



Partnerships

A PEATC
Do You Know
Factsheet for Virginia's Parents

Don't be a bystander!

When parents and educators become active, respectful partners, children are the winners. Family-school partnerships create pathways for children's academic and adult life success. As partners, parents and professionals share important responsibilities. These include:

Supporting a child's development and learning in school and at home. When parents communicate that learning is a top priority, children are more apt to make it a top priority. Parents show their interest by making time for conversations with their children about what is going on at school (what is boring, what is cool, who is the best teacher, what's up with the basketball team, science fair, lunch menu, etc.)

Holding high expectation for your child. Let your child know that you have high expectations for him – in school and beyond. He or she will typically live up or down to the expectations created by their family and teachers.

Communicating positively and regularly with the school. Find ways of communicating that work for your schedule as well as the teacher's. Write notes, text, send emails or set up a weekly 10 minute phone chat date. Positive messages and a personal thank you are always appreciated.

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Do You Know Parent-School Partnerships

MAKE the Difference?

(Twenty years of research says so!)

Getting involved in your child's education takes time and energy. Many parents, with a short supply of both, wonder, 'Is it worth it?' After all, what do you, as a parent, have to contribute? Math is taught differently today. Phonics was never your strong suit. There are too many different teachers and therapists to keep track of and they are always in a rush. Besides, you can't leave your job during school hours.

AND, they are the professionals – so isn't it their job to teach your child?

Yes, it is their job. And if they do their job, *but without your input*, your child will likely make minimal progress from year-to-year and eventually graduate with some kind of certificate or diploma. BUT. He will probably not have the knowledge, skills and experiences he needs to find meaningful employment or post-secondary training opportunities.

You have the power to change that outcome. You have the power to create positive change in your child's learning. Students with involved parents throughout childhood and adolescence are more likely to graduate from high school, succeed in employment or training programs and make better salaries. By becoming a PARTNER with your child's school:

- You influence the school's expectations for your child. You encourage individualized educational planning that focuses on your child's abilities, potential and self-determination.
- You reinforce what your child is learning during the school day and expand learning opportunities at home, in the neighborhood and during family activities.

As a partner with the teachers in your child's life, offer the same respect and consideration that you expect from them. Keep in mind that your child will adopt your view of their school and teachers. Remember to let the school staff members know when they are doing a good job. Nothing means more to a teacher than a brief handwritten thank you

note from a family. When mistakes are made, try to resolve them quickly and completely. Then wipe the slate clean and move forward. Your goal is to direct the energy in your partnership toward the successful education of your child.

Strategies to consider when there is potential conflict:

1. Reflect upon your own assumptions about the conflict.

What has happened in the past that may influence how you perceive the current situation? Do you have negative experiences that make you less willing to accept the other's perspective? What are some of your unwritten and unspoken rules? How can you check these assumptions with others in this situation?

2. Share your assumptions and perspectives.

Listen with your head and your heart. What principles guide your actions? What do you dream about? What worries you? How are you feeling about this situation? Do you share any assumptions and perspectives? What do you question?

3. Try to think and feel about the situation from the other's perspective.

Listen very carefully and try to think and feel about the situation from the other's perspectives. Don't interrupt! Be sure you understand what they are saying and give them the experience of being understood. What may be causing the other person to take this position? How would you feel if you were in his or her shoes? What is getting in the way of resolution? What might make it easier for that person feel more comfortable with the situation?

4. Find agreement.

Where do you agree? How can you build on these agreements to address your disagreements?

5. Reframe the issues.

How can you restate the problem in a way that doesn't place blame? How can this issue become more manageable? How can everyone share responsibility and credit for success?

6. Identify options and opportunities.

How can constraints, negative experiences, and concerns be acknowledged and addressed? Are there assumptions that do not seem appropriate in this situation? How can you build upon each other's dreams and priorities? What are the expanded opportunities if you work in partnership? Who else needs to be involved in finding solutions?

Resources

CADRE (<http://www.directionservice.org/cadre>), which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve as The National Center on Dispute Resolution in Special Education. <http://www.directionservice.org>

Collaborative Problem Solving and Dispute Resolution in Special Education is a helpful manual by Ron Windle and Susan Warren from Hood River School District in Oregon. It can be found on the CADRE site at <http://www.directionservice.org/cadre/contents.cfm>

Virginia Department of Education: Office of Dispute Resolution VDOE offers several resolution options to disputes. http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/resolving_disputes/index.shtml



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