

Trends is published regularly throughout the school year by **Cornerstone Day School** as a service to New Jersey school professionals. Written by the educational professionals at Cornerstone, each issue highlights one important topic with practical applications for those working with students with emotional and behavioral problems.

TRENDS

PARENTS AS PARTNERS



"Integrating state of the art psychiatric treatment and outstanding academics within a dynamic school environment."

"The benefits of parent involvement for children and adolescents are seen across socio-economic status, race/ethnicity and gender, and include regular attendance, fewer behavior problems, higher grades and higher test scores."

References:

- Collier, M., Keefe, E. B., & Hirrel, L.A. (2015) Preparing Special Education Teachers to Collaborate With Families. *School Community Journal* 25(1), 117-135
- National Parent Teacher Association. (2009). Family-school partnerships. Retrieved (January 7, 2016) http://www.pta.org/family_school_partnerships.asp.

Educational research clearly demonstrates a strong relationship between the degree of parent/caregiver involvement in a child's education and the development of social, emotional and cognitive skills. Parent involvement includes talking to children about their education, actively participating in decisions about schooling, interacting with teachers and other school personnel, and participating in activities that extend and enhance the development of social and academic skills. The benefits of parent involvement for children and adolescents are seen across socio-economic status, race/ethnicity and gender, and include regular attendance, fewer behavior problems, higher grades and higher test scores. The following "high impact" strategies represent a good starting point for schools to consider to improve parent involvement:

Adopt a system-wide culture of hospitality

Hospitality is the number one strategy and an overarching principle in fostering parent engagement. It is one of the most effective and efficient investments school can make. It costs nothing, it does not involve extra time, and everyone has the capacity for hospitality without additional training. School personnel need only to think of how it feels when receiving a warm welcome.

Adopt a policy addressing family-school partnerships.

In development of the policy, school personnel should collaborate with parents to develop a set of measurable outcomes for parent engagement, including a method by which to evaluate annual progress toward the defined outcomes.

Foster a learning community that supports parent engagement

Parents should be involved in the selection of workshop topics that address parent engagement and support the delivery of such workshops for other parents. Involving parent groups in the creation and delivery of events for parents and school personnel creates buy-in, helps parents feel comfortable at events, and ensures that parents' needs are represented.

Empower parents of students with disabilities

Parents of students with disabilities have a particular need for information that enables them to effectively partner with school personnel in support of their child's education. This information should include such topics as parental rights, home support for academic work, effective discipline, community services and recreational opportunities.

Parents need to know whom to contact when they have questions about their children's academic, behavioral, and social/emotional progress or if they desire assistance with participating in the development of their children's IEP. Schools can provide parents with a simple visual flowchart describing the organizational structure of their children's school system, including information on whom to contact concerning questions about their children's education.

For parents of students with disabilities, the concept and process of transition to the adult world is significant. To facilitate successful secondary transition, parents of students ages 14 and older need to learn how their youth can explore and set goals to prepare for postsecondary schooling, employment, and/or independent living options. They may need support to effectively work in partnership with the governmental and community agencies designed to assist youth with transition and disability issues.

Parents can make a significant contribution to their child's education in a number of ways. They can provide a home setting that promotes and reinforces what is taught at school. As school supporters, they can contribute their knowledge and skills to enrich academic and social programs. As advocates, they can help children successfully navigate school and community systems, and help these systems be responsive to all families.

When parents and schools work in a partnership students and the community benefit.