Beyond Participation: Building Strong Partnerships

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Objectives

Participants will be able to:

• Understand the importance of building partnerships
• Identify barriers to parent participation
• Use strategies to help foster home/school partnerships
Agenda

• Welcome
• The importance of family participation
• Barriers to participation
• Communication
• Positions and interests
• Conflict
• Strategies to improve partnerships
• Available resources
Introductions

• Name
• Where you’re from
• Your job title
• A unique fact about you
Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.

-Helen Keller
Meaningful Participation

Define meaningful participation.
The Importance of Participation

“...parent/family involvement significantly contributes to improved student outcomes” (Carter, 2002, p.1).

“The evidence is consistent, positive and convincing: families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life” (Henderson and Mapp, 2002, p.7).

“It is simply impossible to have an island of excellence in a sea of community indifference, and when parents become school partners, the results can be consequential and enduring” (Boyer, 1995, p.61).
An Ounce of Prevention...

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<th>Stages of Conflict</th>
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Dimensions that help clarify placement of the options along the Continuum

- Third-Party Assistance
- Decision Making by Parties
- Interest-Based
- Formal & Flexible

Third-Party Intervention
- Decision Making by Third-Party
- Rights-Based
- Formal & Fixed

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So What’s the Problem?

Recent longitudinal research suggests that parent and student participation in IEP planning is less prevalent than expected (Wagner et al., 2012)
What’s Getting in the Way?
Walk the Room

Get into a small group and discuss the potential barriers to meaningful parental participation. Select one person to chart your group’s responses. If one of your responses is already listed, place a check next to it.
CONFLICT

What comes to mind when you hear the word “conflict?”

How does conflict affect you? Your job? Your life?
Conflict Reframed

“If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.”

-Frederick Douglas
Dimensions of Conflict

Problem

People

Process
Listening to Understand

- Pair up with a partner.
- Decide who will be the speaker and listener.
- What did he/she do that made you feel he/she was listening?
- What was his/her attitude toward you?
Effective Listening

Basic skill clusters for effective listening:

**Attending Skills**
- Contact (distance, eyes, touch)
- Gestures
- Body language
- Interested silence

**Responding Skills**
- Reflect content, emotions, meaning
- Ask open-ended questions
- Summarize and clarify

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Communication Loop

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High Risk Responses

1. Ordering
2. Threatening
3. Moralizing
4. Advice
5. Logical Argument
6. Questions
7. Judging
8. Praising
9. Name-Calling
10. Diagnosing
11. Reassuring
12. Diverting
Tips for Communicating Effectively

• Be mindful of your emotional pressure
• Focus positively on your goals - suppress negative expectations
• Prioritize issues
• Listen to understand the other perspectives
• Ask questions for clarification
• Rephrase and restate
• Be open to multiple solutions
• Keep the focus on the student
• Remember you are human

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Bias

Noun:
a particular tendency, trend, inclination, feeling, or opinion, especially one that is preconceived or unreasoned
Getting Caught in a Loop

The Ladder of Inference

Action
Beliefs
Conclusions
Assumptions
Select Data

Pool of Available Data

Reflexive Loop
Our beliefs affect what data we select next time

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Rethinking Thinking
Breaking the Cycle

• How has bias impacted you in your life? Career?
• How has bias impacted families you support?
• How can we break the loop?
Positions and Interests

Positions are:
- Declarative
- Fixed
- One solution

Interests are:
- Hidden
- Underlying need
- Open to many solutions

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Questions For Uncovering Interests

• What will you gain if you get what you’re asking for?
• What are you afraid will happen if we do ___?
• Why is that important to you?
• How does this solve the issue?
• Why isn’t this option acceptable to you?
Position vs. Interest

• Family Position: “We want Philip to have 45 minutes of speech therapy every day.”
• School Position: “Philip will get 20 minutes of speech therapy twice a week.”
Position vs. Interest

• Family Position: “Anita has to be in Ms. Smith’s class next year.”

• School Position: “Anita will be in Ms. Jones class.”
How Do You Respond to Conflict?

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How Do You Respond to Conflict?

Controller
Collaborator
Avoider
Accommodator

Compromiser

Personal Goals
Relationship Goals

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Conflict Activity

• Listen to the scenario.
• Think about how you would respond.
• Walk to the portion of the room that represents your response.
• Chat with the people in your area.
• Someone from each area report out the group’s perspective.
Always Ask Yourself

“Is this approach (style) the best one to use right now in order to reach a successful outcome to the problem at hand?”
Strategies for Building Partnerships

• Prepare families for conflict.
• Help families identify their interests rather than focusing on positions.
• Be aware of bias, both yours and your client’s.
• Model positive communication techniques.
• Teach reflective listening.
• Remember - building partnerships is an ongoing process.
Next Steps

• Take 5 minutes and jot down how you plan on applying the information covered today in your practice. What you will do following this training to encourage meaningful partnerships between schools and families?
Resources

Steps to Success: Communicating with Your Child’s School

If you have a child who is receiving special education services, you’re more than likely to be very involved with your child’s school and teachers — including planning, reviewing, and assessing your child’s educational program. Over time, you will learn a lot about the special education process and how to communicate and negotiate on your child’s behalf. While your knowledge, skill, and confidence will naturally increase, there are some specific communication skills that can help you be most successful in developing and maintaining a strong partnership with your child’s school. We hope these “Steps to Success” will be particularly helpful to parents who are new to the special education process.

Encouraging Meaningful Parent/Educator Collaboration: A Review of Recent Literature

Timothy Hedeen, Philip Moses and Marshall Peters

Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE)
Eugene, Oregon

July 2011

Supporting the prevention and resolution of disputes through partnership and collaboration
Video resource available on the CADRE website
Questions
Debrief

What Worked? | What Can We Improve?
Need More Information?

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