

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN
DEVELOPED FOR THE DEARBORN MIDDLE SCHOOL'S
FAMILY COORDINATOR AND DEARBORN PARTNER ADVISORY COUNCIL
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Strengths

The Dearborn is a well-resourced school in Roxbury that has many different activities and opportunities for student, family, and community engagement. The Dearborn's Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) is a leadership team that is made up of staff, school partners, and families. DPAC is responsible for planning events and activities to help accomplish the school's goals. People in DPAC lead Action Teams that work on specific activities and events.

Problems

Lack of communication between the school and community partners

This leads to an overlap of services, children being underserved, activities being canceled or changed, and community partners being unaware of events and activities.

Lack of community partner engagement in school activities and events

Community partners do not participate in school activities and events. DPAC and Action Team roles are not equally delegated among community partners, so only a few community partners are responsible for activities and events that benefit all community partners.

Literature

Strategies to Improve School and Community Partners' Relationships:

1. Create *united goals* and action steps
2. Share leadership and broaden capacity
- 3 Create opportunities to *communicate* about strengths and struggles
4. Collaborate to fix any problems
5. Use success stories to engage partners.
6. Use data driven *accountability* measures

(Berg, Melaville, Blank, 2006; Jehl, 2001; NNPS, 2010; Taylor & Adelman, 2006)

United Goals

Partners are more likely to meet the school's expectations and align with the shared goals when relationships between school and community partners are successful (Berg, Melaville, & Blank, 2006).

Communication

Effective communication can lead to facilitating relationships, improving school-community partnership support, and increasing the number of partners a school can reach. It is one of the most important, yet most overlooked areas in schools (Soule, 2008). Continuous and frequent communication and the communication about other partner's roles play a large role in the successful of school-community collaboration (Williams, 2008).

Accountability

Sharing goals between the school and community partners leads to sharing accountability. The more accountable partners are for achieving goals, the less likely services are to be duplicated (Berg, Melaville, & Blank, 2006).

When relationships between school and community partners are successful:

Students are more successful (Williams, 2008); partners stay invested in school activities and motivate one another to achieve their goals (Berg, Melaville, & Blank, 2006); quality of the school improves (Williams, 2008); and communities are stronger and have more available resources (Williams, 2008).

Communication and Engagement Improvement Plan for the Dearborn

See Resource Binder for More Strategies and Activities

1. Establish United Goals and Action Steps

Goals will be simple, sustainable, transparent, measurable, range from specific to broad, and communicated to the school community often.

Activities and Resources:

Create a Memorandum of Understanding (Berg, Melaville, & Blank, 2006)
One-year Action Plan for Partnerships (Ellis & Hughes, 2002, pp. 26-31; NNPS, 2010)
Draw and Share Vision of Goals (Ellis & Hughes, 2002, p.25)

2. Set Up Bidirectional Communication Systems

Communications will send a clear message, occur through different vehicles, create opportunities to educate, and allow for interaction. The vehicles of communication will match audience's culture and language.

Activities and Resources:

School website, parent portal on website, Facebook page, newsletters (paper and electronic forms), interactive calendar, blog, and webinars (Soule, 2008; Orange County School District, 2007, p. 90)

3. Hold Community Partners Accountable

Individuals and community partners will be held accountable through data collection (e.g. surveys, focus groups, academic information, etc.). Accountability measures will be used to inform the implementation of activities, bidirectional communication efforts, and the community's short and long-term goals.

Activities and Resources:

Communication Matrix (OCSD, 2007)
Benchmark Checklist (Taylor & Adelman, 2006, pp. 963-967)
School & Community Partnership Survey (William, 2008, pp. 143-146; Ellis & Hughes, 2002, p.32)

Resources

- Berg, A., Melaville, A., & Blank, M. (2006). Community and family engagement: principals share what works. *Coalition for community schools at the institute for educational leadership*. Retrieved from <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CommunityAndFamilyEngagement.pdf>
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