

Seven Other Notable Parental Engagement Strategies

1. Project EASE (Early Access to Success in Education a Parent-Child Program) in White Bear Lake Minnesota Schools

How the program works -- This is a yearlong, early-intervention literacy project designed for kindergarten children and their parents. This project was developed by Gail Jordan, Associate Professor of Literacy and Educational Psychology at Bethel College, and has been implemented by White Bear Lake Minnesota elementary schools.

Parental involvement is one of the major components of Project EASE, which recognizes the integral role parents play in the academic success of their children. Parents are asked to participate in both at-home and at-school literacy based activities with their children. For five monthly sessions, parents participate in parent education workshops where they also receive activities to do at home with their children. Activity topics include, story book reading, working with words, letter recognition and sound awareness, retelling family narratives, and talking about the world. The sessions last from October to April, and parents can choose from a variety of session times.

Why this is an exemplary program for engaging parents -- This program invites and trains parents to become equal partners in promoting early literacy skills in their children. Most importantly, this program raises parents awareness of the integral role that they play in the academic success of their children, and then provides parents with tangible ways for promoting and monitoring their children's literacy skill development.

Information Sources:

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~pild/projectease.htm>

See also, Jordan, G. E., Snow, C.E., & Porche, M.V. (2000). Project EASE: The effect of a family literacy project on kindergarten student's early literacy skills. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(4), 534-546. In this study four schools found greater reading gains for children whose families participated in this program.

2. Community for Learning Program (CFL)

How the Program Works -- This is a school-family-community based intervention program that has been implemented in more than 150 schools, in 13 states, and the District of Columbia, since the program's establishment in 1990. The program is headquartered at Temple University in Philadelphia and has network sites in Philadelphia, western Pennsylvania, and Lincoln, Illinois.

The program's goals are to improve student achievement (especially for academically struggling students), enhance learning and teaching processes, and

promote positive attitudes towards school and learning among students. The program's design encourages an integrated approach to learning where learning in school is linked to learning in other environments such as homes, churches, libraries, workplaces, etc.

Site-specific planning is used to implement the components of the program. First there is an initial two-day planning meeting with site facilitators and principal participants. The initial planning includes an overview of the program, a comprehensive assessment of the needs of the particular site, visits to other Community for Learning sites, and the creation of an implementation plan that is tailored to meet the individual needs of the school.

After the initial training, program implementers provide 12-15 days of on-site professional development to school staff. Following the on-site professional development, project coordinators, site facilitators, and principal participants offer continuous professional development, and mentoring to other personal on how to effectively implement the program.

Since CFL is tailored to the specific needs of particular schools, students, families, and community organizations, there is not a prescribed way in which schools must involve families and community organizations. For example, it is up to the schools and families to decide on the most conducive ways for forming partnerships that will support student learning. The program's cost varies from site to site depending upon the site's current needs and available resources.

The program is cost-effective because it utilizes existing resources, and personnel. Usually, the only additional costs are the initial training of school personnel on how to implement the program, payment for a full-time, on-site facilitator, and reimbursement for teachers engaged in this professional development. The estimated cost for the planning, training, and on-going assistance for implementing the program is around \$35,000 per school for the first three years, and \$16,000 thereafter.

Why this is an exemplary program for engaging parents -- The program's emphasis on tailoring to the individual needs of each site allows for lots of flexibility in the particular ways families and communities can support student learning. Thus, parents can decide for themselves the best ways for them to partner with schools and community organizations. In addition, implementation of this program is very cost-effective since it utilizes existing resources and staff.

Information Sources:

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ToolsforSchools/cfl.html> -- Provides and overview of the program

<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/catalog/ModelDetails.asp?ModelID=8> – Provides details of the model

See also, Wang, Margaret C., Oates, Jane, and Weishew, Nancy L. (1997). Effective school responses to student diversity in inner-city schools: A coordinated approach. *Education and Urban Society*, 27(4), 484-503. This is a study on of three urban schools that enact the CFL Project and show the programs benefits.

3. Dads' Clubs in San Diego City Schools

How the program works -- This program's mission is to encourage fathers' and other male caregivers participation in schools for the purpose of positively impacting children's academic success, as well as children's social, emotional and cognitive development. This program was started in 2002 at four of the districts poorest performing schools.

Since then it has spread to over 25 area elementary schools. Male caregivers are encouraged to participate in classrooms and in school related activities. Some of the academic activities include *Reading with Dad*, *Math Games with Dad*, *Science with Dad*, and *Writing with Dad*. Other activities include *Donuts with Dad*, movies with dads, and community service days with dads. In addition *Dads' Clubs* hold periodic meetings to discuss topics including parenting skills, and learning English as a second language.

