



IV: Home Involvement in Schooling

Goals for this area are to:

- Create a welcoming school environment.
- Help parents support their child's learning at home.
- Enhance home involvement through programs to address specific parent learning and support needs.

Adelman and Taylor state that “the trend in recent years has been to expand the nature and scope of the school’s focus on enhancing home involvement. Intervention practices encompass efforts to (1) address specific learning and support needs of adults in the home (e.g., classes to enhance literacy, job skills, ESL, mutual support groups), (2) help those in the home meet their basic obligations to their children, (3) enhance the home-school connection and sense of community, (5) enhance participation in making decisions that are essential to the student, (6) enhance home support related to the student’s basic learning and development, (7) mobilize those at home to problem solve related to student needs and (8) elicit help (support, collaborations, and partnerships) from those at home with respect to meeting classroom, school, and community needs.” (Adelman and Taylor, *A Center Brief: Introduction to a Component for Addressing Barriers to Student Learning*, June 2001, UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, Department of Psychology, P.O Box. 951563, Los Angeles, CA 90095, p.9.).

Find out who is currently working on home involvement in the school. This might include: the family/parent liaison, Title-I family involvement coordinator, the Latino Consent Decree staff person, educational assistants, Site Council members, various school committees and/or parents. Connect with those who are already involved, while trying to engage more people in the effort. Work in partnership with who and what is already at your school, and begin by working on what the school staff view as most important.

Create a welcoming and user-friendly school environment:

- Post clear signs with welcome messages and directions translated into languages spoken at the school or in the larger community (*see Appendix for examples, page A-90*).
- Make sure the school building is well lit and has inviting décor.
- Have someone at the school entrance to greet families and help them find the office.
- Encourage all school staff to greet and welcome families while they are at the school.

Mobilize parents to problem solve student needs:

- Include families in all decision-making about their child.
- Invite families to spend time observing their child and to meet with staff to learn as much as possible about their child’s strengths and needs.

- Reach out to parents in their homes, when possible, to engage them in the process. Making the effort to go to the parent sends a strong message about your commitment to their child and your perception of the importance of their role in their child's success.

Example:

When a teacher had limited success contacting a student's family about his lack of academic progress she consulted with the school counselor. The school's Parent Liaison called the home and then mailed a note to the family asking to meet with the child's parent/caretaker. The Parent Liaison learned that the child's parent was living out of state and the caretaker was having difficulty meeting the needs of the child. With support from the Parent Liaison the child's caretaker was able to obtain temporary legal custody of the child so that medical concerns, including a vision problem, could be addressed. The child began to focus more on school work, seemed more comfortable at school and talked about planning to continue living with their guardian.

Enhance home involvement through programs to address specific parent learning and support needs:

- Survey families to determine their needs and desires. Examples of how this can be done include: family focus groups, written surveys at conferences with a free ice cream sundae in exchange for a completed survey. See *page 35* for a Support for Home Involvement Survey, developed by Adelman and Taylor.
- Provide English Language Learner or other adult education classes as needed and desired by families.
- Provide Parenting Groups to interested families at the school. The frequency, time and location of the groups are important to their success. The physical space must allow for dialogue, classes cannot be scheduled too often to make it impractical for families to attend or too infrequent so they lose interest and continuity. It is important to find a time when most families are available, which means being sensitive to work schedules.
- Begin parent/family-meeting nights that, ideally, will eventually be run by and for families. Provide for transportation, childcare and offer a meal to families who attend.
- Make sure group topics are ones in which families are interested and allow flexibility based upon group desires. Include information about how parents can help their students be successful in school. Provide space, information and structure as needed and requested by group.

(Example: parents were invited to attend a Parent Night which included a teacher/staff panel for Q&A session on parents' concerns about gang activity. The discussion was conducted in English and three other smaller language specific groups to ease communication. The presenters included a community youth worker and someone from the Gang Taskforce. Many parents who attended this program talked about their worries about their children growing up, becoming teenagers, etc. Some parents talked about the value of obtaining accurate information about gang activity and information about what they could do to support their student in making positive choices. The night also included a free meal, childcare, raffle prizes and transportation assistance.)

- Provide school-wide social events that include all families and are focused on positive interaction within and between families as well as furthering a strong connection to school and staff.

(Examples: Family Sock Hop, Carnival, or Multicultural Celebration Family Night. One elementary school offered a Family Night with a presenter to lead a discussion for parents

on helping their student set up routines for a successful start to the school year while students and siblings watched a movie.)

- Title I funds can be used to provide these resources. Small grants or other funding can also be used.



