

Quality Educational Programs, Inc.

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Gaining Parental Support: Building Home-School Partnerships

A Distance Learning Graduate Course

Course Syllabus

"Home-school partnership is no longer a luxury. There is an urgent need for schools to find ways to support the success of all children. One element we know contributes to more successful children and more successful schools across all populations is parent involvement in children's education. When our focus is on improving the achievement of children at academic risk, partnership with families is not just useful – it is crucial."

Susan McAllister Swap
Developing Home-School Partnerships

Rationale

There are many advantages when parents partner with teachers and become active participants in the education of their children. Children spend much more time at home than at school. Their parents know them intimately, interact with them one-to-one, and are eager to help their children succeed. The home environment, more familiar and less structured than the classroom, offer what Dorothy Rich (1985) calls "'teachable moments' that teachers can only dream about."

Children whose parents are involved in their formal education have many advantages. They have better grades, test scores, long-term academic achievement, attitudes, and behavior than those with disinterested mothers and fathers (Henderson, 1988).

Many studies underscore the point: parent participation in education is closely related to student achievement. A Stanford University study found that using parents as tutors brought significant and immediate changes in children's I.Q. scores. (Peterson, 1989). Other research projects found that community involvement correlated strongly with schoolwide achievement and that all forms of parent involvement helped student achievement (Rich, 1985).

Involvement in the education process also has benefits for parents. Susan McAllister Swap (1987, 1990, 1993) found that involved parents reported pleasure in getting to know teachers as people, expressed a new appreciation for the commitment and skill of teachers, and experienced an increase in their own parenting skills and confidence in them.

The problem is not that parents do not want to help. They do. They just do not know how to go about helping. Joyce Epstein (1992) discovered that almost all parents, even those from the most economically depressed communities, are committed to their children's education. She concluded: "Parents say they want their children to succeed; they want to help them; and they need the school's and the teacher's help to know what to do with their children at each grade level."

If parents want to help their children succeed in school, if teachers want parent involvement, if research confirms the value of parent-teacher collaboration, then what is needed to bring about more effective home-school partnerships? For an answer to this question, consider the following statement by Robert L. DeBruyn (1996) in *Proactive Leadership in the 21st Century Classroom, School and District*: "Unfortunately, not very many people want theory. And not very many want philosophy. They just want a plan. Above all, they want action and results." The goal of this course is to address the need for a plan by presenting a specific set of strategies for teachers and administrators that are based on sound theory and research and are directed toward the creation and implementation of home-school partnerships that produce positive results

Course Title

"Gaining Parental Support: Building Home-School Partnerships"

Course Description

"Gaining Parental Support: Building Home-School Partnerships" is a three semester (five quarter) hour graduate course designed to give teachers the theory and skills to improve communication with parents, hold more effective parent conferences and implement strategies that build a collaborative partnership between parents and teachers. The course provides theoretical foundations and implementation designs that prepare participants to work more effectively with parents to improve student achievement.

Course Goals

The goals of this course are to have participants develop an understanding of the need for increased parent involvement, to increase their awareness of partnership-building strategies and activities, to demonstrate to them a diversity of successful involvement practices, and to guide them in developing their own strategies to enhance the parent participation in the education process.

Course Outline

Session #1: "Introduction and Establishing Course Goals"

1. Course Overview
2. Participant's current understanding of the need for and effectiveness of parental involvement
3. Inventory of participant's perceived needs in the area of parent involvement
4. Establishing participant's personal course goals

Session #2: The Benefits of Parent Involvement"

1. Parental involvement and student achievement
 - a.) A review of relevant research
2. The effects of increased parental involvement on children
3. The effects of increased parental involvement on adults
4. Development of a plan to increase parental involvement and support.
5. Research information to be utilized in the completion of the plan

Session #3: "Overcoming Barriers to Parent Involvement"

