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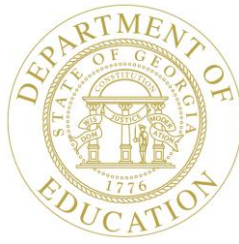
## Promising Practices for Meaningful Community Collaborations

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.
- 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.
  - 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.
- 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)