

## Understanding Partnerships

School/community partnerships are more than a one-sided relationship that provides resources and support to schools. A true partnership is beneficial to all collaborators. Use this tool to determine the level of partnership your school is at in working with community entities.

		Degree of Power Sharing		
Degree of Resource Sharing	Cooperating	Coordinating	Collaborating	
	Using resources to assist other agencies	Organizing or combining resources to more effectively reach a mutual goal	Collectively applying resources toward problems which lack clear ownership	
	<b>Contributing Resources</b>	<b>Reconciling Activities</b>	<b>Sharing Program Responsibilities</b>	
	School and community contribute resources to project or effort; contribution is clearly defined and usually material.	School and community adjust or combine existing programs in order to deliver services more effectively; usually entails on going relationships among partners.	School and community come together as a new entity to provide services or to manage a resource.	
	<b>Promoting Others</b>	<b>Sharing Resources</b>	<b>Creating New Systems or Programs</b>	
	School and community willingly share information about the work and services of others.	School and community, which use the same goods or service, agree to share costs often defined by a contract.	School and community work to create and implement a new model to deliver services or address a public problem.	
	<b>Sharing Information</b>	<b>Joint Projects</b>	<b>Collective Planning</b>	
	School and community share information on a formal or informal basis.	School and community depend upon each other to produce a specific product or event; generally involves short-term commitments.	School and community develop a collective vision (and/or study) to identify community assets and for the management of resources to alleviate social problems.	

**Taken From:** New Mexico Highlands University. (2007). *Working Together: School-Family-Community Partnerships, a Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities*. Page 493. Albuquerque: New Mexico Public Education Department. Available from [http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/pdfs/pd\\_mod6.pdf](http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/pdfs/pd_mod6.pdf)



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## **Community Assets Mapping**

### **Exercise I**

List your knowledge on any of the following resources in your community. Remember to think about existing partnerships and also look for additional resources by examining directories or phone books and searching the internet. Think outside of the box and do not forget your regional and state partners too. For now, do not worry if they are the "right" partner, just list as many potential partners as possible.

Artists and cultural institutions

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Social service agencies

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Senior citizen organizations and community individuals

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Libraries and bookstores

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Higher education institutions

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Churches and faith-based organizations

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Childcare providers

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Fraternal organizations and clubs

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Law enforcement offices

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Media and publication agencies

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Locally-owned and large businesses

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Health providers and services

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Food services and restaurants

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Banking and credit institutions

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Citizen and community-based organizations

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Entertainment groups and offices

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Government and military agencies

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Environmental and recreational institutions

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**Exercise I was adapted from:** New Mexico Highlands University. (2007). *Working Together: School-Family-Community Partnerships, a Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities*. Page 496. Albuquerque: New Mexico Public Education Department. Available from [http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/pdfs/pd\\_mod6.pdf](http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/pdfs/pd_mod6.pdf)

## **Exercise II**

Use the following diagram on the next page to graph your identified resources above. Depending on how many you have, you may also want to draw out your own diagram on chart paper to ensure you can get all of your resources to fit. After you complete the diagram do you see anything missing? If so, keep searching until you are confident you have located all of your potential partners.

