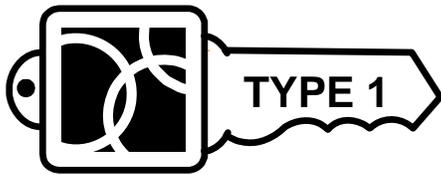
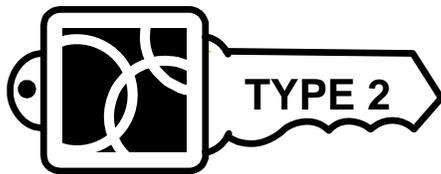


THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

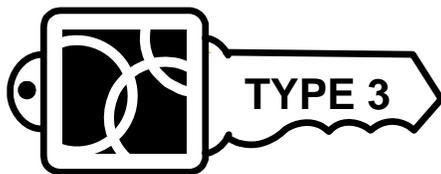
EPSTEIN'S SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT



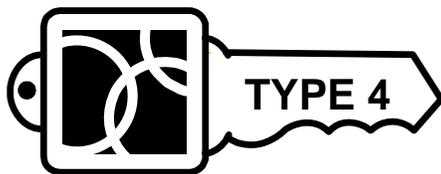
PARENTING: Assist families in understanding child and adolescent development and in setting home conditions that support children as students at each grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.



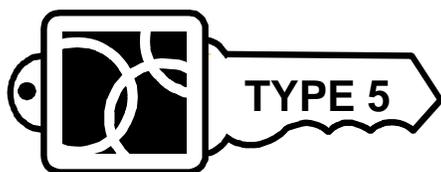
COMMUNICATING: Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.



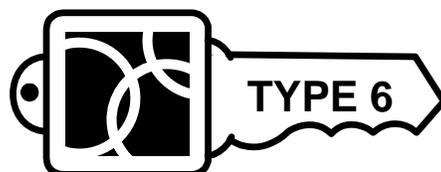
VOLUNTEERING: Improve recruitment, training, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school and in other locations to support students and school programs.



LEARNING AT HOME: Involve families with their children in learning at home, including homework, other curriculum-related activities, and individual course and program decisions.



DECISION MAKING: Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, action teams, and other parent organizations.



COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY: Coordinate community resources and services for students, families, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.

Tiger Closet Coat and Clothes Exchange

*John Tyler Elementary School
Hampton, Virginia*

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Tyler Elementary is always looking for projects that will meet the needs of its students and their families. Hurricane Katrina gave them the opportunity to repeat a highly successful activity: the Tiger Closet Coat and Clothes Exchange, named after the school's feline mascot.

Four families displaced by the hurricane joined the school family this year. Along with a number of other families, these new residents often found it hard to keep up with their fast-growing children's clothing needs. At the same time, the children of many other families outgrew their clothes long before they wore out. To help out all of these families, the school set up a clothing exchange, collecting gently used clothing and inviting needy families for a free day of "shopping." ATP members and volunteers made a special effort to collect winter essentials, such as hats, coats, and gloves; some families bought new clothes to donate to Tiger Closet. In its second year, this project was so successful that the donated clothes spilled out of the Parent Resource Center and had to be moved to the cafeteria. "It's as big as a Hecht's sale!" exclaimed the principal, referring to an area department store.

Items were set aside for families unable to come to the school on "sale" day, and the school nurse even offered to deliver the items. Volunteers worked in shifts to set up for the event and helped shoppers find just the right bargain. "As with many other efforts, parent volunteers made all the difference," said the parent involvement coordinator.

This program also allowed Tyler's ATP to reach out to the community and expand existing partnerships. For example, local dry cleaners and clothing stores donated hangers, bags, and clothing racks. And, to make sure everything went to good use, all items remaining in the Tiger Closet after the "sale" were donated to a shelter for battered women.

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Financial Aid Workshop for Parents and Students

*Mullins High School
Mullins, South Carolina*

To show parents and students how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for postsecondary school, Mullins created a financial aid workshop. The workshop was held in February—after parents had received wage statements, but before they started their tax returns.

The area surrounding Mullins has a high unemployment rate. Many of the parents of students at Mullins have difficulty navigating the complex financial aid form. As a result, many students cannot access the financial assistance they qualify for and need to take advantage of postsecondary education opportunities.

