Standard 6:
Collaborating with the Community

Families and school staff collaborate with community members to *connect* students, families, and staff to expand learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Ideas for Implementation

1. Develop a school public relations campaign to rally the community around innovative and successful school programs. Pick a topic such as parent engagement, attendance, or the importance of graduating high school. Partner with local radio and television stations, faith-based and community-based organizations, health clinics, supermarkets, restaurants, and other neighborhood businesses. Ask them to use empty store front space to communicate the initiative and actively contribute their time to the greater cause.

2. Ask and seek out community members to sit on school committees. Share your school data and use their expertise to assist and develop programs to support student success. Get to know them as a resource and connection to the greater school community.

3. Link families to local resources to assist them in their everyday lives. Hold community resource fairs that connect families to all types of free resources and services. Develop a community resource directory or partner with a local non-profit organization to create one. Work with local partners to help communicate the various services offered, especially ones that many could benefit from but do not seek out on their own.

4. Bring community members into the school community by creating various opportunities for them to share their skills or participate in events. Reach out to local business and community partners at the beginning of each school year by sending a personal note from the school or stopping by to just say hello. Let them know that you would like to work together. Use community partners in different ways such as opening car doors in the morning car pool lane, joining the school volunteer program, reading to a class once a month, or conducting workshops for students and families on various topics. Better yet, partner with businesses to allow their employees to volunteer in some way once a month!

5. Build trust and understanding with your community partners. Know their contributions and limitations. Make sure your partnerships are strategic and mutually beneficial. Think about what you can contribute to the partnership. Is it physical school space? Is it expertise? Is it giving back by holding a community clean up day that allows the school to share its appreciation to local partners? The stronger the relationship is with your partners, the better outcomes for your students and families.

6. Make your school the hub of the community. Extend the hours of the school media center, computer lab, or gym to allow families and community members access to these resources and facilities. Offer homework and mentoring sessions for family and community members to interact with students. Offer the use of the school auditorium or cafeteria for town hall meetings and other community events. Allow the community recreation center to hold exercise classes, inclusive of nutrition guidance, in the school gym. The possibilities are endless.

7. Ensure all community partnership activities link to learning. Utilize traditional and non-traditional partnerships. Have knowledge share activities where students interview senior citizens at a local assisted living facility about events in history, or have younger students create books or notes for them that share information about the current curriculum they are learning. Think outside the box.

8. Partner with local businesses to allow them to encourage employees with children to be involved in their child's education (and those without children to give back to the community). Leave school flyers in the break rooms, hold school-parent meetings during lunch hours on-site, or provide learning opportunities for the student and parent through skype (and other media tools) so employees do not even have to leave their desk.

9. Develop a shared vision for success by reaching out to a broad base of community partners. Make education everyone's business by holding quarterly community forums for partners to come to the school and learn about current initiatives. Allow them to share ideas for collaboration and work together to make them happen. Map out all your community resources and do not leave anyone out.

10. Coordinate 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 and administrators to speak and share successes or concerns that need community input. Ask the outreach groups to conduct workshops and share resources with teachers so they can learn about the educational, cultural, business, and economic service resources in the community.

Reference:

National Parent Teacher Association (PTA). (2009). *PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships: An Implementation Guide.* Retrieved from http://www.pta.org/2757.asp

Your Ideas for Implementation

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