**Aqua Circle:** Students (This is your outcome, but they also are a resource!)

**Red Circle:** Local non-profit, civic, community, and faith-based organizations

**Grey Circle:** Local businesses and for-profits

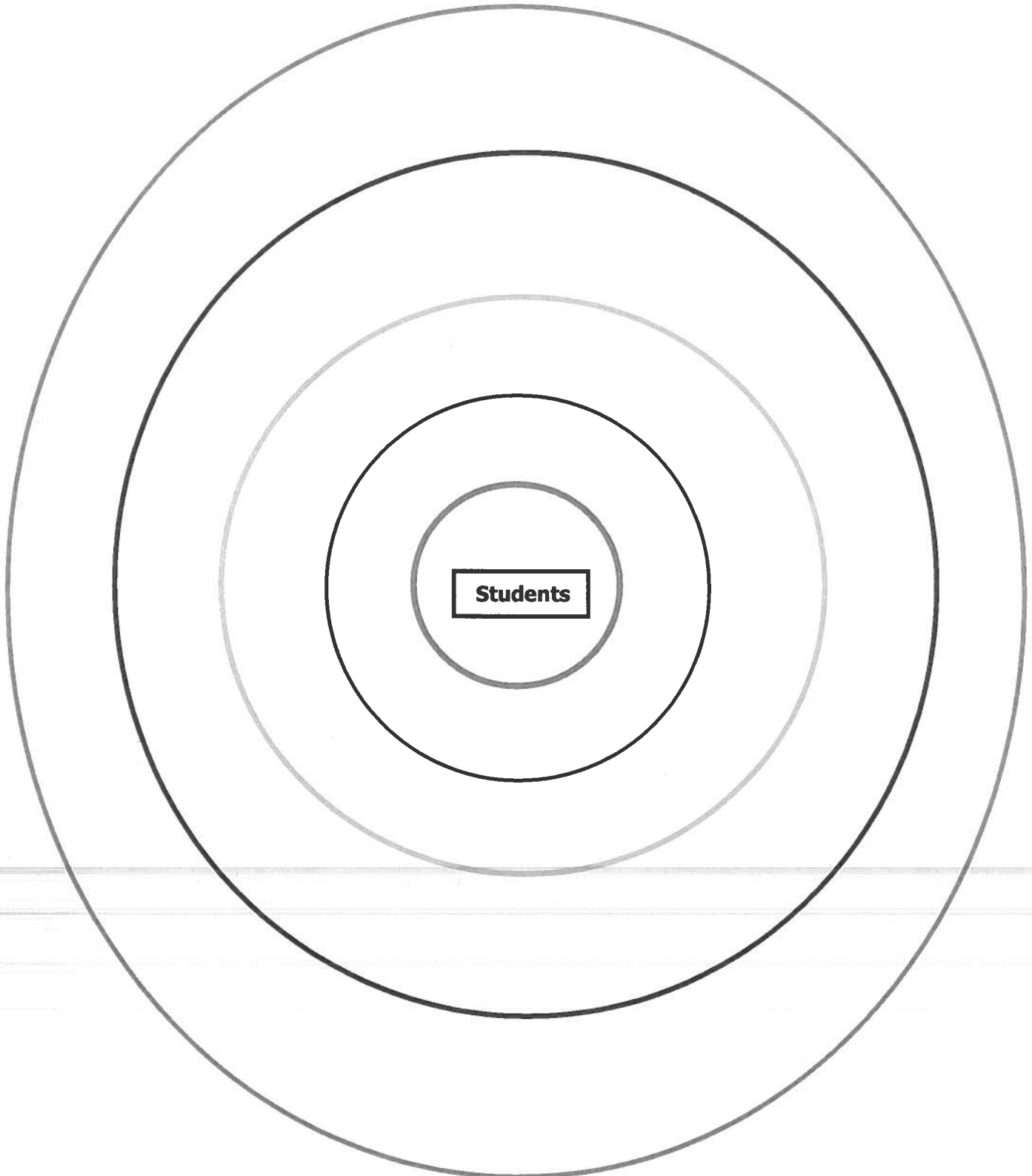
**Blue Circle:** Local government and public organizations

**Green Circle:** Regional and state organizations



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## How to Map School Assets

Community partners must view the school as a rich collection of physical and human resources. The following list of school facilities and assets can help identify potential partnerships. Use this tool to determine the assets and resources of your school.

