

## Wise Ways

**All teachers communicate regularly with primary caregivers and encourage them to participate as active partners in teaching and reinforcing physical, social, emotional, behavioral, and academic competencies. (CL15)**

### Evidence Review:

Specific family involvement processes have been shown to improve elementary school children's reading scores, language growth and development, motivation to achieve, pro-social behavior, and quality work habits. These family involvement processes, supported by substantial research, can be organized within the following framework:

- *Parenting* consists of the attitudes, values, and practices of parents in raising young children. Positive parent-child relationships, where the parents demonstrate support, appropriate instruction based on the child's development and respect for his/her autonomy, are associated with pro-social behaviors and academic success (Eccles, J. S., 1999; and Morrison, E. F., Rimm-Kauffman, S., & Pianta, R., 2003). Linkages with the community, inclusive of parents' social networks of families, friends, and neighbors, can serve as resources and have a significant impact on parenting (Marshall, N. L., et al, 2001).
- *Home-school relationships* are the formal and informal connections between the family and educational setting. These relationships are developed and maintained through various communication efforts as well as through parental participation in school events and formal parent involvement activities. A study of ethnically diverse and low income children in grades K-5 and their families revealed that high levels of family involvement was predictive of gains in child literacy performance. Parent involvement activities included: parent-teacher conferences, classroom visits, school performances, field trips, social events, and volunteering (Dearing, E., et al, 2006).
- *Responsibility for learning* is the aspect of parenting that places emphasis on activities in the home and community that promote learning skills in the young child. Parents can accomplish this by supporting literacy, helping with homework, managing children's education, and maintaining high expectations (Dearing, E., et al, 2004).

Teachers can support these specific family involvement processes by creating welcoming environments for families and sharing information about:

- children's performance, including children's successes and challenges over an array of settings in a timely fashion;
- content-specific knowledge;
- school events and parent involvement opportunities in the school and classroom;
- local evidence-based parenting program opportunities; and
- other community resources.

**Source-** Caspe, M., Lopez, M. E., & Wolos, C. (Winter 2006/2007). *Family Involvement in Elementary School Children's Education* (Family Involvement Makes a Difference Series, Brief No. 2). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved from [http://www.hfrp.org/FI\\_ElementarySchool](http://www.hfrp.org/FI_ElementarySchool).

### References and Other Resources:

- Dearing, E., Kreider, H., Simpkins, S., & Weiss, H. B. (2006). Family involvement in school and low-income children's literacy performance: Longitudinal associations between and within families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98, 653–664.
- Dearing, E., McCartney, K., Weiss, H. B., Kreider, H., & Simpkins, S. (2004). The promotive effects of family educational involvement for low-income children's literacy. *Journal of School Psychology*, 42(6), 445–460.
- Eccles, J. S. (1999). The development of children ages 6 to 14. *The Future of Children*, 9(2), 30–44.

Marshall, N. L., Noonan, A. E., McCartney, K., Marx, F., & Keefe, N. (2001). It takes an urban village: Parenting networks of urban families. *Journal of Family Issues*, 22(2),163–182.

**Evidence Review:**

Family involvement has been effective in facilitating children's cognitive, social, and emotional functioning and has improved self-esteem, behavior, and attitudes toward school (Christenson & Havsy, 2004; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005). Consistent among successful school family partnerships are:

- the underlying beliefs that *all* families can contribute to children's learning and development and that parents and teachers share responsibility for nurturing and educating children; and
- the needs and characteristics of the particular school community in which they are based are incorporated into efforts (Christenson & Havsey, 2004).

School Family Partnership activities can be organized into the following categories:

- *Two-way school-home communication*, which informs, educates, and empowers families to be actively and effectively involved in children's education.
- *Family involvement at home*, which helps families establish a home environment that extends and reinforces school-based learning.
- *Family involvement in school*, which encourages families to participate in classroom- and school-based activities and events.

Effective efforts to promote home-school communication and family involvement at home include:

- *Child-centered communication* that is specific to the child; this type of communication is most likely to engage parents, due to its personalized nature and individual relevance.
- *Constructive communication*—information that is meaningful and useful because it provides families with practical suggestions.
- *Clear and concrete guidelines and strategies*, which are most beneficial to families in supporting children's actual learning.
- *Continual, ongoing communication*, which keeps families informed about and in sync with classroom practices and policies, and children's performance and skill development.

Some strategies for creating and maintain school family partnerships to teach and reinforce social, emotional and academic competencies include:

- Learn about children and families in the community;
- Be positive- communicate, respect, support and appreciation;
- Share information about classroom policies and practices;
- Inform parents of the strategies being used at school to promote social and emotional learning;
- Share specific strategies and practical tips to promote children's social and emotional learning at home; and
- Invite parents into the classroom to observe and actively participate.

**Source-** School-Family Partnership Strategies to Enhance Children's Social, Emotional, and Academic Growth, *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in collaboration with The National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, which is managed by Education Development Center, Inc.*

**Evidence Review:**

Family involvement in a student's education can result in numerous positive outcomes, including improved student achievement and behavior. Epstein, et.al (2008) suggest that teachers

proactively communicate with families before any problems are identified. Recommendations include:

- sending positive emails or notes home that highlight the student's strengths;
- providing a parent signature log with the child's homework assignments;
- communicating regularly by phone; and
- inviting parents to participate in school events.

When social, emotional, behavioral or academic concerns are identified, teachers need to communicate these concerns to the parent and describe any strategies implemented in the classroom to address the barrier(s) to learning. The teacher should also invite the family in solving any school related concerns.

**Source-**

IES Practice Guide for Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom