
District Record

Project in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan Helps Parents Understand Goals for Student Learning

The Parent Friendly Outcomes Project was submitted to the Network's Sharing Best Practices by District Key Contact Gail Mitchell of Mt. Pleasant Public Schools, Michigan. The goal of the project is to create informational brochures that explain in parent-friendly language the learning objectives for each grade level. With this information, more parents should be able to support their children as learners. The Parent Friendly Outcomes Project was designed to help four Title I schools improve their partnership activities for Type 2—Communicating and Type 4—Learning at Home.

During the summer of 1996, teachers and administrators were invited to join grade level teams. Parent groups were also informed of the project. Each team included at least two classroom teachers, one parent, and one Title I teacher or administra-

tor. The participating schools allocated money from their parent involvement funds to pay the 29 team members for their time.

Grade level teams reviewed all learning outcomes to determine if they were written in language understandable to most parents. Teams reached consensus on one of three decisions:

- the outcome was understandable to most parents as written
- the outcome needed alternative wording that would not change the original intent—suggest new wording
- the outcome was not understandable, but alternative wording might change the intent—keep original wording

All teachers and administrators were required to review and initial the suggested wording so that the integrity

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Manual is Published as New Handbook

The manual for the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools is now available as an easy-to-use book: *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook For Action*, published by Corwin Press. The new handbook includes all of the information and tools in the original

School, Family, and Community Partnerships



Your Handbook for Action

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manual. The book's binding permits Network members and other educators to photocopy planning forms and to create transparencies and handouts for presentations.

New members will continue to receive one free copy of the handbook when they join the Network. Additional copies may be obtained from: Corwin Press
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320-2218
tel: 805-499-8071
fax: 805-499-9774
e-mail:
order@corwin.sagepub.com.

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School Report

Lake County School Reports Partnerships on *Good Morning America*

Skeen Elementary School in Leesburg, Florida—a Lake County School District Partnership-2000 School—was featured on *Good Morning America* in its 1997 back-to-school series on August 25. The show learned about Skeen's work in the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools from a *Wall Street Journal* article on homework. Sandra Aiken, a segment producer for *GMA* stated, "We were looking for schools with a different take on education in America today. Skeen with its loyal band of volunteer parents and its 'interactive' homework program seemed like a match." *GMA* followed one parent volunteer home with her second grader to show the mother and son interacting on homework.

The Key Contact for Partnership-2000 Schools in Lake County is Diana H. Brown, at the Effective Teaching Center—a collaborative program of the district school board and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Educational Research and Dissemination Program. Currently, seven Lake County schools are members of the Network, and all are working with Diana Brown to create excellent programs of school, family, and community

Other District News

Newark Public School System (NJ), a new district member in the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools, is awarding \$5000 initial incentive grants through the Geraldine A. Dodge Foundation to the first fifteen schools in Newark to join the Network. The program is under the direction of Dr. Beverly Hall, Superintendent, and Catherine Branco, District Key Contact.

Focus on Results

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Schools at all levels were working to improve and maintain students' good attendance by taking a multi-faceted approach, not relying on just one strategy or technology. They also combined information about the importance of student attendance for all families with targeted attention to families of chronically absent students. Personal attention from school staff and parents was rated as more effective than computerized messages or contacts by outside agents.

Not all participants reached their attendance goal for 1996-97, but all were reflective about their activities and about their plans to continue improving attendance.

1997-98 School Year: Focus on Math Achievement. This year, Focus on Results will examine student math achievement. We will focus on questions such as: Which practices of school-family-community partnerships are likely to help students improve math report card grades and math achievement test scores? How are schools meeting challenges to inform and involve all families and communities in students' math activities? How do schools, districts, and states assess whether or how family and community involvement affect math achievement?

Schools, districts, and states will receive an invitation to join the 1997-98 Focus on Results in November. If **math achievement** is one of your goals, we encourage you to join this evaluation activity.

District Record

Parent Friendly Outcomes Project

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of the instructional outcomes was maintained. The district Curriculum Director also reviewed the outcomes. Grade level brochures explaining learning outcomes in parent-friendly language were produced and distributed at parent-teacher conferences in the fall.

Parents and Teachers Benefit

Ms. Mitchell reports that the response from parents has been very positive. She states, "a typical comment from parents has been 'I didn't know it was all written down what my child should know. I thought it was whatever was in the book.'" Teachers like the brochures as an easy way to give parents a yearly overview during conference time. Ms. Mitchell also notes that the district has received requests for information about the project from other districts in Michigan

An unexpected result from the Parent Friendly Outcomes Project was that teachers identified learning outcomes that were not taught at the agreed upon grade levels or were confusing in other ways. Ms. Mitchell reports that the district will address these issues with the district Curriculum Director and the Professional Study Committee. Also in the future, the project will be expanded to include more curriculum areas and grade levels.

Summary of a report from Gail Mitchell, Mt. Pleasant Public Schools, MI contributed to the 1996-97 Sharing Best Practices of the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools at Johns Hopkins University.