<b>Facilities</b>	Schools are places where community groups can meet. Are there meeting rooms, computer labs, auditoriums and other areas that can be used by community members?
Your assets and resources:	
<b>Materials and Equipment</b>	Even resource-strapped, economically disadvantaged schools have at least some of the following resources which can be shared with and/or used in support of various local community groups: computers, copy machines, books, videos and other media materials.
Your assets and resources:	
<b>Purchasing Power</b>	The materials, commodities and services purchased by schools can be directed to initiate, support or expand neighborhood enterprises, including those created by local youth.
Your assets and resources:	
<b>Employment and Training Practices</b>	The school's hiring practices can include local residents. Professional development opportunities can include other educational service providers in the community.
Your assets and resources:	
<b>Courses</b>	Through existing or newly created evening courses, schools can provide education and training for residents or groups who seek to participate in the area's development efforts.
Your assets and resources:	
<b>Teachers</b>	Teachers are a concentrated pool of highly trained adults with critical skills and essential knowledge that can contribute to the efforts of local groups involved in development activities.
Your assets and resources:	
<b>Financial Capacity</b>	Schools have the local power to generate and receive special funds through bond issues and proposals to government agencies, corporations and foundations not usually accessible to other community groups. This special capacity can be an important resource in a community development strategy.
Your assets and resources:	
<b>Youth</b>	Students with ideas, energy and motivation can participate in classes, projects and internships which involve them in the local community development process.
Your assets and resources:	

Source: Kretzman and McKnight (1993).

**Taken From:** New Mexico Highlands University. (2007). *Working Together: School-Family-Community Partnerships, a Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities*. Page 499. Albuquerque: New Mexico Public Education Department. Available from [http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/pdfs/pd\\_mod6.pdf](http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/pdfs/pd_mod6.pdf)

**Exercise 3. Identifying Skills and Knowledge in Community Resources**

A strategy to develop long-range partnerships is to visualize the knowledge and skills that are embedded in our communities. Often community partners are not invited to contribute to school activities or need some coaching to bring their resources into the schools.

Use this tool to list the knowledge, skills and human resources in your community.

Organization/Entity	Knowledge Base and Skills	Possible Collaboration
Example: Kiwanis	Fund-raising, community welfare, civic projects, leadership training, public speaking, rules of order for meetings	Teach students about how to conduct effective meetings, leadership skill training, scholarships

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**Table 9.5: Examples of school–community partnerships**

Community resource	Potential school benefits	Potential partner benefits
Church or other religious institution	Space for a literacy program, after-school youth center	Materials for a youth center, clothes for a resale shop
College or university	Tutoring and mentoring summer program, future teachers, alternative high school	Space, employment for students
Local residents	Security guards, volunteers, donations, special skills	Employment opportunities, classes, newsletters, volunteer opportunities
Businesses	Donations, scholarships, mentoring, service learning opportunities	Future employees, interns and apprentices
Chamber of Commerce	Access to the business community, mentoring, training, volunteers	Well-trained workforce, publicity
Bakeries or restaurants	Food for events, help establishing catering enterprises	Catering opportunities, publicity
Media	Good publicity for events, assistance in mobilizing the community	Access to news events, public service opportunities
Artists and cultural institutions	Mentors, judges for contests, facilitators for projects	Display space, artist in residence opportunities, publicity
Library	Access to resources, space, specialized content skills	Support for library programs, access to kids and parents (patrons)
Senior citizen's groups	Tutoring, mentoring, transportation, event volunteers, child-care resources	Access to school space, educational programs, holiday meals
Banks	Money, connections to outside funders, grant-writing skills	Public service opportunities, publicity
Police	Assistance with crime prevention, mentoring	Development of relationships with youth
Various community events – festivals	Community exposure, support for school-community relationships	Volunteers, participants
Community education	Access to special training like sewing, model building, car maintenance, budgeting, public speaking	Access to participants
Daycare centers	Student exposure to young children, service-learning opportunities	Volunteer help from students, possible space
Policy makers	Influence over local decisions and policies, especially ones impacting schools (levies, etc.)	Exposure, platforms
Government	Influence over funding streams and priorities for delivery of services, etc.	More effective use of funding and resources because they are more responsive to local needs
Councils and boards (i.e., Family and Children First Councils, School Boards, etc.)	Influence over policies, funding streams, etc.	More effective use of funding and resources; better aligned policies
Citizen and community groups (i.e., neighborhood associations, racial and/or ethnic groups)	Mobilization of key constituents in support of school directions	Ability to better serve their community via the school

From: Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Stone, Henig, Jones, & Pierrannuzi, 2001.



