

# SAU 53 - Professional Development Day March 25, 2011

## Part 1: Parents and School Personal Working Together for Student Success

### Objectives:

- Gain an understanding of what the SAU currently does to promote family involvement
- Build the foundation for action planning to increase family/school partnerships

Participants worked in two groups:

- Group 1 comprised of a Principal (pre-K-8), Special Educator (K-8), Headmaster (high school)
- Group 2 comprised of a Special Education Administrator, Student Support Teacher (K-4), GED Teacher, Health/Wellness teacher (k-5), GED teacher

Using small group activity participants explored what they are currently doing to engage families and promote family involvement. "Starting Points: an inventory of Present Practices of School, Family, and Community Partnerships" of the National Network of Partnership Schools, John Hopkins University was used as a prompting tool.

The six types of involvement were split between the 2 groups; they spent 5 minutes on each of the assigned types, recording what they are presently doing; after 15 minutes, the groups switched and continued the work of the previous group, recording any additional activities they could think of, for an additional 2 minutes for each type.

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## What is happening in the SAU to promote family engagement?

*Parenting- assist families in understanding child and adolescent development and in setting home conditions that support children as students. Assist schools in understanding family backgrounds, cultures, and goals.*

### **Group 2**

- Parent education and workshops, example- "Worried About Your Worrier: Creating Calmer Kids In a Stressed-Out World"- Lynn Lyons
- Offer resources to targeted families, examples-books, video
- Parent-student liaison
- 1000 book club-preschool

### **Group 1**

- Education around college application process
- Special education parent education for
- Technology safety training on site as well as information sent home
- Jack Agati (speaker on Behavior)

**Discussion:** Schools spend good amount of time preparing for event and families do not come. Suggestions- Put information on website, provide links to resources, provide information to be read, viewed or heard at other times

**Communicating** - *communicate effectively from school to home and from home to school about school programs and children's progress.*

**Group 1-** representatives believe their schools implement the majority of the following items from "Starting Points" including:

- Formal conferences with every parent at least once a year
- Provide language translators/interpreters to assist families as needed
- Provide clear information about report cards and how great are earned
- Provide clear information about state test in student and school results
- Provide clear information about selecting courses, programs and/or activities in the school
- Send home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comments at high school level they have online assignments for parents to review
- Staff members send home positive messages about students on a regular basis
- Notify families about student awards and recognition
- Contact families of students having academic or behavior problems
- Teachers have easy access to telephones to communicate with parents during or after school
- Teachers and administrators have e-mail and/or a website to communicate with parents
- Provide parents with information on internet safety
- Parents have the telephone numbers and/or e-mail addresses of the school, principal, teachers, and counselors
- Have automated phone system to deliver messages to families
- Have a homework hotline for students and families to hear daily assignments and messages
- Conduct surveys-topic specific, not necessarily annually
- School newsletter includes:
  - student activity information
  - curriculum and program information
  - school volunteer information
  - school policy information
  - samples of student writing and artwork
  - a column to address parents questions
  - recognition of students, families, and community members
  - a column on activities for family and community involvement

**Group 2**

- PRIDE / AES newsletters
- Conferences
- Artsonia.com - displays student artwork online

**Discussion:** Do not provide annual surveys but would be interested in what others have done - ask other school districts what are they doing for annual surveys - will they share as not to have to reinvent the wheel. (NH Connections will research and provide feedback)

Student handbook contains most information for families - but do they read it? Put snippets of information from handbook on website, provide links to resources; have principal's pull out pieces of information to share during school gatherings, meetings

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***Volunteering-*** *involvement at and for the school. Organize volunteers and audiences to support the school and students.*

**Group 2**

- PALS (Pembroke Action League for Schools (k-8) Parent Teacher Organization.
- APPLE (Allenstown Parent Teacher Organization)
- Library volunteers
- Volunteer breakfast-to thank volunteers

**Group 1**

- PTO
- Classroom volunteers-help and some lead projects
- T-shirts for volunteers
- Booster clubs
- Daily volunteers in kindergarten grade 1 grade 2
- Junior achievement program
- Big buddies
- Reading buddies
- Book fair, plays
- Community service- high school required 35 hours
- One - eighth grade magnet - focuses on community services
  - expected 10 hours-sixth grade
  - expected 20 hours-seventh grade
  - expected 30 hours-eighth grade

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***Student Learning/Learning at Home*** - *involve families with their children in homework, other curriculum-related activities, course and program choices, and plans for the future.*

**Group 1**

- Monthly curriculum themes-each grade contributes in outlines curriculum for the month
- Helping parents help their children with their work at home-or opportunities seem to be sparsely attended
- Literacy night's-mostly k through four attend; experience the AR (accelerated reading) program

**Group 2**

- Math and science nights
- Transition nights-at every level

**Discussion:** Student learning looks different at every level. Do parents access technology? Not all parents come to these events. How could information be shared with parents without having a school event? Do parents know how to use the technology?

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***School Decision-Making and Advocacy - Participation and Leadership. Include families as participants in school decisions, and develop parent leaders and representatives.***

**Group 1**

- High school PTO-used to have one that was not successful.
- Have booster clubs.
- Parents on curriculum and policy councils.
- Parents and community surveyed and invited to participate in wellness team, school improvement "my voice team"
- Elementary PTO's

**Group 2**

- Community forums for hiring up leadership positions in SAU
- School board as liaisons

**Discussion:** Individual IEP Teams are advocacy opportunities for parents. Not all families want to be involved at this level. Important that the schools offer the opportunity for families and support their participation.

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***Collaborating with the Community- Coordinate resources and services from the community for families, students, and the school, and provide services to the community.***

**Group 2**

- After school programs
- Alumni support
- Girl scouts and other community activities held at the school
- Art to art - art in residence program
- Resource officer - police

**Group 1**

- Gymnastics after school
- DARE
- Safety programs - police and fire departments
- Partnership with Mental Health Center
- Town sports
- School is in a "town building"

**Discussion:** partnering with the local business - can offer deep discounts, example - pizza nights

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**Presenters: NH Connections and Parent Information Center**

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NH Connections is a project of the Parent Information Center and funded by the NH Department of Education Bureau of Special Education.