Why this program is exemplary for engaging parents – Most programs that seek to promote parental engagement, tend to attract mothers, or are designed for mothers. This program is special because it focuses on ways to engage fathers' or other male caregivers' participation. This program developed out of research by the U.S Department of Education that shows that a father's involvement plays an equally important and powerful role in the academic success of children as a mother's involvement. This program engages fathers in activities that are meaningful and fun for both fathers and their children. In addition, fathers and other male caregiver's who serve as role models to their children, show them the importance of education when they play an active role in their children's school lives.

Information Sources:

San Diego City Schools Dads' Clubs Fact Sheet Fall 2005

http://www.sandi.net/comm/factsheets/dads_club.pdf

4. The Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership in Kentucky

How the program works -- The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence (an independent, non partisan group of citizens, parents, and business people, all united with the common pursuit of creating educational reform in Kentucky) formed an institute, the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, to train parents on how to be leaders in educational issues.

Participants in this program are a group of self-selected parents called Fellows. Fellows must have or had children enrolled in public schools, completed an application, submitted letters of reference, shown involvement in previous volunteer experiences, committed to the six-day training session, and stay involved in the Commonwealth for at least two years after the training.

Participants in the program represent a diversity of socioeconomic backgrounds, and can be either experienced advocates or novices. There are about 200 new Fellows per regional training institute each year. The training consists of three, two-day sessions at the regional training institute, followed by a state wide conference with all participants from the various regional training institutes.

At the training session, participants acquire the necessary knowledge and skills needed to advocate for educational reform in Kentucky. In particular, participants become informed about Kentucky's educational system, their rights as parents to be active participants and decision makers in their children's education, how to become advocates for the academic success of children, and how to motivate other parents to become involved and to take on leadership roles in educational issues. Participants are required to develop and lead projects designed to improve school conditions.

For example, past projects have included, making schools more welcoming to parents, easing student transitions between schools, improving school technology and resources, and promoting literacy skills in children and adults. The total budget for the program is \$1.3 million per year. Funding comes from seven foundations, as well as individual sponsors and business in Kentucky.

Why this program is exemplary for supporting/promoting parental advocacy -- This program is so powerful because it trains parents to become advocates for the academic success of their children. At the heart of this program is the notion that people are motivated to take action on issues that directly affect them. It is most often the case that parents are deeply concerned about the academic welfare of their children, but feel helpless when it comes to knowing how to take appropriate action for improving their children's school success. Thus, this program supports the belief that once parents know how to take action, they will.

The program recognizes that it in order for parents to take on leadership roles in educational reform; they must first have a basic understanding of how the educational system in Kentucky works, and be knowledgeable of state reform legislation and policy. In addition parents must know where to gather more information about educational and community resources, and specific ways that they can become involved in advocating for educational reform. This knowledge prepares parents to take on leadership roles in educational matters,

spread the knowledge they have acquired to other parents, and motivate other parents to also become leaders in educational reform.

Information Sources:

<http://www.cipl.org/> -- Home page of Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership

See also the below articles, which provide a comprehensive examination of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership:

Wilson, Bruce, and Corbett, Hi Dickson (2000). *“I Didn’t Know I Could Do That”*: Parents learning to be leaders through the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership. Lexington, KY: Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership.

Kroll, Janet, Sexton, Robert F., Raimondo, Beverly N., Corbett, H. Dickson, and Wilson, Bruce (2001). *Setting the stage for success: Bringing parents into education reform as advocates for higher student achievement*. Lexington, KY: Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence

5. Padres Promotores de la Educación project (Parent Education Promoters) in Santa Ana California

How this program works -- This program is part of the Kellogg Engaging Latino Communities for Education (ENLACE) initiative. It is a parent-lead, mentoring program, which helps other parents prepare their children for college. Each year 30 Padres Promotores (education promoters) are recruited by former education promoters to mentor over 1,000 parents in the Santa Ana community. These Hispanic parent leaders, who have received training in community advocacy and have been educated on the public higher education system, offer assistance and training to other parents who would like to assist their children in going to college.

The Padres Promotores travel door-to door to an average of 500 homes, and hold around 50 discussion groups to inform families about their area’s educational systems. In turn, they make Hispanic parents realize that higher education can be a reality for their children by informing them about financial aid resources, offering parents tips to improve their children’s school success, and encouraging parents to enhance their own education. The Padres Promotores also communicate with school systems to ensure Hispanic children’s needs are addressed. The program’s budget is \$100,000 and is funded by Santa Ana ENLACE and GEAR UP Santa Ana.

Why this program is exemplary for supporting/promoting parental advocacy -- This program’s strategy is so successful because it first gets parents interested in the education of their own children, and then eventually

expands their interest to the improvement of education for all children. The defining characteristic of this program is having parent leaders from the community travel to the individual homes of families and tell their own personal stories and experiences with the educational system. Parents unite with each other by expressing their shared experiences, and empathizing with each other's stories. This allows parents to build strong relationships based on trust and reciprocity.

In turn, parents become receptive to learning about how they can make a difference in preparing their own children for higher education. Parents, who now recognize what they can do for their own children, then help other families by eagerly sharing with them the knowledge they have acquired. Some parents have gone even farther by attending school board meetings to share the challenges children in their community face in relation to higher education issues.