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## Partnership Planning Checklist

It is important to ensure that the mission and overall vision of both the school and partnership organization match. This is because those who understand and believe in your program are more likely to partner and support you in the long run. It will help if you evaluate potential partners before approaching them for a meeting by using a partnership planning checklist. You may not have all the answers to the questions before meeting with your partner but reviewing the questions before hand will provide you some information on whether the partner is worth pursuing. Here are some questions to consider:

- ☐ What needs did you identify that you believe this partner can address?
  - ☐ What population(s) does the prospective partner currently serve?
  - ☐ Does it have the capacity to recruit, serve, and retain other populations, especially ones that the school finds hard to reach?
  - ☐ Does the prospective partner offer unique and important benefits to students and their families?
  - ☐ Does partnering with the prospective partner have promise to improve student achievement and success?
  - ☐ Does the partner have local competitors? Is the school able to work with them if needed?
  - ☐ Does the potential partner have a solid reputation? Is it credible, dependable, and trustworthy?
  - ☐ Are you willing to refer students and families to this potential partner?
  - ☐ Do you and the prospective partner share similar missions, values, and goals? Do they endorse the vision of education?
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- ☐ Is the prospective partner goals oriented? What has it accomplished?
  - ☐ Does the prospective partner have enough resources to accomplish the goals set in the partnership plan?
  - ☐ Are there risks associated in partnering with the potential partner?
  - ☐ What do you stand to gain or lose by partnering? Are the benefits worth it?

*Adapted from:* Anderson-Butcher, D., Lawson, H., Bean, J., Boone, B., Kwiatkowski, A., et al. (2004). *Implementation guide: The Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio Department of Education.



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## How to Approach Potential Community Partners

Once you decide your school's needs and have examined the assets, skills and knowledge of potential partners, it is now time to reach out! The best way to establish this contact is through personal connections. This can be through a personal letter with materials from the school, a personal visit with a packet of the school's information, or through a courtesy phone call to schedule a time to meet.

If you have no prior relationship with the potential partner, it is best that the first outreach communication be introductory and informal to allow for relationship building. After the first initial contact however, you may want to begin to further pitch your ideas for collaboration. Remember though to start small and focus on common goals first so you do not overwhelm!

Here are some suggestions in writing an initial letter:

- Find the name and address of the owner or president of the business/community organization and address the letter accordingly. If it is a large organization, you may also want to send a copy of the letter to another person within the organization to ensure your communication is received.
- Include your school's name and location.
- Describe the school's mission and goals for high standards and success for all students.
- Briefly explain your emphasis on school, family, and community partnerships.
- Describe how the partner's support can help achieve goals and benefit the community as a whole.
- Illustrate how the partnership will be mutually beneficial for both parties.
- Specify how the business or organization will be recognized for its support.
- Note that you will call or visit next week.
- Include your signature and contact information along with the principal's signature.

You may attempt sending personalized letters to all potential partners as not everyone will be able to match your schools needs or you may focus on a select few and really nurture those partnerships first.

New Mexico Highlands University. (2007). *Working Together: School-Family-Community Partnerships, a Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities*. Albuquerque: New Mexico Public Education Department. Available from <http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/index.html>.



## Integrating Community Partners into the School or Classroom

Look at the Community Partners list below. Use this tool to think about how you can engage some of these partners in your classroom or school.

