

# Partnering with Parents

How Early Childhood Professionals  
Can Bridge the Gap

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# Goals:

“There’s more than one way to raise a child.” - Unknown

## Parents:

- Be happy
- Go to college
- Be responsible
  
- Be independent
- Have integrity (be honest)
- Be respectful

## Teachers:

- Be happy
- Be a life-long learner
- Learn that actions have results
  
- Make choices
- Take care of classmates
- Learn from others

# Partner (noun)

- *1archaic* : one that shares : partaker<sup>2</sup> a: one associated with another especially in an action : associate colleague b: either of two persons who dance together c: one of two or more persons who play together in a game against an opposing side d: a person with whom one shares an intimate relationship : one member of a couple<sup>3</sup>: a member of a partnership especially in a business; *also* : such membership<sup>4</sup>: one of the heavy timbers that strengthen a ship's deck to support a mast —usually used in plural
- From: <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/partner>

# Partner (verb)

- *transitive verb* 1 : to join or associate with another as partner 2 : to provide with a partner *intransitive verb* : to join as a partner
- From: <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary>

# What Affects the Partnership

- Communication
- Diversity
- Power
- Decision Making
- Understanding of Each Other's Backgrounds
- Networks of Support

# Communication:

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak: courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.” - Unknown

- You are the host of the classroom – beware of families’ self-efficacy as well as your own
- Be proactive rather than reactive
- Use a variety of forms – newsletters, daily notes, daily conversations, conferences, bulletin boards, photos, artwork
- Families need to be provided with a variety of ways to give feedback – letters, notes, conversations, suggestion box, what else?

# Diversity:

“The great accomplishments of man have resulted from transmission of ideas and enthusiasm.” – Thomas J. Watson

- Ethnicity
  - Use resources including books
- Culture
  - Incorporate daily in the classroom by various methods including music
- Child-rearing strategies
  - The classroom’s is most-likely different than at home
  - Remember it is easier to be consistent in the classroom than at home and be supportive of families
  - Even if the methods are different

# Power:

“It is good to rub and polish our brain against that of others.” - Montaigne

- It needs to be shared so that there's a balance



# Decision Making:

“Don’t permit yourself to show temper. Always remember that if you are right you can afford to keep your temper, and if you are wrong you cannot afford to lose it.” J. Reynolds

- Both sides need to come willing to listen
- The decision needs to be made collaboratively
- Professionals represent the benefit of the whole class/school
- Families represent the lifelong success of the child

# Understanding of Each Other's Backgrounds and Situations

- Professional's previous experience with families
- Families' previous experience with schools
- What resources are accessed outside of the classroom?
- Family System's Theory

# Networks of Support

- I talked to my friend, and at her son/daughter's school....
- We've done this activity for years...
- Circles of Interaction:
  - Work, recreation, health care, extended family, friends, school, social services, college
- More difficult to establish and maintain now because people are so busy

# Challenges:

“Bad times have a scientific value. These are occasions a good learner would not miss.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

- Families who do not support the curriculum
- Different guidance strategies
- Different beliefs about children’s conflict resolution – “I tell my kid to hit back.”
- Families are busy
- When the families listen to the child and are not open to another opinion

# Activities that Support Collaboration:

*“We can do anything if we stick to it long enough.” – Helen Keller*

- Family Banners
- Invite families to read a story to the class
- Invite families to participate in events and/or activities
- Invite families to share information about their ethnic/cultural traditions
- Explore other resources that families can offer
- What else?

## E.C. Professionals

## Families

Learn what child is like at home and what guidance strategies the family uses

Learn what child is like at school and what guidance strategies school uses

Resource for ideas, expertise, materials, volunteers, and community connections

Greater understanding of children which helps teacher develop a more accurate curriculum

Gain access to information about child development & teaching strategies

Receive acknowledgement for work they do as child's teacher

Receive acknowledgement for work they do as child's first teacher

Greater feeling of success and competence

Have a sounding board, support, and referrals to resources when feeling challenged

Experience children's increased trust

Can share joys, accomplishments, struggles, sorrows of child with someone who cares about child

Solving conflicts makes interacting more enjoyable

Feel confidence and security that leaving child in good care

# Resources

- From Parents to Partners by Janis Keyser
- Off to School by Irene Hannigan
- “Young Children: Spotlight on Families”
- Kids Quotes by
- Teaching Adults Revisited by Elizabeth Jones
- Grassroots Success! by Valora Washington, Valorie Johnson, and Janet Brown McCracken