



Supporting Parents *through* Communication *and* Education

What Gets in the Way of Partnerships?

The difference between parental involvement and partnerships in schools and preschools has to do primarily with power and authority. Typically, family involvement consists of families taking the time to contribute to the school or child care facility. These may include participating in activities such as:

- Fundraising;
- Serving on committees;
- Contributing materials; and
- Organizing and/or attending social events or meetings.

Most parental involvement allows the professional to maintain control and power. Partnerships require a confident child care professional who is open to parents' priorities and who is clear about areas where compromise or negotiation is not possible. This may be due to regulations, when parents' requests do not fit with the center's philosophy or policies, or are not in the child's best interests. However, when partnerships *are* in place, parents are encouraged to express their concerns, question practices and policies, and ask for what they want. When requests cannot be agreed to, professionals owe them an explanation, given *without* any implication that it was inappropriate to ask.

Certainly, having a variety of ways for parents to become involved is important, and can contribute to a partnership. However, it is possible for parents to be involved and not have a partnership – that is, to not have much of a say in their child's classroom experience. That is a key difference.

What Gets in the Way?

Partnerships aren't easy. Obstacles include:

- ❖ Inclination for one party to blame the other when something goes wrong;



- ❖ Narrow view of the role of the child care professional;
- ❖ Parents' expectations – they may not be expecting a partnership; and
- ❖ Parents' lack of confidence – “*What do I know?*”

Practices that Promote Partnerships

❖ *Share good news.* Both parents and child care professionals need to share all of the good things going on with the child at home and school. This includes the little things, not just the big events or milestones. This demonstrates that both parties truly know and value the child.

❖ *Start with the little things, and build from there.* Just as is the case with personal relationships, partnerships between parents and child care professionals are built on many small, often brief, sometimes seemingly insignificant and taken for granted encounters – all the little things that both parties do and say.

Summary

True partnerships mean that parents and professionals negotiate the child's experience in child care or school. ■

Source: Excerpted with permission from March/April 2011 issue of “Exchange” magazine, www.childcareexchange.com.

ACTIVITY PLANNER

Activity Calendar Ideas!

In previous issues of *Parent Talk*, we have presented activities that parents can place on a calendar as a way to encourage more movement in their home. This is important because, let's face it, children and adults alike are often too sedentary in today's high-tech world. The following are more suggestions to try with your kids. Pencil in these suggestions on various dates on a calendar:

❖ *Have fun with sidewalk chalk.* Make a big circle with sidewalk chalk – and practice moving in relationship to the circle. Can you move in and out; over; around; under? Can you move with one foot in and one foot out?

❖ *Play run and touch.* Have one of your kids identify a part of your body and assign a number that goes with it. Then run and touch that many items using that body part. For instance, run and touch eight things with your elbow.



❖ *Play a game of three!* Take turns doing three different movements. Wiggle, reach, and touch the floor. Touch your nose, lay on the floor, jump really high. Make some up! The only limit is your imagination!

❖ *Go for a walk and look for things that begin with different letters of the alphabet.* Make a game out of it – the person who comes up with the most different letters wins an ice cream cone! ■

Source: www.headstartbodystart.org.

STUDY BUDDY

Read-aloud Enjoyment

Some of the best times with your child may be when you share a story. Get the most out of reading aloud with these easy tips:

❖ *Be visual.* Hold the book so your youngster can see the words and pictures while you're reading. Run your finger under the text, or point to interesting things in the illustrations.



❖ *Take your time and don't rush.* Your child can tell if you're in a hurry. Reading slowly will help you read clearly – and it'll give you and your youngster more time together!

❖ *Gauge your child's interest.* Don't be afraid to stop reading a book if your child doesn't seem interested. Have another selection ready so read-aloud can continue. ■

Source: Reading Connection.

SNACK SMART

Snack Ideas!

🍷 **Mini-pizza:** Toast an English muffin, drizzle with pizza sauce and sprinkle with low-fat mozzarella cheese.

🍷 **Rocky Road:** Break a graham cracker into bite-size pieces. Add to low-fat chocolate pudding along with a few miniature marshmallows.

🍷 **Inside-out Sandwich:** Spread mustard on a slice of deli turkey. Wrap around a sesame breadstick.

🍷 **Parfait:** Layer vanilla yogurt and mandarin oranges or blueberries in a tall glass. Top with a sprinkle of granola. ■

Source: American Dietetic Association.

BEEHAVIOR MATTERS

Discipline an Easier Way

Disciplining children is hard work. As parents, sometimes it feels like a constant battle. Let's think about a different approach. There are times in which games work better than punishment; and praise is more effective than scolding. A positive approach can work wonders in your children's education. Here are some tips:

❖ **Discipline through playtime** – Kids absorb many essential values while playing. They have to accept such "annoying" concepts as rules, waiting for other people's turns, and even losing. Those are all important disciplinary notions. The disciplinary process continues as you play. While your children play, the notions

of fair play and cooperation sink into their hearts, resulting in better behavior. Don't stress the education angle too strongly though. Games should be fun and your kids shouldn't feel they're being examined.

❖ **Behave yourself** – Remember that your own behavior is always the key. Your children look up to you and imitate you. They will show as much respect toward you as you show toward them. They will be just as courteous to you as you are to them. This can be a tough pill to swallow for some parents, but stop and think about it: If you are constantly yelling at your kids, why *wouldn't* they think it's ok to yell back?

❖ **Give praise when praise is due** – This is

something that is true of children of all ages, and it will continue to be relevant even when your kids have children of their own: always, **always**, praise your kids when they deserve it. Express your appreciation and let them know how much you're proud of them. You were busy all day and your child did his best to help. Let him know that you appreciate it. Eric helped his little brother with his homework? Praise him: "I saw how quietly you worked with Jimmy. I'm very proud of you." Remember to look into their eyes as you praise them. Show them that you really care, and they will naturally want to please you more often. ■

Source: "How to Improve Your Children's Behavior," www.childrensbehavior.net.

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