Types of Community Partners	Examples:	Plan to Integrate
<b>Business/Corporations</b>	Local businesses, national corporations and franchises	
<b>Universities and Educational Institutions</b>	Colleges, universities, high schools and other educational institutions	
<b>Health Care Organizations</b>	Hospitals, health care centers, mental health facilities, health departments, health foundations and associations	
<b>Government and Military Agencies</b>	Fire departments, police departments, city councils, other local and state government agencies and departments	
<b>Faith-Based Organizations</b>	Churches, mosques, synagogues, other religious organizations and charities	
<b>Senior Citizen Organizations</b>	Nursing homes, senior volunteer and service organizations	
<b>Cultural and Recreational Institutions</b>	Zoos, museums, libraries and recreational centers	

**Taken From:** New Mexico Highlands University. (2007). *Working Together: School-Family-Community Partnerships, a Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities*. Page 498. Albuquerque: New Mexico Public Education Department. Available from [http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/pdfs/pd\\_mod6.pdf](http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/pdfs/pd_mod6.pdf)

**Table 9.6: Examples of activities for connecting schools and community partners**

Key activities	For educators	For community leaders
<b>FIND OUT</b> about each others' interests, needs, aspirations and resources.	<b>Find out</b> about the neighborhoods where your students live. What are the local issues? What assets are out there? What resources do they offer? How can you capitalize on them to help students and the school? What can you provide them?	<b>Find out</b> about your local schools, including their performance records, their needs and their recent innovations? What opportunities do they offer for engagement and partnership? What opportunities can you help the schools develop?
<b>REACH OUT</b> to potential partners on their own turf with specific offers of assistance and opportunities to work together.	<b>Reach out</b> to community agencies invested in children's learning, healthy development and success in school. Tell them what you offer them and what they can provide in return. Be specific about the value of partnerships and your plans for developing them. Offer the school's facilities for programs and services that help advance the school's mission.	<b>Reach out</b> to principals, teachers and other school staff by attending school functions and offering help in concrete ways. Make educators aware of all you do with kids and families, emphasizing how your work helps them and the students. Develop concrete strategies for communicating, connecting and collaborating.
<b>SPELL OUT</b> the purpose of the partnership and the terms and conditions of joint efforts, including who will do what, with whom, when, where and how.	<b>Spell out</b> the areas that are "off-limits" for partnerships, emphasizing the need for partnerships to be linked directly to school improvement. Draft MOUs and inter-agency agreements that specify outcomes, responsibilities and resources.	<b>Spell out</b> how complete success in your work depends on successful schools. Also spell out how your work can make schools successful. Be clear on what you want to do, through the partnership, and how the partnership will benefit the schools.
<b>WORK OUT</b> the kinks as they arise and change your approach as indicated by the feedback you receive.	<b>Work out</b> the issues, especially the conflicts because conflict is unavoidable and good things happen when it is resolved. Develop trouble shooting procedures to fix problems "on the fly."	<b>Work out</b> the problems that always occur when you establish partnerships with schools and need to abide by their rules, procedures and policies. Help educators think about alternatives and remain flexible as you align some of your operations with theirs.
<b>BUILD OUT</b> as you experience success by sharing positive results and promoting more innovative programs and services.	<b>Build out</b> by sharing positive results and success stories with staff, parents, district leaders and school board members. Use your successes to seek resources from governmental officials and funding agencies.	<b>Build out</b> by sharing success stories with other community organizations, local governments and the media. Proudly announce your achievements and use them to recruit other partners and supporters.

Taken From: Anderson-Butcher, D., Lawson, H., Bean, J., Boone, B., Kwiatkowski, A., et al. (2004). *Implementation guide: The Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio Department of Education.



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## Promising Practices for Meaningful Community Collaborations

Standard six of PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships is Collaborating with Community. This means that families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation. This handout provides a list of promising practices for creating meaningful community collaborations for all partners: school, families, and students.

