

How to Collaborate with Service and Support Organizations

Definition:

- **What:** “Collaborating with service and support organizations” means working with non-profit and for-profit organizations that provide students and their families such support services as tutoring, mentoring, counseling, and enrichment. These services can be offered during or out of school time, and within or beyond the school’s walls. Partners may include community organizations, rec centers, faith-based organizations, mentoring services, libraries or museums, other government agencies, and educational service companies, among others. The collaboration should involve a reciprocal process in which schools and other partners engage families in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways, and families take initiative to actively support their children’s development and learning. Schools and partners also make efforts to listen to parents, support them, and ensure that they have the tools to participate actively in their children’s school experience.
- **Why:** Schools that serve under-resourced communities and youth usually don’t have the resources and capacity to provide everything their students need to thrive. Working with partners who can offer additional service and enrichment opportunities helps young people and their families make connections, expand networks, and develop academic potential as well as social-emotional life skills. Collaborations between schools and outside organizations help both partners better understand the young people they serve and target their offerings more appropriately. Partnerships strengthen all partners, resulting in improved program quality, more efficient use of resources, and better alignment of goals and curricula.
- **How:**
 - Recognize that collaboration with service and support providers will vary from school to school and district to district, depending on the needs identified and on the partners present and willing to engage in addressing those needs. It typically takes months or years to build trust, develop a common vision, and create and adapt an action plan involving multiple partners!
 - Establish a leadership team comprised of school and community stakeholders. The school principal, specialized instructional support staff, families, students, and community leaders should all be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school–community partnerships.
 - Assess current assets and needs to identify gaps and develop a framework for evaluating results. Partnerships should complement existing school resources and programs and help fill in the gaps based on the needs identified. Schools and partners should mutually establish a framework to assess results in relation to specific short- and long-term goals based on the needs identified.

- Designate a person at the school to coordinate school–community partnerships. Coordinators help maintain partnerships with community agencies and facilitate effective communication and collaboration among the leadership team, specialized instructional support personnel, service providers, school personnel, parents, families, and members of the community.
- Use formal agreements to establish clear expectations and shared accountability for partners. Delineation of roles and responsibilities for school personnel and community providers enhances efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, while ensuring that the needs of the school are being.
- Provide ongoing comprehensive professional development for all school leaders, staff, and community partners. Continuous, high-quality professional development is important to ensure effective partnerships. Regular meetings with all stakeholders participating (school staff and community partners) should occur to ensure that they continue to build relationships and trust, develop a common vocabulary, and learn the same content and best practices around school–community partnerships.
- Determine what data can and should be shared with which partners, and set up appropriate data-sharing agreements to help partners target and monitor interventions and impact.

Exemplars in Practice:

- **School-Community Partnerships: Joining forces to support the learning and development of all students**, The Aspen Institute, 2018.
Excellent report on the Tacoma (WA) Whole Child Initiative, a citywide collaboration of government and non-profit agencies with the Tacoma Public Schools.
The initiative, focused on academic excellence, partnership, early learning, and safety, has produced a 30-point increase in graduation rates over ten years. “What Makes for a Strong Partnership?” on page 5 is especially helpful. Additional snapshots of the Providence (RI) After School Alliance, New York City Student Success Network, and Communities In Schools of Central Texas (greater Austin area).
<https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2018/04/Community-School-Partnerships-Case-Study.pdf>
- **The Lawrence Community Partnerships Case Study**. MassINC Gateway Cities Innovation Institute, Oct. 22, 2015.
How the Lawrence (MA) school district developed a collaboration with the Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs, YMCA, and multiple other community organizations to provide extensive enrichment experiences for youth from Lawrence’s low-income working families. Very helpful.
<http://massinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Lawrence-Community-Partnership-Case-Study1.pdf>

- **The Helping Families Initiative**

The Helping Families Initiative is a unique program of the Volunteers of America Southeast, helps local district attorney's offices and community organizations support schools to work with families of chronically absent students. <https://hfiAlabama.com/>

Also see the research report "Helping Families Initiative: Intervening with High-Risk Students through a Community, School, and District Attorney Partnership," Turner et al., *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 26(3):209-223, June 2009.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225773283_Helping_Families_Initiative_Intervening_with_High-Risk_Students_through_a_Community_School_and_District_Attorney_Partnership

- **Partners for Education at Berea College**

For more than 23 years, the Partners for Education at Berea College have mobilized funding and worked with nonprofit and government agencies to raise rural Appalachian youths' educational aspirations and attainment, becoming a national leader in improving outcomes among rural youth.

<https://www.berea.edu/pfe/>

- **New Visions for Public Schools**

New Visions for Public Schools is an organization dedicated to improving outcomes for all New York City public school students since 1989, works with traditional and charter public schools in a variety of initiatives. Currently these include the College Advising Pilot Program for 27 schools; the eighteen-school College Readiness Network for School improvement; and the Transfer to Careers program providing meaningful pathways to success for overage and under-credited students.

<https://www.newvisions.org/>

Training Materials:

- **Essential Elements in Implementation**, John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities; Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University; and UChicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, May 2014.

Basic information as you begin to explore the power of collaborations.

<https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Essential%20Elements%20in%20Implementation.pdf>

- **Achieving Results through Community School Partnerships**, Center for American Progress, January 2012.

Comprehensive guide for developing and sustaining community schools.

https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2012/01/pdf/community_schools.pdf

- **The Expanded Learning & Afterschool Project, “Toolkit for Expanding Learning.”**
A toolkit of resources for city agencies, school districts, intermediaries and other organizations seeking to implement or strengthen city-wide expanded learning opportunities.
<https://www.expandinglearning.org/toolkit>

Resources:

- **Resources to Learn More: Research, Guides and Other Toolkits, Institute for Local Government.**
Links to multiple resources on options in creating and sustaining community-school partnerships.
<http://www.ca-ilg.org/resources-learn-more-research-guides-and-other-toolkits>
- **The Great Schools Partnership**
The Great Schools Partnership, part of the technical-assistance team for U.S. Department of Education school improvement programs, has coordinated several multi-year grant initiatives, including projects funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, and Arthur Vining Davis Foundation. Find information on grants and funding opportunities at the link below.
[https://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/work/programs-contracts/.](https://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/work/programs-contracts/)
- **U.S. Department of Education**
Inventory of community-based learning resources
<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/communityschools/resources.html>
- **Coalition for Community Schools**
“Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships: The Community Schools Strategy.”
Interactive guide and networking.
<http://www.communityschools.org/ScalingUp/>

Research:

- **“Partnering with Families and Communities,”** Educational Leadership, 61(8)12-18, May 2004. Epstein & Salinas.
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may04/vol61/num08/Partnering-with-Families-and-Communities.aspx>
- **“How the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model Works: Creating Greater Alignment, Integration, and Collaboration between Health and Education,”** The Journal of School Health, 85(11)775-784, Nov. 2015. Chiang, Meagher, & Slade
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4606771/>