To create the program, Mullins researched how other schools were helping their students and families navigate the financial aid system, borrowing several of those practices. The guidance office contacted local college financial aid advisors to help design and implement the workshop. These advisors did most of the content planning and supplied the required materials. The sessions demonstrated the step-by-step process required to fill out the forms and addressed the questions and concerns of students and their parents. The advisors provided each parent with a copy of the FAFSA form. By the end of the workshop, each student's financial aid application was complete.

Mullins knew its biggest challenge would be getting parents to attend. Other parent involvement initiatives had only drawn a handful of participants. To publicize the financial aid classes, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) offered a bonus incentive to stu-

dents who attended the workshops: a tardy pass that could be used once anytime before the end of the school year. Guidance counselors visited classrooms to invite juniors and seniors to attend, and the daily televised broadcast included announcements and reminders about the tardy pass incentive. The school encouraged students to remind their parents about the workshops. The ATP also used traditional publicity methods to reach out to the parents directly, including signage outside the school, fliers for visiting parents, the website, and newsletter announcements.

In the end, 56 students and 73 parents participated in the workshop. Thanks to the efforts of teachers, administrators, community members who acted as financial aid advisors, and students who helped with publicity, the event was a success. Students and parents received valuable information about financial aid, and they realized how much the school cared that they attend the workshops. Best of all, the students walked out of the meetings with filled-out financial aid applications in hand!

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SIMPLY THE BEST

SOUTH FLORENCE HIGH SCHOOL FLORENCE, SC

Leaders at South Florence High School (SFHS) wanted to showcase all of its programs and celebrate the culture and diversity of the school. Simply the Best: Academic Showcase and Fine Arts Celebration was planned with the School Improvement Council (SIC).

Each member of the School Improvement Council was assigned a specific task to organize for the Simply the Best family night. Seven tasks were identified: preparing, inviting, incentivizing, caring for children, showcasing student work, facilitating, and volunteering. Parents, teachers, community members, students, and administrators took leadership and helping roles.

The committee prepared a schedule for displays, presentations, and performances. This included designing, printing, and mailing invitations; advertising the event; and making table decorations. Invitations were sent to the Mayor of Florence, all School Board members, parents, and the community. An elected member of the City Council who is an alumnus of SFHS was invited to be the Keynote speaker. Plans were made to feature all departments, sports teams, and extra curricula clubs.

To encourage attendance, the committee planned incentives and services. Over 20 local businesses donated refreshments and door prizes. A childcare center for families with very young children was created. It was coordinated by the Early Childhood and Development teacher and staffed by student volunteers from early childhood classes and SFHS staff.

The Ninth Grade Academy set its display in the library. Eighth graders and their families had an opportunity to meet ninth grade teachers and see students' work samples. Each academic department displayed students' work. Student members of the School Improvement Council judged the departmental displays and selected a winner.

Simply the Best featured demonstrations by teams and clubs throughout the evening, including the ROTC drill team, step team, gospel choir, choraliars, and the dance, art,

drama, drum line, and bass fishing clubs. 15 concurrent sessions repeated from 1 to 4 times provided information and resources for participants on "hot topics" including school safety, law enforcement, financial aid for college attendance, dual credit programs, adolescent vaccinations, district test requirements, and Common Core State Standards by subject. School staff and community partners made these presentations, including a state-level representative from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), area college representatives, and a local doctor. As a highlight of Simply the Best, the SFHS Alumni Association presented a \$2000 check to the school to renovate the auditorium and track.

Student volunteers had important roles. The football team and cheerleaders served guests dinner. Student Council representatives and marshals were tour guides. ROTC presented colors, led the pledge of allegiance, and handed out door-prize tickets.

In all, about 175 parents, 275 students, 100 staff, and 50 community members enjoyed the evening. A federal Safe and Supportive Schools Grant supported the \$1000 cost and a grant from Mueller's Spaghetti Company provided the spaghetti dinner.

The planning team learned that the more fun that students have in preparing, demonstrating, and performing at a school event, the more likely they are to participate. One student noted, "Everyone was checking out our boat! People were really interested in knowing that we had a bass fishing team." The principal laughed, "Wow, this is like being at Disney World!" Simply the Best enabled everyone to learn about and enjoy the exciting opportunities for student learning and success that are supported by the school.