### 1. What Schools Can Do

#### *Have Schools...*

- Create useful directories that inform students and their families about the availability of various community resources and services in the community, such as afterschool programs, recreational opportunities, tutorials, cultural events, job fairs, health services, volunteer opportunities, and summer programs.
  - Develop a plan with local businesses and community organizations to use their facilities to conduct school meetings, performances, or other school related events. In this way, the school is going to the community instead of always expecting the community to come to the school.
  - Recruit partners to provide refreshments or incentives at school-based meetings and workshops to increase attendance and overall success.
  - Develop a school public relations campaign to rally the community around innovative and successful school programs. Use local radio or television stations, faith based organizations, clinics, supermarkets, and other neighborhood locations to communicate school events and other messages.
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- Work with local businesses and community organizations to establish a school volunteer program that allows employees to volunteer at least one hour a month to the school. Provide various programs and ways for these volunteers to spend their time.
  - Seek and actively recruit community members to participate in school decision making councils and committees.
  - Hold quarterly community forums for all school and community members to discuss school improvement topics and learn about ways they can support education locally.



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- Partner with community and faith-based partners to help with school outreach projects that have benefits for students, such as communicating to parents about Supplemental Education Services (SES), CRCT Test Prep, and other academic opportunities.
  - Collaborate with feeder school(s) to host joint community events.
  - Request that business partners use empty areas of store front windows to display student projects, as well as school successes and notices.
  - Partner with a local college to provide tutors to after-school programs in core subject areas.
  - Develop a partnership with an assisted living facility or nursing home so students and senior citizens can learn from one another. Have knowledge share activities where students interview the senior citizens about previous events for history projects, have classes create books or notes to share information related to the curriculum, recruit them as volunteers to the school, and invite them regularly to attend school events and performances.
  - Establish a School-to-Work program and invite businesses to participate through mentoring programs and service learning projects.
  - Use community partners to provide input on course offerings or curriculum. Tap into their expertise by developing curriculum units around work areas so basic skills are applied to real world experiences.
  - Work with community partners to move business and civic expertise or skills into the classroom. For example, have them serve as guest speakers at any grade level.
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- Develop teacher “externships” at business and community organizations over the summer to allow interested teachers opportunities to gain first-hand experience about what the working environment outside the school demands.
  - Invite local “celebrities” to come to the school to read to students or conduct a community workshop for families.
  - Have business and community members help middle and high school students by conducting mock interviews, evaluating “practice” employment applications, reviewing and advising student resumes, or assisting with career information interviews.



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- Partner with local civic and service groups to extend open invitations to teachers and administrators to attend meetings and events during summer months and breaks. Offer opportunities for teachers or administrators to speak and share successes or concerns that need community attention or input.
  - Ask community, faith, government, and for profit organizations and businesses to share key school messages with community members through newsletters, signs, and other advertising methods.
  - Sponsor career days or career fairs at school that showcase various jobs and volunteer opportunities around the community. Have participating partners provide opportunities for career intern sites or job shadowing to students.
  - Establish a community homework hour. Ask families, churches, business leaders, and others to support students in setting aside a designated hour each day for homework, reading, or other school related projects.
  - Invite community members to school programs through personal invitations or announcements. Use your community partners to help get the word out. To increase attendance, hold some school programs in other community facilities.
  - Hold a Community Clean Up Day that allows the school to show their appreciation to local business and community organizations. Use the time for students, teachers, administrators, and parents to work together in teams to complete various clean-up chores that local community organizations submit. Help students recognize their sense of belonging in the community.
  - Encourage local businesses to participate in a Support Our Schools Program that has businesses donate a percentage of their profits for one business day. Allow businesses to choose the day of the event, the percentage of profits they wish to donate, and which school enrichment program or opportunity they wish to fund.
  - Send regular letters to the local newspaper sharing the positive things happening at the school. Focus especially on stories that highlight family and community support.
  - Make a video about your school that includes ways families and community members can get involved in education. Share it with new parents, show it on the local TV station, and work with local businesses such as restaurants and doctors' offices to have them play it on their televisions.



