

# Parents as Partners

## I. Highlights

- A. It supports children's well-being and development when we are as consistent as possible between home and school. That's part of why a parent partnership is so important.
- B. Different parenting styles (authoritarian, permissive, authoritative) impact the way our children act at school, so it helps to understand them.
- C. School can serve as a community center / extended family. A high-quality parent program includes equal collaboration between parents and teachers, tailored to the specific needs of the families served.
- D. Families are not always the "typical" nuclear family we used to see in the past.
- E. Families (in whatever form) are the building blocks of society and give children a sense of identity.
- F. 1 in 3 single mothers lives in poverty.
- G. "Family support movement" = focus on the needs, wants and desires of families, strengthen families to meet future challenges. This happens through several different models / projects for creating that home-school partnership.

## II. Homework

- A. Midterm is one week from today. Follow the study guide.
- B. Program observation assignment is due two weeks from today. Go observe!

## III. Discussion

- A. Realistically, when I see a baby born with a disability today, I think the future holds... challenges, but more positive possibilities, hope, and a more accepting community than ever before.

1. We also see more children being born with special needs (or at least more being diagnosed/recognized).
    - a) Not being hidden away now
    - b) Parents having children later in life = greater risk of disability
    - c) Environmental factors
  2. More accessibility/services/resources than in the past.
  3. More public awareness of disabilities in general, more acceptance.
- B. Optimism in general, but also more stigma toward certain kinds of special needs. Some of the bullying we've been seeing has been against those children.
1. Especially true for non-physical disabilities including autism, mental health, behavior, social-emotional issues, etc. because of society-wide stigma against mental issues. They're less well-defined, less understood, and harder to treat than physical things such as wheelchairs or blindness. More stigma.
  2. Also true with different cultural biases about disability (some cultures see it as someone's fault, a punishment for sin, etc.).
- C. It's everyone's job to advocate for this. Funding for children with special needs affects all children's well-being because they're all mixed together. It's not a "special interest." It affects everyone.

#### **IV. Parents as Partners**

- A. Consistency in how we meet children's needs at home and at school supports the child's well-being and development. The rest of us involved in the relationship also benefit from the partnership.
- B. Why should we learn about parenting styles?
  1. Helps us understand the children better because children bring those expectations and authority relationships with them to school.

2. It is to our benefit to educate the parents on what happens at school with discipline, etc., because then parents can do the same things at home. When children's experience is more consistent, our lives are easier.

C. Video: Cultivating Roots

1. Have to stop looking at schools as a place for just education, need to see schools as a place for families to come together, communities to link, everyone to work together.
2. Keep in mind some parents have had terrible experiences when they were in school, so we have to work extra hard to extend a welcoming hand to them.
3. Family-school partnership benefits everyone
  - a) Parents learn how children learn at school
  - b) Teachers learn about the family's cultural environment
  - c) Families are recognized as the most significant teachers for young children
4. Children cannot be successful unless the needs of their parents are being met!
  - a) One of the best ways to change the child's attitude is to meet the parent's needs.
  - b) When school becomes a community center, offering emotional and social support, see our children as the responsibility of the community.
  - c) If a child came in dirty clothes or without food, would present that concern to the parent, give parent every opportunity to meet that need.
  - d) Children need to be nurtured, supported, loved, know they are valued, before they can be successful in school.
5. Parenting classes educate and inform parents, also become like support groups for the parents. (Extra important in low-income areas.)
6. Example: offer a Wednesday night ceramics class for parents. Gives access for parents who normally would not have access to a meaningful activity outside