Information Sources:

<http://www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/factsheet/padres.PDF> -- provides information and facts about the program.

See also:

Cournoyer, David (ED.) The Santa Ana Partnership. Brattle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation www.wkkf.org/ENLACE

Torres, Celina & Márquez. Reaching higher ground: Parental outreach programs at the postsecondary level. Los Angeles: The Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, p. 32-36. <http://www.trpi.org/PDFs/rhg.pdf> --- This report contains profiles of ten exemplary parental outreach programs that assist Latino families with preparing their children for post-secondary education. Padres Promotores de la Educación program is one of the ten programs highlighted in this report.

6. Parent Leadership Network in Mecklenburg County Charlotte North Carolina

How the program works -- The Parent Leadership Network was developed in 2005 as part of the Charlotte Advocates for Education, a community-based, independent organization that is headed by business and community leaders. Their mission is to achieve quality public education for students in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community.

The Parent Leadership Network is modeled after the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership in Kentucky. Like the Commonwealth Institute, the purpose of this program is to prepare parents to be leaders in advocating for the academic success of all students within the community. Each year, around 20 parents from different schools and from diverse backgrounds participate in the program.

Participants attend a six-day training session that aims to increase parents' knowledge and skills in relation to educational reform. Parents are then required to utilize the knowledge they have acquired by designing and implementing a school-based project that seeks to improve some aspect of school life. After completing the training and the project, participants serve as parent coaches for the next two years guiding other parents through the processes of school reform efforts. Participants also attain life-long membership into the network. Funding for the program has come from a \$100,000 grant by the Wachovia Foundation, a \$15,000 grant from the Foundation for the Carolinas, a \$5,000 grant from the Livingston Foundation, and a \$50,000 grant from the West Mecklenburg Collaborating for Educational Reform Initiative.

Why this program is exemplary for supporting/promoting parental advocacy
-- This program provides parents with a very systematic approach for becoming partners in educational reform efforts in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area. First, parents build their knowledge and skills necessary for participation in school reform efforts. Next, parents are provided with the opportunity to immediately utilize the skills and knowledge they have acquired, when they must design and implement projects in area schools, which seek to improve the quality of student learning and teaching. Providing parents with the hands-on opportunity to immediately exercise their knowledge and skills makes this program outstanding..

Information Sources:

Parent Leadership Network: A resource of Charlotte Advocates for Education
<http://www.advocatesfored.org/pln.htm>

Charlotte Advocates for Education announces the Parent Leadership Network (2004). News release from the Charlotte Advocates of Education.
Retrieved August 1st, 2006

<http://www.advocatesfored.org/news.htm>

Parent Leadership Network: Class 1 Summary

<http://www.advocatesfored.org/publications/PLN/Summary%20of%20%20Class.pdf>

7. The Indiana Academy of Parent Leadership

How this program works -- This program is an initiative of the Indiana Partnerships Center, a state-wide program, funded by the U.S Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement, that seeks to empower parents about their rights and responsibilities for being involved in their children's education. The Indiana Academy of Parent Leadership strives to inform parents about state and federal accountability laws (Indiana Public Law 221, The No Child Left Behind Act), standards, assessments, school achievement data, and effective communication strategies between families and schools, so that they can design and implement a leadership project with a school community that aims to increase parental involvement and improve student achievement.

Over the course of a year, a group of about 30 parent participants from diverse communities throughout the state are selected to attend 5-7 training sessions. Topics include: understanding health and safety issues and how they affect student learning, understanding state and federal educational laws, and developing skills for facilitating communication between families and schools. In addition, parents lead projects with school communities to increase the achievement, and or safety of students, as well as to promote parental involvement. This program is funded by the Indiana Partnership Center's Parent Involvement Resource Center (PIRC) grant, Twenty -First Century Scholars, United Water, and the Gene B. Glick Junior Achievement Education Center

Why this program is exemplary for supporting/promoting parental advocacy – This leadership program not only unites parents from diverse counties throughout the state of Indiana to inform them about educational-related, salient issues so that they can better understand and navigate Indiana's districts' school systems, but also trains parents on how to lead projects that will allow them to utilize the knowledge they have learned. Designing and implementing leadership projects provides participants wit the opportunity to make a positive difference in improving student achievement, and parental involvement in a particular school community.

Information Sources:

<http://www.fscp.org/index.asp?p=57> – The Indiana Academy for Parent Leadership's home page

<http://www.fscp.org/index.asp?p=59> ---The Indiana Academy for Parent Leadership's 2006 overview

The home web page of the Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) has a link to PIRCs in Action <http://www.pirc-info.net/action.asp>. One of the highlighted centers is the Indiana Partnership Center which, provides a link to an online version of their newsletter, Partners-in Learning. This newsletter describes the 2005-2006 Indiana Academy for Parent Leadership <http://www.pirc-info.net/checkout/ENews.pdf>.