- Open the school up to the community by setting up a program at the school using business leaders, parents, community members and students to offer free computer classes to the public. If free computer classes are not needed, find out what is needed and create a free program to enhance those skill sets for the community at the school.

## **2. What Families Can Do**

### *Have Families...*

- Participate in school and community events, regardless of their location.
- Find out about and use information on community resources and organizations. Take advantage of the benefits they offer.
- Make local agencies and businesses aware of what is happening at your school. Ask places you frequent often if they would be willing to promote and advertise various events inclusive of academic, sporting, or the arts.
- Help the school develop a directory of social and community services for students and their families. If you cannot donate much time, just submit a list of social and community services you are aware of to help in compiling the list.
- Help coordinate and participate in events that support community groups.
- Ask your employer about holding a parent meeting or parent workshop for the school on-site before or after work hours. Other ideas may include lunch sessions too.
- Talk with employers and local businesses about making donations to support school programs.
- Talk positively about education with friends, businesses, community groups, and others in the community you come across.
- Help organize and/or participate in community health fairs, community resource fairs, or parent and families expos.
- Recruit community members to volunteer their time at the school or at community organizations that benefit students.



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- Become active in community groups that support today's children and youth such as the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, or Boy and Girl Scouts.
  - Serve on local community advisory councils and committees or represent a community group on a school council or leadership team.
  - Seek and invite local authorities and public officials to sponsor community events or to visit the school regularly.
  - Help organize and/or participate in a community clean up day or school beautification project.
  - Encourage and find ways for your child to participate in community service. If able, participate in service projects with your child.
  - Be a role model for your child by being active in the community.

### **3. What Students Can Do**

#### *Have Students...*

- Attend civic organization meetings during summer or other school breaks and participate in special events that they have throughout the year.
  - Invite community members, neighbors, and friends to school events.
  - Organize a donation drive or other project to meet a community need or simply give back.
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- Share information about family trips with your teacher and class as an opportunity to learn about geography, culture, and activities.
  - Identify and discuss different programs and agencies in the community to learn what is available. Make phone books and access to the internet available to them to assist in locating the resources.
  - Report their participation in celebrations, grand openings, art exhibitions, fairs and other community events. Offer opportunities for students to promote community activities or share experiences once they return.



- Attend a school board, city council, or county commission meeting to learn about what concerns adults in the community.
- Create a community bulletin board at the school where people can post information about events, services, and celebrations. Make sure it is placed in a high traffic area that many students and visitors can see.
- Participate in various leadership and community opportunities such as youth advisories, after-school programs, community and faith based councils.
- Review course catalogs from local colleges and universities, inclusive of technical and community colleges, and other training agencies. This will help provide the bigger pictures of what is available in career development and life-long learning opportunities.
- Interview community members for school projects.
- Write a letter to the local newspaper or television station about something they are passionate about sharing.
- Develop a community almanac that regularly reports on what is happening in the community. Have students report monthly on identifying seasonal changes and corresponding events and/or tasks.

**Adapted From:**

- New Mexico Highlands University. (2007). *Working Together: School-Family-Community Partnerships, a Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities*. Albuquerque: New Mexico Public Education Department. Available from [http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/pdfs/pd\\_mod6.pdf](http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/pdfs/pd_mod6.pdf)
- Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence and Partnership for Kentucky Schools. (1997). *92 Ways to Involve Families and the Community in Education*. Lexington, KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. Available from: <http://webapps.fcps.net/parenttoolkit/default.asp?prcltem=193>

To learn more about PTA's National Standards for Family School Partnerships please visit:  
[http://www.pta.org/family\\_school\\_partnerships.asp](http://www.pta.org/family_school_partnerships.asp)