- of the home. Creates an opening for a dialog and emotional support for parents.
7. Encourages parents to become active in their child's education.
  8. Partnership is a two-way process of active collaboration and communication.
  9. School's role is to be part of a community, to work with other agencies to meet children's and parents' needs. "It takes a village to raise a child." Need all parents to get involved, not just this one parent of this one child.
  10. Parents find openness and warmth when they first walk through the doors in these programs. "When you first walk in, you know that you're welcome."
  11. Put together a parent lending library so they can borrow books, toys, magazines, materials, etc. because they may not have access to materials at home. Also creates a conversation for how to use this with your child, how to make homemade teaching materials. Materials featured in the parent library correlate with what the teachers are doing in the classroom curriculum.
  12. Be careful to have a family support team, not an individual person the program revolves around. It gets more buy-in in the school philosophy and makes the community more robust.
  13. Everyone has a different level of commitment, but parents have to come in knowing that this is a commitment on their end.
  14. Work closely with job training, GED, adult ed, CPR training, parenting classes, counseling, other agencies that already exist in the community. Budget won't let us create everything ourselves.
  15. Parent involvement doesn't have to mean being physically present or volunteering in the classroom. Parent involvement is when a parent is working with their child to help their child be successful in school and in life, active in that, have done everything they know how to do to learn as much as they can about helping their child succeed.

16. Families have a lot to offer! Schools need to remember families are the most important aspect of the child's education. Children and school are all more successful when teachers work in partnership with families.

17. Children are the most important beneficiaries of home-school partnership: more successful in classroom, better sense of belonging, etc.

D. Discussion: what was outstanding to us from the video?

1. Parents getting to come do make-and-take workshops at school to supplement materials at home. Good for families without the materials at home, or without the know-how.
2. Parent ceramics class as an adult-oriented way to build the parents' well-being (which helps the kids), relieves family stress, increase social connection. Different from potlucks where parents meet other parents with their kids, but it's different when they're just there with other adults doing something that's not oriented around their kids. Parents are people too!
3. Liked their definition of parent involvement. It doesn't have to mean volunteering. Even volunteers may not be that involved if they don't really understand the value of their contribution and what they can bring home to their children.
4. Research shows if parents had negative school experiences, they often unintentionally transmit that anxiety and negative energy to their child when dropping them off because the school environment is a negative context to the parent. Children pick up on that energy even if the parent doesn't say anything. We have to work harder to build relationships with these parents.
5. Do we honestly want parents in our classroom?
  - a) We complain that the parents aren't involved, but then when they come, we say, "Why don't they go away and let me do my job?!"

- b) Don't call parents "they" like they're the enemy. They're teachers for their kids too.
- c) Difficult for us when parents come to fulfill their own needs, forget what it does to their child when they come and go randomly during the day, what it does to the flow of the room and the day when there are extra adult bodies.
- d) The insecure parents who annoy us the most because they're uncomfortable and they linger are also the ones who need the connection the most. They're looking for our stamp of approval that they're a good parent.
- e) We connect better with some parents than others.
- f) Sometimes we say it's an open-door policy, you're always welcome, but then we get frustrated when they actually show up. Either we are good actresses and let them join in while we get mad inside, or we're bad actresses and they get the message that we don't mean what we say.
- g) This parent-teacher partnership is not as easy as it sounds!
- h) How you deliver what you say makes a difference. If the parent doesn't want the child to climb the ladder on the structure, the teacher says, "But everyone plays outside..." that doesn't give parents confidence. The director looks the parent in the eye, uses a confident voice, and says, "She is going to climb when she's outside. I saw her there this morning, she was doing well." It's very different. Parents will respect the confidence.

#### E. PowerPoint: Parents as Partners

1. How are our families changing (compared to many years ago)?
  - a) Not just mom + dad + three or four children in a nuclear family
  - b) Need to make sure we can connect to all families

- c) Realize their needs are different than they used to be. It's not dad working 9-5 and eating dinner at home with the family.
  - d) Single parents, grandparents raising families, parents working two jobs, same-gender parents, foster care children, etc. Have to be aware of all those possibilities. Be able to develop relationships with them.
2. Key points about parents and family
- a) The most stable component of society = the family = the building block of community, whatever that family looks like
  - b) Bond among the members of the family is very important
    - (1) As teachers of young children, we need to remind the children at least 2-3x/day that parents are at work and love them, have their pictures available in the classroom for children to see. The younger the child, the more important those reminders are.
    - (2) We need to connect the child to the family more and more. When child comes to my care for 12 hours/day, school becomes their main home/experience, their family seems far away/disconnected. We have to actively help them keep connected to their family first. Make it a conscious effort, not just when they're crying for Mommy.
    - (3) Need to know about the family, convey that we care. If mom says grandma is coming to visit next week, then next week ask if grandma is here. It shows we're interested in their news.
  - c) Families prepare children for society.
    - (1) Our school is a miniature society for the children. Go on a "field trip" to say hi to another class, go for a walk and see the neighborhood shops and other schools. Gives them some ownership of their community.