1. An examination of the effects of demographic changes
2. An examination of school norms that do not support parent involvement
 - a.) The traditional, hierarchical school structure.
 - b.) The school's desire to avoid conflict with parents
 - c.) Limited resources to support involvement programs
 - d.) Lack of information about how to establish effective parent involvement programs
3. An examination of barriers from the perspective of the parents
4. Overcoming barriers to parental involvement

Session #4: "The Three Traditional Models of Parental Involvement"

1. The protective model
 - a.) This model's goal: to reduce conflict between parents and school
2. The School-to-Home Transmission Model
 - a.) This model's goal: to enlist parents in supporting the objectives of the school
3. The curriculum enrichment model
 - a.) This model's goal: to expand and extend the school's curriculum
4. An evaluation of the strengths and weakness of each of these three models

Session #5: "A Fourth Model: The Partnership Model"

1. The goal of this model: for parents and educators to work together to accomplish a common mission for all children to succeed in school
2. Comparing and contrasting this model to the three previously studied
 - a.) The role of two-way communication in distinguishing these models
3. Case Studies illustrating the effectiveness of the partnership model
 - a.) Comer's school development model
 - b.) The accelerated schools model

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4. The four elements of a true partnership: two-way communication, learning at home and at school, mutual support and joint decision-making

Session #6: "Two-Way Communication During Conferences"

1. Developing an appropriate conference agenda, format and schedule
2. Using effective communication skills
3. Including parents in goal setting
4. Strategies for discussing student progress
5. Strategies for addressing problem areas
6. Role playing conferences with students

Session #7: "Positive and Problem-Solving Communication"

1. Creating a Culture that Supports Two-Way Communication
2. Building better student-teacher relationships
3. Teachers as the key to reaching out to parents
4. Acting as an advocate for students

Session #8: "Dealing with Parents Who Are Upset or Angry"

1. Analyze current approaches to dealing with emotional parents.
2. Techniques for describing problems objectively.
3. Defusing criticism and anger.
4. Developing a plan for improved dealing with parents who are angry or upset.

Session #9: "Using Two-Way Communication Skills"

1. Understanding of the key elements in effective communication with parents.
2. Learning how parents can use choices to help teach their students to behave responsibly.
3. Participants evaluate their current approach to parental involvement with respect to effective communication.
4. Developing a parent training session regarding offering choices.

Session #10: "Parent Education and Training"

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1. Assessing the need for a parent education program.
 2. Identifying needed parenting skills.
 3. A schoolwide approach to parent education and training.
 4. Implementing a parent training session regarding offering choices.

Session #11: "Enhancing Student Learning at Home and at School"

1. Parent involvement in learning at school
2. Parent involvement in learning at home
3. The role of businesses, local colleges in tutoring
4. Developing a parent training session regarding setting boundaries.

Session #12: "Providing Mutual Support"

1. Activities that support parents
 - a.) Activities that support parents' needs and interests
 - b.) Workshops for parents
 - c.) Outreach activities to parents at home
2. Activities that support teachers
 - a.) Parents as helpers
 - b.) Parents as advocates
3. Implementing a parent training session regarding setting boundaries.

Session #13: "Making Joint Decisions"

1. The potential of school-based management teams
2. An analysis of school-based management projects
3. Examining concerns about joint decision-making
4. Developing a parent training session regarding dealing with children's feelings and problems.

Session #14: "Three Paths to Partnership"

1. Three pathway models
 - a.) The limited partnership for student learning
 - b.) Networks of mutual support
 - c.) School restructuring and student achievement
2. Developing your own pathway
3. Implementing a parent training session regarding dealing with children's feelings and problems.

Session #15: "Reflection, Synthesis and Planning"

1. Schoolwide improvements in parent communication and involvement that could raise the level of parent support.
2. Evaluation of study team members' Parent Involvement and Support Plans.
3. Reflect on learning experience in this course.
4. Planning for future use of course concepts

Participant Characteristics

This course is designed for teachers and administrators in grades kindergarten through high school. Participants will have a bachelor's degree and a valid teacher credential (if applicable). There are no other prerequisites.

