

LEAD FOR LITERACY MEMO

Providing guidance for leaders dedicated to children's literacy development, birth to age 9

DESIGNING FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Issue: Despite the potential for partnerships with families that boost children's literacy development, most plans to engage families are not literacy focused. Updating the design of your family partnership plan—with children's literacy needs at the core—can make a difference in literacy and academic outcomes.

What Are Some Common Pitfalls That Impede Impact?

Common Pitfalls	What We're Learning
1. Families want to support their children's learning, but there is no plan in place to capitalize on this commitment.	1. Educators need to equip families with information and home literacy activities that will support their children's literacy learning.
2. Leaders commit to school-family partnerships, but rarely focus on building relationships with families that foster children's literacy development.	2. A key goal of the school-family partnership must be to boost literacy rates, and leaders must show commitment to that goal.
3. The site's plan for school-family partnerships was designed without input from families.	3. Family representatives, staff, and leaders must work together to develop a school-family partnership plan that will boost literacy.
4. Educators are the link between families and schools, but often don't have the training necessary to help families support their children's literacy.	4. For educators to understand and support home literacy practices, professional development must be part of a school-family partnership plan (Memos 8 & 9).

Self-study for Impact:

As you go through the process of tightening your site's link between literacy learning and family engagement, use this checklist:

Put Children's Literacy Learning at the Core!

- Appoint an individual (or team) with knowledge about literacy (Memos 3 & 4) to lead the family partnership effort
- In collaboration with family and staff representatives, examine current: 1) family partnership efforts, 2) trends in literacy at the site
- Use this accumulated information to set goals for advancing literacy in partnership with families
- Update your family partnership plan to include specific actions that will change or improve behaviors and impact children's literacy skills (Memo 1)

Get the school community invested!

- Incorporate input from families into the updated plan for school-family partnerships
- Clearly communicate the specific plan for the school-family partnership, and the rationale behind it, to the whole community
- Provide educators with professional development (Memos 8 & 9) that builds:
 - knowledge about how school-family partnerships will improve children's literacy outcomes
 - capacity to support families' literacy practices

For More on This...

Beyond the Bake Sale:

The Essential Guide to Family/School Partnerships
by A.T. Henderson, K.L. Mapp, V.R. Johnson, & D. Davies

School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action by J.L. Epstein & colleagues

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