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Type 2

CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Student-Led Conferences

*West Carrollton Middle School
West Carrollton, Ohio*

West Carrollton Middle School has given the traditional parent-teacher conference an interesting twist.

Some years ago, the school's administrators became concerned that a very important person was missing from these conferences: the student! Today, students at West Carrollton individually meet with their parents and teachers at the school, and actually lead their conferences, taking responsibility for their own accomplishments and progress.

Students present a portfolio that showcases their work and use measurement tools to chart their academic progress. Teachers are available on conference nights to meet with parents, answer questions, and help the parents and students work together to evaluate the students' progress. From the beginning of the year, students know they will participate in at least two conferences. This encourages them to do their best work for their conference portfolios.

Conferences are held after the first- and second-quarter report cards so students have the opportunity to improve by the end of the academic year. Some teams also opt to do a standard home conference after the third quarter.

Two weeks before the end of the quarter, teachers mail invitations to parents with sign-up sheets. To prepare for the conferences themselves, teachers help students evaluate their progress on check lists that use a 1-to-5 scale. These evaluation sheets also include the student's grade in the course and self-stated next-quarter goals. The children rehearse their own presentations with a classmate.

Since the school began these student-led conferences, participation of parents has grown from 30 to 78 percent. The conferences are worth a percentage of each grade in the core subjects: math, social studies, English, reading, and science.

Although it was initially a challenge to adopt the student-led conference system, West Carrollton, with careful planning, has been able to phase in the program. Each team of teachers started with a small, set number of conferences. As teams began to see the advantages, they shared ideas and worked out the best way to implement the new system. The teams stuck to an implementation calendar that helped ease teachers' apprehension about the program. In the end, the school allowed each team the flexibility to adapt the program to its needs.

Thanks to the student conferences program, middle school students at West Carrollton feel like they are in control of their education. The program reinforces the need for organization, decision-making, goal-setting, communication, and leadership skills. It also strengthens the relationship between the school and its families, creating more interest among students and parents and giving them more responsibility at school.

"This has been the perfect fit for us to get our parents actively involved within our building," said the principal.

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BES Goes to Work

*Ballentine Elementary School
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BES, the bear, goes to work. And nearly every week she has a different job—fire-fighter, nurse, construction worker, office manager. BES is a busy bear. Just ask the students at Ballentine Elementary School who keep track of BES's travels and adventures.

BES is a miniature version of the school's mascot, and BES Goes to Work is a program designed to involve hard-working parents in the school and also showcase the parents' diverse careers to its student body. Ballentine Elementary encourages them to take turns each week bringing BES to their workplaces. Each parent photographs BES at work, whether she's donning a construction cap, standing at a lecture podium, or sitting at a television news anchor's desk, and writes a short summary of what BES saw on the job.

"BES had fun learning about all the cool jobs in a bank," reported a parent who is market development manager of a bank. "BES went to class and saw how college students take notes. The students were curious why BES was there," reported another parent, who is a professor of criminology.

Inspired by a similar idea shared at a counselors conference, BES Goes to Work was developed as an extension to Ballentine's career program. The guidance office sends out a questionnaire about the program several times each year. Interested parents respond and the guidance office works out BES's busy travel schedule. Families from all grades may participate in the program, but, because of high demand for BES, only one parent from each family may participate.

The week that BES goes to work, the participating child receives a special blue bag that contains the bear, a T-shirt, a disposable camera, and a BES Goes to Work folder with a sheet that the parent fills out to tell students at the school about his or her job. The child wears the T-shirt to school so everyone can see whose family has BES for the week. When the student returns the bag, he or she has a photo taken in front of Big BES, the school's full-sized bear mascot. Once all the pictures of BES at work are developed, they are pasted into a collage along with the parent's write-up. Everyone can enjoy the collages, which are displayed prominently in the mini-theater.

Since the program began, BES has visited high schools, churches, hospitals, police stations, a local television station, and many offices. The program has effectively improved the home-school connection at a small-town school where many of the working parents commute 30 minutes or more and cannot take time off to visit the school.

In addition to providing busy parents with an opportunity to involve themselves in the school, BES Goes to Work teaches students about various jobs and careers and gives them another reason to take pride in what their parents do. The program is a definite community builder—increasing school spirit and enhancing Ballentine's image.

