Collaborative Family-School Relationships for Children's Learning

Beliefs

and

Practices

Study Guide

2004

Virginia Department of Education

This study guide is designed in the form of a series of questions to assist in the understanding of the material presented in "Collaborative Family-School Relation-ships for Children's Learning: Beliefs and Practices", a publication of the Virginia Department of Education. The questions move in a sequence with the text and are best utilized in the context of a group discussion. Adequate time needs to be allotted and a discussion leader might best facilitate the process. The appointment of a recorder will assure that a record of all ideas generated will be maintained.

The information in this publication is intended to encourage educators to reflect on their attitudes towards parents. Implementing an effective family-school partnership is a process activity. It is more than implementing an idea or two. Schools need to commit to this concept, assess their current level of functioning, develop a plan of action, and implement it. This resource can assist you with the process.

The Collaborative Family-School Relationships for Children's Learning: Beliefs and Practices/Study Guide publication is divided into five sections:

1. Overview
2. Understanding Past Practices and Influences
3. Fostering Positive Family-School Working Relationships
4. Establishing Intervention Points
5. Finding Additional Resources

Each section consists of study questions, points of reflection, and an action plan.

Note - In the study guide, the word "parent" refers to the primary caregiver, relative, foster parent, etc.

CHAPTER

1

Overview

Study Questions: Please refer to the manual to answer the following questions.

1) Why is parent involvement a part of today's education?
   (pgs. 1-3)

2) What are the challenges to effective parent involvement?
   (pgs. 1-3)

Points of Reflection: As a group, reflect and discuss the following questions.

1) What challenges do you see regarding effective parent involvement?

2) What do you see as the implications of the words "choice of partnership"?

3) How do you see your relationship with parents?

Action Plan and Points of Implementation:

A.

B.

C.

D.

CHAPTER 2

Understanding Past Practices and Influences

Study Questions: Please refer to the manual to answer the following questions.

1) Three movements are noted on page 5: parent education, parent involvement in education, and family-school partnership. What are the chief features of these movements?

2) Three emerging trends and practices are given on pages 9 and 10: systems approach, creating conditions to enhance family-school connections and providing professional development for school staff members. Explain these trends.
    a. Systems Approach

    b. Creating Conditions to Enhance Family-School Connections

    c. Providing Professional Development for School Staff Members

3) What emerging practices are given for creating conditions to enhance family-school connections? (pg. 10)

Points of Reflection: As a group, reflect and discuss the following questions.

Past Practices and Influences

1) What element of each feature do you see in your school?

2) According to research, what are the benefits of positive parent relationships?

Systems Approach

1) Create an illustration depicting what you see as traditional or existing thinking regarding family-school involvement.

2) Create an illustration depicting a systems approach to family-school involvement.

3) Why do you think a systems approach is considered a "promising practice"?

Creating Conditions to Enhance Family-School Connections

1) What practices do you have in place that develop efficient, routine communication?

2) What practices do you have in place that develop trust?

3) What practices do you have in place that focus on improving connections?

Providing Professional Development for School Staff Members

1) What information do you think you and your school staff need to improve your competency in family-school relationships?

2) How could you obtain this information?

Action Plan and Points of Implementation:

A.

B.

C.

D.

CHAPTER

3

Fostering Positive Family-School Working Relationships

Study Questions: Please refer to the manual to answer the following questions.

1) What is the "changing face of family involvement"? (pg. 13)

2) What are the roles of family-school involvement that promote student learning? (pg. 16)

3) Describe the functions of a school in family-school team (Comer model) and a family outreach model. (pg. 17)

Points of Reflection: As a group, reflect and discuss the following questions.

1) Review the chart of pages 14-15, "Types of Family Involvement". What activities are you, your school, or your school division currently conducting? How might some of these ideas be implemented in your situation?

2) Each family-school role is listed as a co function. What is the meaning and significance of the co descriptor?

3) How might you utilize the Comer or family outreach model in your school? What concerns would you have? What barriers do you see to implementing it? How might these barriers be removed?

