



Joyce Epstein's Typology

Types of Parent Involvement in Education



Parenting

Helping all families establish home environments to support their children.

Activities:

- Lending library with books and video tapes.
- Parent workshops such as child development, homework help, and understanding the standards.
- Resources and referrals to assist families with nutrition, health care, other services.
- Parent education to enhance employability, literacy, and family literacy.
- Grandparents as Parents – support and recognition for the role grandparents play in the extended family as teachers.
- Parent Support Group – encourage parents to organize a parent-led support group where families can share their experiences and their knowledge with each other.

Challenges:

- Getting appropriate information to all parents, not just those who attend workshops.
- Enabling parents to share family/child strengths/talents, including cultural values.
- Link information to children's success in school.
- Developing alternative means to get the word out to all families.

Families must provide for the health and safety of children, and maintain a home environment that encourages learning and good behavior. After-school programs, independently or in conjunction with the school, can provide training and information to help families understand their children's development and how to support the changes they undergo.

Communicating

Design regular and effective kinds of program-to-home and home-to-program communication about after-school programs, school events, and child progress.

Activities:

- Annual orientation for families, and individual orientations for new families that join mid-year.
- Clear information on program policies (parent handbook).
- Translation services – for all program to home and home to program communications.
- Parent Newsletters –tips to learn at home, activities, parent guest column.
- Bulletin board to post news and announcements for parents.
- Calendars – a comprehensive parent’s calendar that includes important program dates, parent staff conferences, citywide parent meetings, and other important information.
- Regular folders of student work for parent review and comment.
- Parent/staff socials – informal luncheons or after school activities for families, staff, and community members.
- Check-in with parents when their child “gets caught being good.” Provide staff with stamped postcards to send home positive comments.

Challenges:

- Language and literacy barriers.
- Quality and clarity of communication media – print, telephone, video, etc.
- Establish clear pathways for two way communication between school and home.
- Establish effective multi-track communications with student, family, community, staff.

After-school programs should reach out to families with information about programs and student progress. This includes the traditional phone calls, report cards, and parent conferences. Communication must be in forms that families find understandable and useful, for example, programs can use translators to reach parents who don’t speak English well, and it must be two-way, with educators paying attention to the concerns and needs of families.

Volunteering

Recruit and organize parent help and support.

Activities:

- After-school program has volunteer program to help accomplish their goals.
- Parent room/family center for volunteer work, support and resources.
- Survey parents for talents and availability.
- Volunteer parent telephone tree to provide all parents with information.
- Many opportunities created for parents to help with safety, academic work and career related information.
- Volunteer Wall of Fame – display all those who have given a certain amount of hours to the program as members of the “wall of fame.”
- Share a book – invite families and community members to the classroom to read a story in their home language with the teacher, who reads the same story in English.
- Volunteer Training Programs – training programs to help parents and other community members find out how they can participate and use their skills.

Challenges:

- Recruit families widely so all know their time and talents are welcome.
- Create flexible scheduling for volunteers, assemblies, and events so parents that work can participate.
- Organize volunteer work, provide training, match time and talent with school/teacher/student needs.
- Recognize and acknowledge the time and effort parents give to the school.

Parents can make significant contributions to the environment and functions of an after-school program. Programs can get the most out of this process by creating flexible schedules, so more parents can participate, and by working to match the talents and interests of parents to the needs of students, staff, and administrators.

Learning At Home

Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with activities, decisions, and planning.

Activities:

- Train families about skills required to meet standards.
- Host parent forums that allow parents to meet one another and discuss their concerns and experiences with child rearing, culture clash, and other family matters.
- Family Kits – for family interaction with children, on specific topics such as play, safety, nutrition, and the development of language.
- Promote a “TV Free Week” for families. Also encourage activities that encourage students and families to talk about television programs they view together, record their opinions, and write reviews.
- Interactive activities that encourage children to discuss and interact with their families about what they are learning and provide opportunities for families and community members to contribute their knowledge to what children are learning in the program, or a family appreciation event.
- Family Interviews – bring parents and children together to participate in activities promoting literacy through communication, writing and reading. Parents and children interview one another about their program experiences and heritage, including topics related to child rearing and family life.
- Make It; Take it – workshop on how parents can make games, flash cards, and activity boxes to use at home.

Challenges:

- Design regular interactive activities that engage students and families in the assignment.
- Coordinate family-linked activities between multiple staff members.
- Involve families with their children in important curricular-related decisions.

With the guidance and support of program staff and “experts” the after-school program can bring in, family members can supervise and assist their children at home with learning, assignments, and other school-related activities.

Decision Making

Include families in program decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

Activities:

- Program level committees for family participation and community involvement.
- Parent participation on advisory councils and collaboratives.
- Networks to link all families with parent representatives.
- Suggestion box where staff, students, and parents can contribute ideas.
- Trainings for staff, families, and students that focus on how to leverage additional financial and community resources for program-based and community-based reform and activities.
- Action research teams – program staff and community members develop a mutually agreeable plan that encourages and invites parents and other adults to visit and participate in classrooms throughout the year. Staff, parents, children, and other participating adults assess the outcomes of increased parent and adult presence in the classroom and its impact on children's learning by recording and discussing their reactions and observations throughout the year. The team shares the challenges and successes of the process with other members of the school and community.

Challenges:

- To adequately involve family representatives of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.
- Train parent leaders to serve as representatives of other families and to provide consistent feedback to their fellow parents.
- To include students as well as parents in the decision making process.
- Redefine decision making to mean a partnership of shared views and goals vs. power struggle.

After-school programs, independently or in conjunction with schools, can give parents meaningful roles in decision-making processes and provide parents with training and information so they can make the most of those opportunities. This opportunity should be open to all segments of the community, not just people who have the most time and energy to spend on program affairs.

Collaborating With Community

Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

Activities:

- Service integration in partnership with business, civic, counseling, cultural, recreation and other agencies and organizations.
- Service to the community by students, families and programs.
- Garden Projects – with the help of the local businesses and the community, plant a garden at school that will not only beautify the program campus but the neighborhood as well.
- Library Care sign-up day.
- Inform students and families on health, cultural, recreational and social supports.
- Art Exhibitions – display student artwork, invite parents and the community to view the art.
- Link to community activities that support learning and talent development.
- Community Mentor Program – students obtain information about college, employment, internships and developing a better understanding about new technology and on-line communication.

Challenges:

- Solve turf problems – responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities.
- Inform families of community programs for students (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, business partners).
- Assure equity of opportunities for students and families to participate in programs and services.
- Match community contributions with school goals; integrate child/family services with education.
- Redefine community to be inclusive of all social and economic groups with an interest in education.

After-school programs, independently or in conjunction with schools, can help families gain access to support services offered by other agencies, such as healthcare, cultural events, tutoring services, and child-care programs. They also can help families and community groups provide services to the community, such as recycling programs and food pantries.