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INNOVATIVE VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

PATTERSON PARK PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BALTIMORE, MD

The Innovative Volunteer Engagement program at Patterson Park Public Charter School (PPPCS) embraces the diversity of its families' backgrounds, cultures, and education levels. The school requests each family to serve 20 hours of volunteer time per year. It has designed ways for families to meet this request by offering a broad range of meaningful volunteer opportunities and by recognizing families for their contributions. Volunteer activities call for a wide array of talents in health and wellness, academic enrichment and tutoring, economics, and many others.

The Gifts & Talents survey is the hallmark of the Innovative Volunteer Engagement practice. It enables the school to recruit volunteers on the basis of their unique interests, skills, and abilities. Offered in English and Spanish at the beginning of the school year, the survey asks the volunteers about the talents that they would like to share with the school. The survey also lists many specific volunteer opportunities at PPPCS. Examples include laundering team uniforms; assembling bookshelves; chaperoning field trips; tutoring in the classroom; aiding lunch and recess; fundraising; being a reading buddy; translating and interpreting; and more. The survey lets families know that, whatever their talents, they can support the school.

The Gifts & Talents survey also asks about parents' work and personal affiliations that may enrich the school's Career Day, field trips, or fund raising activities. Families are asked to note their ideal time to volunteer (during the school day, after school, on weekends, or at home) and their contact information. Parents also may list topics they want to learn about such as back-to-school night, career day, open house, teacher appreciation, and other school programs.

All of this information is entered into a database and used throughout the year to recruit volunteers. Teachers can, for example, sort the list to find only the families who are interested in tutoring students in particular subjects during the school day. The numbers of volunteers and their hours of service are tracked throughout the year.

PPPCS officially recognizes volunteers' contributions in the school's monthly newsletter. Those who complete the 20-hour commitment are invited to the Volunteer Appreciation Banquet at the end of the year. There, at a bountiful breakfast, the principal and executive director thank the families with certificates and thank you gifts presented by their children. Gift cards donated by local businesses and staff are raffled off.

The \$500 cost of the program is supported by school funds and donations from staff, local businesses, and organizations. A member of the Action Team for Partnership (ATP) or others can serve as the Volunteer Coordinator to process the data from the Gifts & Talents survey, and organize the Banquet.

The school appreciates its families. One PPPCS reading specialist noted, "The impact [of reading volunteers] on [students'] literacy development is powerful." Students are likewise proud of their parents, and the families know that they are valued by their children, the school, and other families. Some parents have found employment at the school via volunteering, and others have built skills that led to employment elsewhere. It is clear that the Innovative Volunteer Engagement project that matches parents' talents with staff needs improves school programs, school spirit, and student success.

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BLUE RIBBON HOMEWORK CENTER

AMISTAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KENNEWICK, WASHINGTON

When the principal comes knocking, it could mean trouble. For students at Amistad Elementary, however, when the principal knocked on their doors, it was to deliver a blue ribbon! Students and families who participated in a new program, Blue Ribbon Homework Center, received awards for completing the program's requirements, starting with having parents and children create a homework space at home for students to do their work.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and other teachers at the school noted that some students did not complete their assignments because they lacked a dedicated space and basic supplies (e.g., tape, crayons) to do their work at home. The faculty agreed that all students—successful or struggling—would benefit by improving the homework process.

To start this project, the principal sent letters asking parents if they would help their children create a study space at home. Children whose parents responded to the letter received a backpack with pencils, notebooks, erasers, rulers, and other supplies that students need for homework. Community members donated the backpacks and supplies, and volunteers filled them, too. Participating families received another surprise—a visit from the principal.

Amistad Elementary's principal visited every family that agreed to create a homework center. After seeing the space, the principal presented the student with a blue ribbon and congratulated her or him for creating a place dedicated to doing homework. The principal also took pictures of the students and their families. He said that the home visits were his favorite part of the program. He felt it was important to make a connection on an individual, comfortable basis with each family to emphasize the importance of students' work on homework at every grade level.

The principal's excitement was shared by students and parents. One mother said,

"My son is so excited about his space. He doesn't let anybody mess it up. He tells his brothers, 'This is my homework center.'"

It never is easy to make home visits. The principal had to adjust his schedule to meet with all of the families in the program. A teacher and member of the ATP accompanied him.