4) Review pages 18-20 with particular emphasis on sidebar information. What strengths do you and/or your school possess? What areas need improvement? What actions might you take to make positive changes?
   ** Hint - The barriers on page 21 offer insight. **

Action Plan and Points of Implementation:

A.

B.

C.

D.

CHAPTER

4

Establishing Intervention Points

Establishing a Welcoming and Positive School Climate

Study Questions: Please refer to the manual to answer the following questions.

1) What are the characteristics of a welcoming climate in a school? (pgs. 23-24)

2) What practices support this environment? (pgs. 25-26)

3) How can efficiency be a barrier to building trust? (pgs. 25-26)

Points of Reflection: As a group, reflect and discuss the following questions.

Page 26 provides sidebars about trust with students and parents and creating a welcoming environment. Review these sections and think about your practices and the practices currently in your building.

1) What areas are you doing well with and where is improvement needed?

2) What actions could you put into place to create a more welcoming and trusting environment?

Action Plan and Points of Implementation:

A.

B.

C.

D.

Implementing Effective Communication Strategies

Study Question: Please refer to the manual to answer the following question.

1) In the context of building partnerships, what themes should all communications from educators convey to parents? (pgs. 27 - 28)

Points of Reflection: As a group, reflect and discuss the following questions.

Ideas for implementation of effective communication practices are given on Pages 27-30. Review these.

1) What practices do you currently have in place?

2) What ideas are applicable to your school?

3) How would you implement these?

Action Plan and Points of Implementation:

A.

B.

C.

D.

Resolving Conflicts

Study Questions: Please refer to the manual to answer the following questions.

1) What is the meaning of contextual differences? (pg. 31)

2) How does this play into the development of conflict and how does it make problem solving more complicated? (pg. 31)

3) What are three non-adversarial approaches to managing conflict? Discuss each of these. (pg. 31)

Points of Reflection: As a group, reflect and discuss the following question.

1) How can you and your colleagues be trained in these skills?

Action Plan and Points of Implementation:

A.

B.

C.

D.

Including Families in Problem Solving and Decision Making

1) How is problem solving defined? (pg. 33)

2) Why is it beneficial? (pg. 33)

3) What are the steps of problem solving? (pg. 33)

4) How can shared decision making be accomplished? (pg. 34)

Points of Reflection: As a group, reflect and discuss the following question.

1) How can you and your colleagues be trained in these skills?

Action Plan and Points of Implementation:

A.

B.

C.

D.

Enhanced Learning at Home

Study Questions: Please refer to the manual to answer the following questions.

1) What are the home predictors of school success? (pg. 35)

2) What are the sample practices for enhancing learning at home? (pg. 35)

3) What are the six factors that are keys to helping students achieve their potential? (See side bar - Creating Conditions for Student Success. Review the ideas for educators, families, and the public.)

Points of Reflection: As a group, reflect and discuss the following question.

1) What practices are you implementing for educators to achieve student success? Note: Refer to side bar - Creating Conditions for Student Success.

Action Plan and Points of Implementation:

A.

B.

C.

D.

Engaging Uninvolved Families

Study Questions: Please refer to the manual to answer the following questions.

1) Lack of involvement is often viewed as lack of interest. What other factors are given? (pg. 40)

2) What additional factors have you experienced?

Points of Reflection: As a group, reflect and discuss the following question.

1) The sidebar on pages 42-43, "Reflection: Reaching Uninvolved Families" asks a series of questions. These questions offer teachers and school administrators an opportunity to assess both their attitudes and practices. Use these questions to guide a structured discussion.

Action Plan and Points of Implementation:

A.

B.

C.

D.

CHAPTER

5

Finding Additional Resources

Points of Reflection: As a group, reflect and discuss the following question.

1) Pages 45-49 provide information on resources that are available on the topic of family-school relationships. Which would you like to see in you school's professional library?

Action Plan and Points of Implementation:

A.

B.

C.

D.