- d) Teach children family history. Who lives in their house? What do their parents do for a living? Where do they come from? Where do their grandparents live? Bring maps
  - e) Give children a sense of community.
    - (1) We all belong together. Language is very important in building this. This is “your” class, “your” friends, “your” school, etc. Not “my class” as the teacher. Give the children ownership of the school.
    - (2) Slideshow of pictures running, including pictures of children they knew who have left for kindergarten now.
    - (3) Best director she had never said, “This is my school, I’m going to fix it.” When teachers complained, the answer was, “You’re right, and this is your school, go ahead and figure out what needs to be done.” Makes teachers feel important.
    - (4) If parents have ideas of how to improve the school, it’s good to answer, “I agree that’s a good idea. Do you have any ideas of how that can be done?”
3. Population data
- a) 275 million people in USA, 33.9 million in California
  - b) Census 2002 reflects emerging diversity, rapidly growing Latino population
  - c) Changes in families’ structures
  - d) Poverty = 1 in 16 traditional families (nuclear families), 1 in 9 single fathers, 1 in 3 single mothers lives in poverty (data as of year 2000). Also varies with different ethnicities.
4. Dimensions of a high-quality parent program
- a) Collaborative and equal relations between program staff and families
  - b) Maintain a balanced focus on the needs of both parent and child



- c) Tone is set by the director, need directors who are really sold on this
  - d) Tailored to be responsive to the needs and characteristics of the population being served. Depends on the specific needs in your neighborhood.  
Example: in Silicon Valley, if they work in high-tech companies, they usually go to work later in the morning and work later at night. Affects the hours the center needs to be open.
  - e) Devoted to open-ended parent-dominated discussion. Of course we can't change everything because parents say so, but if we have good reasons for what we do, then we can have a two-way conversation with the parents about how things have been done (what we think because we are trained experts) and listen to what they say (because they are experts on their own child and family). Put those two sets of expertise together to best serve the child. Important to make them comfortable enough to talk to us about what matters most to their family.
  - f) Practice active listening to keep these conversations going!
  - g) In ECE, remember we can never separate the family from the child. We don't just serve children. We serve families as a whole. Children this age don't knock on the door and enroll themselves. We have a job because the parents need our help in providing care. They're not the enemy. They're the reason we get to do what we love every day!
5. Ingredients of a quality parent program
- a) Communication between home and the program is regular, two-way and meaningful
    - (1) The younger the child, the more frequent it needs to be (daily for infants, weekly for five-year-olds)
    - (2) Two-way communication = we both report to each other and listen to each other

- b) Parenting support is provided and skills are promoted
    - (1) Parents have so many problems with their children: food, discipline problems, brushing teeth, sleep training, etc. They come to us and need our support.
  - c) Parents plan an integral part in assisting a child's development
    - (1) Parents are forever. We are temporary.
    - (2) Food parents bring is going to have an effect on the way the child behaves in the class.
  - d) Parents are welcome in the program and assistance is sought
    - (1) Welcome to discuss everything about the program and their kids, but not to disturb other people's children or the teachers. If they want to have a conference, make an appointment, come on time, go to a private space, and end it. No two-minute conferences in the hallway. It's not respectful to the teachers as professionals.
  - e) Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families
    - (1) More than just volunteering to bake muffins in class
    - (2) Parent committees or board, ways parents can impact the decisions in the program (even in landscaping, writing the mission statement, everything)
6. Family Support Movement
- a) Values and beliefs that focus on the needs, wants and desires of families
  - b) Many groups supporting families, especially second language learners, single-parent families, others who need help succeeding in parenting and in school
  - c) Strengthen families to meet the challenges of parenting in years ahead
    - (1) When a parent has a problem disciplining a 2-year-old, what do you think will happen when that toddler becomes a teenager?