Benefits were quickly apparent. More students were encouraged by teachers and parents to do their homework, more completed their assignments, fewer reported "lost" homework, and students' grades improved. "I've definitely seen an increase on homework returned from those who have participated in the Blue Ribbon Homework Center," said one teacher.

Amistad will continue this initiative. The staff plans to keep better track of those who are involved and monitor their progress. They will encourage more students to join in. It was clear that a small, organized, and dedicated space for homework is one easy way to start to improve the homework process.

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Type 4

OTHER SUBJECTS

Summary-Type 4 Learning at Home

Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Language Arts, Science, and Math in the Elementary and Middle Grades

Educators are increasingly aware of the importance of involving parents¹ in the education of their children. Countless studies confirm that parental involvement improves student achievement. When parents are engaged, children do better in school. Parental encouragement and assistance contribute to students' achievement, report card grades, positive attitudes about school, and higher aspirations.

Some families already are partners with their children's teachers and encourage their children to do their best in school. Most parents, however, say that they need more and better information and guidance from teachers to know how to help their children at home. As children progress, families need clear and timely information and assistance to talk with, monitor, and encourage their children as students in different subjects at each grade level.

Teachers play a critical role in whether, how, and which families are involved in their children's education. By providing ideas on how to help at home, teachers can encourage all parents to talk and work with their student. When parents are assisted in this way, they become more aware of their children's classwork and progress, interact with their children more, and reinforce the teachers' goals for student learning. When parents are knowledgeable partners, students see that their teachers and parents are communicating about schoolwork. Students become more aware of their parents' interest in their work and progress.

Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS). Researchers worked with teachers to design, implement, and test the process called *Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) Interactive Homework*. With TIPS, any teacher can enable all families to stay informed and involved in their children's learning activities at home, and help all students complete homework to increase success in school.

TIPS homework assignments are the student's responsibility. Students are guided to talk to a parent about something interesting that they are learning in class. TIPS helps solve some important problems with homework:

- TIPS activities help all parents become involved, not just the few who know how to discuss math, science, language arts, or other subjects.
- TIPS activities are conducted by the students. Parents are not asked to "teach" school subjects. Students share their work, ideas and progress with a parent.
- TIPS activities include a section for students and parents to discuss how a school skill is used in the real world.
- TIPS includes a section for home-to-school communications for parents to comment on their interactions with their children and ask questions of teachers.

Evaluations of TIPS indicate that parents recognize and appreciate teachers' efforts to keep them informed and engaged. Over time, students learn that their teachers want their families to know what they are learning in class and to participate in conversations about homework.

Prototype TIPS activities are available in the elementary and middle grades in **language arts, science, and math**, along with a **manual for teachers** to implement the TIPS process.

- TIPS CD for the elementary grades includes over 300 TIPS activities.
- TIPS CD for the middle grades includes over 350 TIPS activities.

All activities are in PDF form for easy use and in WORD form for local adaptations.

For information on TIPS materials in language arts, math, and science in the elementary and middle grades, visit www.partnershipschools.org and see the section on TIPS.

¹ In TIPS, the word "parent" refers to anyone who is responsible for a child's learning and development, and who has connections with the school and teachers (e.g., parent, grandparent, foster parent, other family partner).

HUSKIE K-9 MENTORING PROGRAM

**NAPERVILLE NORTH HIGH SCHOOL
NAPERVILLE, IL**

Type 5

Lunch period can seem awfully long when you're sitting alone. But this is just one of several challenges faced by students who transfer to a new school mid-year. Transfer students must adjust to a new building, enter a new set of classes, find new friends, and join a new school culture. Two juniors at Naperville North High School understood this very well—both had been transfer students, themselves, at one point. Two parents also saw the need to create a more welcoming environment for new families to the school and district. Students, parents, teachers, and the partnership team (SFCP) collaborated to start a mentoring program.

Now, when students transfer to Naperville North High School, they have friends before their first day of class. When new students register at the school, they receive a questionnaire asking about their interests and background. This questionnaire is used to pair them with a Huskie K-9 Companion—a current student who has applied to act as a mentor to new students. By design, the peer mentor has the same lunch schedule as the transfer student so that new students never have to sit alone at lunch.

“It was so great to help the students, especially at lunch when they didn't have anyone to sit with,” said one mentor.

