Resource 4

Collaborating with the Community: Three Critical Questions

Use the following questions to stimulate discussions regarding community involvement. How well is your school doing? What can you do as a classroom teacher?

How Are Community Partners Useful?

To determine how community partners can best help your school, the school Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) Planning Team should begin by reviewing the school improvement goals and by writing a one-year Action Plan for community partnerships to meet school goals. Identify goals that might be more successfully reached with community support. Brainstorm a "wish list" of in-kind donations, services, programs, partnerships and money that will help meet these goals. Then make a list of potential businesses, government entities, universities, community colleges and other partners in your community who might be able to help. Write a clear, brief plan of how the support will help reach the school goals.

Plan:

How Do We Approach A Potential Partner?

Once needs are clearly outlined, you can approach potential business/community partners with a short letter. Later, you may follow-up with a phone call or a visit. Here are some suggestions for writing an initial letter.

- Find the name and address of the owner or president of the business/community organization and address the letter accordingly.
- Include the school's name and location.
- Describe the school's mission/goals for high standards and success for its students.
- Briefly explain your emphasis on school, family and community partnerships.
- Describe how the partner's support can help achieve important school goals.
- Illustrate how the partnership will benefit the community, school and/or the community as a whole.
- Specify how the business or organization will be recognized for its support.
- Note that you will call or visit in the next week.
- Include the principal's signature and a contact person's phone number and address.

Send letters to many potential partners because not everyone will be able to match your schools needs.

Plan:
### How Do We Maintain Community Partnerships?

It is important to thank your partners and recognize their contributions. Think of creative ways to recognize the value of their support, such as artwork or letters from students, an item with the school’s mascot, an appreciation breakfast or a band/chorus/drama performance. Advertise the business/community partner’s support at the sponsored activity. Recognize partners in district, school, local newspapers and on the school’s marquee.

Ask all partners for feedback on the partnership relationship and activities. Use the feedback to improve your school-family-community partnership program each year. By reaching out to the community to meet specific school goals and recognizing their support, you will improve community involvement at your school.

### Plan:

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