- (2) When serving diverse families, a lot of them don't have their extended family in the area so they don't have a support network outside of the school.
- d) "If a community values its children, it must cherish their parents." -John Bowlby
  - (1) "Cherish" means to honor and value and love -- same words we apply to our children.
  - (2) Without those parents, we have no children and no job!
- 7. Models and approaches
  - a) Parent Services Project
    - (1) Connecting to other agencies in the community
    - (2) An approach to family support services in early childhood programs
    - (3) Offers social support, partnership with program staff, practical skills straining, opportunities to build self-esteem
    - (4) Help parents who are struggling to learn new skills and build their self-esteem as parents
    - (5) Increases capacities of families to raise their children
    - (6) Parents of children with special needs always have questions, want our approvalendorsement of service they find out about online
    - (7) Almost all of society's wrongs could be remedied by this: if parents knew how to pass on appropriate values to children, how to love and nurture and care for them, then we won't have all these criminal and mental problems in our adults down the road (we have bipolar infants diagnosed now under 12 months of age, never had this before)
    - (8) [www.ParentServicesProject.org](http://www.ParentServicesProject.org)
  - b) Relationship Based Approach (what we've been talking about)
  - c) Partnerships with Families

- (1) Need to explain to parents why we value this partnership (because it is to the benefit of the child)

d) Male Involvement

- (1) Our industry is very weak in this department
- (2) A lot of our children don't have a dad at home, no male role model at home, and we're not giving them one at school. How do the boys learn how to rough-and-tumble play in appropriate ways?
- (3) More men in middle and high school, a few in elementary, very few in ECE.
- (4) Have to bring in fathers to be involved so they can be those role models and playmates.
- (5) Lots of reasons: low pay, low status, belief this is a woman's job so they must be gay, worries about inappropriate touching, etc.

F. Patterns of Parenting handout

1. Authoritarian = based on control and obedience.

- a) Parents are leaders, children are followers.
- b) Order without freedom.
- c) Children are discontented, withdrawn, distrustful
- d) Most common in Eastern cultures, some Latino families also
- e) Usually dad is the boss of the house, mom follows dad's orders
- f) Children are scared, feel their ideas aren't heard, parents refer the children to one another ("Listen to your mother" or "Listen to your father")
- g) "No, because I say so"
- h) Children take this as a role model and want to be rough and controlling on each other

2. Permissive = based on freedom, no control

- a) Parents are followers/facilitators, children are leaders

- b) Freedom without order
  - c) Children are immature, lacking self control, least exploratory
  - d) Parents see their responsibility as providing food, shelter, clothing
  - e) Parents are into their own interests, letting the kids do whatever
  - f) Often older siblings are caring for younger siblings
  - g) Children don't want what Mom makes for dinner, Mom says okay, you can have something different
  - h) Children are at loose ends, stressful for them to have no order or discipline, no one taking charge
3. Authoritative/democratic = based on modified control related to child's abilities
- a) Parent's role is defined by levels of responsibility and control
  - b) Parents talk to each other, make decisions together, not one parent against another like authoritarian
  - c) Give freedom to children. If children use it well, give them more freedom. Amount of freedom depends on child's age and abilities.
  - d) Helps children flourish, blossom, become self-reliant, self-controlled, exploratory.
4. We see these parenting styles in our children:
- a) Girl who pushes parents, throws herself on the floor, throws a fit to get what she wants = probably permissive parents
  - b) Boy who asks permission to do everything, no autonomy = probably authoritarian parents
  - c) Realize that our job is twice as hard setting limits with children who have no limits (or no freedom) at home, but it's worth it because they need it twice as much as the other children do

- d) There are sometimes cultural influences/ reasons for these behaviors, so need to be culturally sensitive, not just judging that authoritative is strictly the best

**V. Midterm is next week.**

- A. Short lecture, then midterm exam on chapters 1-5.
- B. Worth 50 points
- C. Define and explain words, answer short questions (just like the study guide)
- D. One page, one side, of our hand-written notes okay (not typed)
- E. Bring a few sheets of paper to write on + pen or pencil, no Scantron