Instructional Materials

Instructional materials for this course include:

1.) Basic text:

School-Family Partnerships for Children's Success. Evanthia Patrikakou, Roger Weissberg, Sam Redding, Herbert Walberg, Editors. New York: Teachers College Press, 2005.

2.) Course Media:

- Video: "Ways to Win When You Are Talking With Students Part One"
- Video: "Ways to Win When You Are Talking With Students Part Two"
- Video: "The Art of Building and Maintaining Relationships With Parents Throughout the School Term Part One"
- Video: "The Art of Building and Maintaining Relationships With Parents Throughout the School Term Part Two"
- Video: "Setting the Stage for Great Conferences Part One"
- Video: "Setting the Stage for Great Conferences Part Two"
- Video: "How to Talk with Parents in the Informal Conference Part One"
- Video: "How to Talk with Parents in the Informal Conference Part Two"
- Video: "Win-Win Parenting Part One: Offering Choices"
- Video: "Win-Win Parenting Part Two: Setting Boundaries"
- Video: "Win-Win Parenting Part Three: Dealing with Feelings and Problems"
- Video: "Promoting Parent Involvement: A Success Story"

c.) Course of Study Workbook:

This book contains summaries of course content, pre-video viewing activities, discussion questions, activities, worksheets, classroom application assignments, and learning reports.

d.) Course Instructions:

This booklet contains detailed instructions on how participants should proceed through the course work. Also included are instructions for the professional project.

e.) Bibliography

Learning Activities

1. For each of the fifteen (15) sections of this course, participants will complete the following activities:

- a.) Read the assigned chapters of the course text.
- b.) Read supplemental articles in the course of study book.
- c.) Participate in a study/preparation activity with a colleague.

NOTE: While benefits are greatest when participants take this course as a part of a study team, participants can successfully complete course requirements by working with a friend or colleague who is not enrolled in the course; or, by reflecting upon the material and considering how they might use it in their teaching situations.

- d.) View instructional videos.
- e.) Discuss (see above note) course material in terms of participants' own students.
- f.) Record summary of discussion activities in progress report
- g.) Design, implement, and evaluate an application of course content in their teaching situation.

NOTE: If participants are taking this course during the summer or at a time when they do not have access to a classroom, they follow these directions with respect to classroom application projects.

1. If they choose to design a classroom lesson or activity for their project, they design it for a class that they have had in the past.
 2. Instead of implementing their activity in a classroom, they share their activity design with a colleague and ask for their input.
 3. Based on the input received from their colleagues, they make whatever changes they feel are appropriate to improve their activity design.
- h.) Summarize classroom application design, application experience, and evaluation in progress report.

2. Submit a final paper.

Course Outcomes

Our courses been designed to provide a learning environment in which participants' individual and collaborative efforts result in positive change in the classroom. The courses are designed to promote a quality graduate educational experience through the attainment of the following outcomes:

To successfully complete the program, participants will:

1. Identify barriers to effective parental support and strategies to overcome them.
2. Compare, contrast, and analyze traditional and innovative approaches to parental support.
3. Develop, implement, and demonstrate proficiency in strategies designed to build a partnership with parents.
4. Develop, implement, and demonstrate proficiency in utilizing two-way communication strategies with parents.
5. Develop, implement, and evaluate strategies for developing and implementing parent training sessions.
6. Develop, evaluate, revise, and produce a comprehensive parent support and involvement improvement plan.
7. Develop an action plan for the further use of knowledge and skills gained in this course.
8. Acquire and utilize the skills in building learning networks that they may continue to utilize as lifelong learners.

Course Assessment

Participant achievement will be measured by a combination of the following:

1. An evaluation of participant's 15 progress reports. (Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.)
 - Each progress report will be evaluated for:
 - Completeness and quality of responses.
 - Accuracy of information.
 - Appropriateness of classroom application.
 - Quality of reflection.
2. An evaluation of participant's professional paper. (Outcomes 6, 7, and 8.)
 - The professional paper will be evaluated for:
 - Inclusion of required components.
 - Synthesis and analysis of course concepts.
 - Presentation in an organized, professional manner.

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