
- Communication primarily during crisis
- Limited contact for building trust.
- Limited skills and knowledge about collaborating
- Lack of routine communication system
- Limited understanding of barriers faced by other partner

(Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997; Lareau)

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## Three kinds of parents

- Need only a suggestion or information
- Need information plus attention to a specific family concern
- Need information and ongoing support to make education a priority

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## Schools can provide information that:

- Helps parents navigate the school system (e.g., understand policies and practices).
- Describes resources for parental questions/needs/desires.
- Encourages parents to ask specific questions about their child's learning.
- Fosters positive learning environment at home.

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## Reaching disengaged families

*"The difference between parents who participate and those who do not is that those who do have recognized that they are a critical part in their children's education."*

(Delgado-Gaitan, 1991)

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## Parent-School Connections



*When parents, teachers, and students communicate, meet, and plan together, fewer behavioral problems and improved school experiences result.*

(Webster-Stratton, 1993)

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## Parent-School Connections

*Students are more likely to avoid high-risk behavior (e.g., substance abuse, violence) when they feel connected to their families and schools.*

(Resnick et al., 1997)



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## Resources:

- Parenting for School Success booklet
- [www.parenting.umn.edu](http://www.parenting.umn.edu) – research background and more
- Resource List



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## Resources:

### **MN School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (SW-PBIS)**

- MN Dept. of Ed.  
Char Ryan, 651-582-8645
- PACER – Renelle Nelson, 952-838-9000
- [www.pacer.org/pbis/index/asp](http://www.pacer.org/pbis/index/asp)



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