The peer mentors aren't just lunch buddies. They also undergo a training session to understand their other responsibilities. These include helping new students find their classes, introducing them to school activities, and addressing their questions and concerns.

“It was so nice to have someone who I could ask questions and not look bad because I asked a dumb question,” a new student observed.

The student mentors report that they enjoy this role. In fact, so many have applied to the program that there are now more mentors than new students. More than 125 students at the school are involved. This is a good problem, as more and different mentors mean better “matches” with the new students who enter.

In some cases, new students are also new English speakers. An English Language Learner (ELL) teacher at the school offers additional support for these students through the program.

Parents of new students are given a warm welcome, too. These parents also fill out a questionnaire when their student registers, and are invited to chat by phone about the school with a parent mentor. Seventy-five parents have participated in the program.

The K-9 Companion program got off to a successful start with an effective awareness campaign. The program was promoted in the school's weekly e-newsletter, and teachers were encouraged to nominate students whom they felt would make good mentors. The program begins and ends with pizza parties. These occasions are the program's only cost.

Although the program is inexpensive, it yields large dividends. As one staff member pointed out, “If a student is comfortable in their environment, they are more likely to become a positive and productive part of that environment.” It's not complicated—makes perfect sense!

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TRANSITIONS

ROOM PARENT PROGRAM

INDIAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL FRANKLIN, WI

Type 5

Indian Community School enrolls Native American children, for whom *family* is an extremely important part of culture. To represent family values in the school building, the Family Resource Center (FRC) implemented the Room Parent Program, designating volunteer parents to serve as liaisons to connect the teachers, parents, and students in class.

Parent volunteers become parent leaders for an assigned classroom. Their first task was to compose a letter to introduce themselves and the program to other parents of students in the class. They acted as the voice of other classroom parents and got to know the students and staff at school. Throughout the year, Room Parents had several opportunities to contribute to students' learning.

They asked all parents to provide their best contact information and asked about their interests in volunteering and participating in school activities. A short handbook, *Guidelines for Room Parents*, explained, "Include all parents in your assigned class. You do not have to do [all of this work] alone."

During the school year, Room Parents made substantial contributions to their classrooms. They read to students, helped with math or social studies, assisted classroom-based activities, coordinated volunteers when needed, and helped teachers communicate with other parents. Room Parents maintained weekly contact with their assigned teachers by phone, e-mail, or in person.

Room Parents' leadership paid off in the classroom. One teacher said, "My Room Parent was so helpful this year and my students...really liked having her in our classroom. They would get so excited knowing that the Room Parent was coming in to help."

Indian Community School supported its parent leaders in many ways. FRC staff held an open information meeting at the beginning of the school year to give curious parents information about program. Only parents who wanted to make a commitment to the program signed an agreement.

The agreement outlined the responsibilities of Room Parents. They were asked to be available on a weekly basis. They were expected to respect all students and their families equally. They were not to purchase supplies for classroom activities nor supervise students on their own. The initial guidelines helped clarify Room Parents' roles. Monthly meetings with FRC staff enabled Room Parents to share their joys, ask questions, and discuss concerns.

One of the challenges that the FRC faced was organizing childcare that allowed the Room Parents to meet in person. The FRC asked parents to identify their childcare needs so that plans for this service could be arranged. The program planners aim to recruit volunteers before the start of the school year and will ask retiring Room Parents to recommend their replacements.

The Room Parent program offered parents an opportunity to give back to their children's school by taking on vital and much-appreciated leadership roles. Students in each classroom gained a mentor and friendly adult on whom they could rely for help with classroom projects. Room Parents brought home and school together in highly visible and important ways.

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CLIMATE OF PARTNERSHIPS

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS CONFERENCE

**NORTHRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL
LAYTON, UT**

Type 6

When Northridge High School wanted to show 1,680 students the value and relevance of education to a career path, the school turned to its community. That's how 60 guest speakers in a wide variety of careers ended up speaking at the College and Career Readiness Conference. There, students heard evidence of the impact of education in the real-world.

Every student in the school participated in the College and Career Readiness Conference. Most dressed in professional business attire. Students welcomed presenters at the door and escorted them to their presentation location. There, student leaders acted as room monitors and introduced their guests. Students listened to the guest speakers' brief presentations about their career paths, and then asked questions. Each student attended three 25-minute sessions, with five minutes to rotate between rooms.

