

The Action Team for Partnerships

Who is responsible for developing and sustaining school, family, and community partnerships? The answer, of course, is that everyone with an interest in students' success has a role to play in conducting productive partnership activities. We have learned from many schools that one principal or teacher, or one parent working alone cannot create a comprehensive and lasting program of partnerships. Rather, an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) is needed to plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve family and community involvement activities to create a welcoming school climate and to help all students succeed.

This excerpt addresses several key questions about the Action Team for Partnerships:

- **What is an Action Team for Partnerships?**
- **Who are the members of the Action Team for Partnerships?**
- **What does an Action Team for Partnerships do?**
- **How often should an Action Team for Partnerships meet?**

What is an Action Team for Partnerships?

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) is an "action arm" or "work group" of a school council or school improvement team. The ATP writes and implements plans for partnerships to produce desired results for students, for families, and for the school as a whole. The ATP includes teachers, administrators, parents and other family members, business and community partners, and, at the high school level, students. The members of the ATP work together to review school goals; select, design, implement, and evaluate partnership activities; and improve partnership practices. The work that the members of the ATP do together helps create and sustain a climate of good partnerships at the school. The ATP's primary goal is to involve families and the community in productive ways so that more students reach important educational goals for learning and success.

Who are the members of the Action Team for Partnerships?

A well-functioning Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) has six to twelve members. Members include at least two teachers, at least two parents, an administrator, and other school and family leaders who have important connections with families and students (e.g., the school nurse, social worker, Title I parent liaison, a PTA/PTO officer or representative, instructional aide, secretary custodian, grandparent who is raising a student, or others). The ATP also may include representatives from the community (e.g., business partners, interfaith leaders, representatives from literary, cultural, or civic organizations, and others). High school ATPs must include one or two students. The diverse members contribute many points of view, connections, talents, and resources for planning, implementing, and evaluating school, family, and community partnership activities.

The ATP serves as a stable structure linked directly to the School Council or School Improvement Team, and accountable to the principal.

What does an Action Team for Partnerships do?

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) writes a plan, implements and coordinates activities, monitors progress, solves problems, publicizes activities, and reports on the school's program of partnerships to the School Council or similar body and to other groups at the school and in the

community. Members of the ATP do not work alone. They recruit other teachers, students, administrators, parents, community members, the parent association, the parent liaison, the nurse or counselors, district leaders, and others to lead, conduct, and participate in the planned family and community involvement activities.

Specifically, in each elementary, middle, and high school, the ATP will:

- Select or elect the ATP chair or co-chairs, and committee chairs or co-chairs.
- Develop a detailed annual One-Year Action Plan for improving partnerships linked to school improvement plans, including activities for all six types of involvement that involve families in ways that help students reach school goals.
- Identify the budget(s) that will support the activities in the One-Year Action Plan.
- Meet monthly as a whole team to ensure progress in plans and activities, and meet in smaller committees, as needed, to implement activities in the One-Year Action Plan.
- Conduct or delegate leadership to implement activities as scheduled.
- Establish goals and guidelines for teamwork, including how team members will communicate, discuss ideas, solve problems, and make decisions.
- Report progress semi-annually or more often to the School Council or School Improvement Team, faculty, and parent organization.
- Publicize activities to all parents, students, teachers, and the broader community.
- Recognize and celebrate excellent participation from parents, other family members, students, and others in the community who contribute to the success of planned partnership activities.
- Evaluate progress to improve the quality of implementations and the strength of results of various involvement activities.
- Gather ideas for new activities.
- Solve problems that impede progress on partnership activities.
- Write a new One-Year Action Plan each year to ensure an on-going program of partnerships in the life and work of the school.
- Replace teachers, parents, administrators, or other members who leave the ATP with new members from the same positions so that a full team is always ready to conduct a planned program of partnerships at the school.

These steps must be followed and improved each year to sustain an excellent program of school, family, and community partnerships. By conducting these activities, the ATP helps everyone in the school know that the school has an active program of school, family, and community partnerships.

How Often Should an Action Team for Partnerships Meet?

An Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) should conduct just the right number of meetings -not too many and not too few – on a realistic schedule. There will be full-team meetings, committee meetings, and periodic reports to the School Council or School Improvement Team and other school groups.

The full ATP should meet on a regular schedule, at least monthly for one or two hours. The full ATP meetings are used to plan and schedule activities, coordinate actions, evaluate results, identify and solve problems, and celebrate progress. The meetings should be organized with agendas that reinforce teamwork and team spirit, and that keeps the activities in the One-Year Action Plan moving forward.