The Community Council, Northridge's NNPS-linked partnership team, asked each teacher to identify at least one presenter who would share his/her expertise at school. The final 60 presenters were parents and community members with various careers, including a graphic artist, computer game designer, registered nurse, lawyer, cartoonist, mortician, radiology technician, meteorologist from the local news station, and a local newspaper columnist. Post-secondary advisors, the principal, school counselors, and ten Northridge alums—including an NFL player—also spoke about the importance of students' education at Northridge.

At the end of the two-hour Conference period, students returned to their advisory classroom for a short debriefing. Teachers took notes on student comments and submitted them to the school team leader for review. The presenters proceeded to the media center conference room, where the culinary arts students had prepared a continental breakfast to show the school's appre-

ciation for their participation. The presenters also filled out a survey with their comments and suggestions.

To help with logistics, ROTC students assisted in facilities management and administrators adjusted the bell schedule for the first two hours of the school day. In an advisory period prior to the Conference, students selected the three 25-minute sessions they wanted to attend. Each student also chose two alternate sessions, in case their top three picks were full. Students were prepared about three weeks before the Conference with guidelines and discussions on appropriate conference behavior and attire, types of questions to ask the presenters, and how to phrase their questions.

To meet the \$150 cost of advertising and food for the Conference, Northridge used funds raised at a school dance. Career/Technical Education funds covered the cost of thank you gifts for the presenters.

Months of planning made the College and Career Readiness Conference a success. One student said, "This conference was a really good idea. I learned so much. I want to do it again next year." A presenter reported, "The students were great! I would love to come back again next year." The Northridge team would say that this activity empowered many students with knowledge about options for post-high school careers and pathways.

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COLLEGE AND CAREERS

READ FOR A BEAD

DELMAE HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC

Every student needs a good education to be a good citizen. With this in mind, Delmae Heights' Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and others at the school implemented a program to link student reading to the community. For one month, students recorded the title of each book they read and wrote a sentence about the book in their Read-for-a-Bead Logs. Then, each student went to a participating local business, told about the book they read, and collected a red, blue, orange, green, or yellow bead, and a signature from the proprietor. When students read five books and collected all five colored beads, they delivered the completed log to their teacher.

The Literacy Coach placed the names of these students on the Bead Board in the cafeteria. These students qualified to play in the Bead Ball Games (free throw, volley ball, relay, and others). Students at each grade level rotated through the games led by parent volunteers. Refreshments were provided for all.

The ATP and Literacy Coach were well organized in planning Read for a Bead. Local businesses were invited to a Community Interest Meeting on how to partner with the school to increase students' reading skills. The local newspaper ran an article about the meeting to spark attendance. Each business—25 in all—that became a partner received a jar of beads of one color and a plaque that identified the site as a Read for a Bead stop for students. Five businesses were given each color bead to ensure that no place would be overwhelmed by student visitors. Some partners went further. For example, an orthodontist gave a free t-shirt to every student reader who visited him. A bank gave away piggy banks and contributed \$5 to a new student bank account (opened with parental permission). Chic-Fil-A donated reading bookmarks and free

meal cards for the school to give as prizes to every student who collected five beads.

The literacy coach visited all 30 classrooms at Delmae Heights to explain the project to students and answer their questions. Students were enthusiastic. During Read for a Bead month, 197 students participated, made 985 visits, and made necklaces of their colored beads. Some businesses received more than 100 visits from students and others just a few. One student said, "This is the most fun thing I have ever done in my life!" Parents enjoyed taking their children to visit the businesses. They also read books with their children at home.

At the end of the month, students and the Literacy Coach wrote thank you notes to each business partner. They all sent positive comments and were eager to partner again. The remaining beads and plaques were collected.

Other donations were made to the Bead Ball games to celebrate reading. Barnes & Noble donated gift cards that were raffled off to the readers. Wal-Mart sent volunteers to help staff the event and supplied free refreshments. Chic-Fil-A sent its cow to celebrate with the students.

Delmae Heights serves one of the most culturally diverse populations in the district. The well-organized project was a hit because everyone—students, parents, teachers, and business partners—understood the importance of reading. The manager at Barnes & Noble summed things up noting that reading is important for all students *and* for the future of the community.

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