Keys to Success

- Recognize the family's expertise about their own child and use their suggestions.
- Include parents on key school committees and decision-making teams (Site Council, School Conduct Improvement Team, Leadership Council).
- Let families know that the school staff care about their students and want to help them succeed.
- Encourage parents to socialize and connect with other parents for support.
- Make it convenient for families to attend social functions: provide transportation, childcare and food.
- Make the food a meal rather than a snack. (This will require exploring funding options)
- Provide raffle prizes for those who attend.
- Send out invitations for school activities through a wide variety of means – phone calls, letters or post cards through the mail, flyers sent home with students, advertise in the school or community newsletter, put dates on the school calendar.
- Make sure interpreters are available and all verbal and written communication is translated.
- Welcome and appreciate families – smile, greet them in their own language when possible. Be sensitive to cultural and gender differences, eye contact etc.
- Include parents in the planning for events/meetings.



Challenges

- Multi-stressed, busy families do not always have the time to visit the school or focus significantly on their students' education.
- Families have not always had good experiences with mental health professionals or with school personnel. They often feel blamed by the "system."
- Large families with limited resources make the logistics of family involvement at school more difficult.
- School staff may not always have the time to participate in after school parent events.
- Understand how the school climate and school staff may impact the parents' comfort in attending school events.

Sample - Home Involvement in Schooling Survey

Please provide your opinions on the following:	Check one			Check Yes or No	
	Yes	Yes, but more needed	No	If no, do you want this? Yes No	
A. Which of the following are available to address specific learning and support needs of the ADULTS in the home?					
1. Does your school offer ADULT classes focused on:					
a) English Language Learners (ELL)?					
b) citizenship preparation?					
c) basic literacy skills?					
d) GED preparation?					
e) job preparation?					
f) other?(specify)					
2. Are there groups for mutual support and discussion?					
3. Are ADULTS in the home offered help in getting outside help for personal needs?					
B. Which of the following are available to help those in the home meet their basic obligations to the student?					
1. Is help provided for addressing special family needs for					
a) food and clothing?					
b) shelter?					
c) school supplies?					
2. Are education programs offered on					
a) child-rearing /parenting?					
b) creating a supportive home environment for students?					
c) reducing factors that interfere with a student's school learning and performance?					
3. Are guidelines provided for helping students deal with homework?					

OVER

Sample - Home Involvement in Schooling Survey

	Check one			Check Yes or No	
	Yes	Yes, but more needed	No	If no, do you want this? Yes	No
C. Which of the following are in use to improve communication about matters essential to the students and family?					
1. Are there periodic general announcements and meetings such as					
a) advertising for incoming students?					
b) orientation for incoming students and families?					
c) bulletins/newsletters?					
d) back to school night/open house?					
1. (continued) Are there periodic general announcements and meetings such as					
e) parent teacher conferences?					
f) other (specify)					
2. Is there a system to inform the home on a regular basis					
a) about general school matters?					
b) about opportunities for home involvement in school?					
c) other (specify)					
3. To enhance home involvement in the student's program and progress, are interactive communications used, such as					
a) sending notes home regularly?					
b) a computerized phone line?					
c) frequent in-person conferences with the family?					
4. Other (specify):					

D. Please indicate below any other ways that are used at your school to enhance home involvement in schooling.

Please indicate below other things you want the school to do to enhance home involvement in schooling.

Survey adapted from the *Mental Health and School-Based Health Centers*, School Mental Health Project, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA

V. Support for Transitions

The goal for this area is to:

- Enhance a school's capacity to handle a variety of transition concerns, e.g., new students to their school, transitions for students as they go to a new grade, transitions for students as they go to middle school from elementary school, and student transitions during the school day.

Back to school transition for *all* students –At the beginning of the school year or after school breaks; these could involve:

- Change in the types of daily activity, for example, being outside and more active in the summer, to spending more time at a desk and in doors when school begins.
- Change in daily routine.
- Increased structure.
- Increased pressure associated with school life.
- Changes related to a new teacher: expectations, teaching style, personality.
- New peers.
- Loss of former peers and former teachers.
- Increased academic demands.

Kindergarten transition could involve:

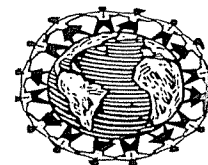
- New roles, for example., being a student in addition to a child in a family.
- New/different behavioral expectations (rules)—raising your hand before talking, asking for permission to leave the room, standing in line, and so on.
- Increased expectation of self-control—standing or sitting quietly for longer periods of time, needing to control impulses to yell or laugh.
- Being part of a larger peer group.
- Increased academic demands.
- Needing to follow the structure of the school day—getting to school at a certain time, eating a snack or meal at a specific time, not when you're hungry.
- Change in activities and activity levels—a student who had been active and playing outside most days, now needs to sit at a desk, listen to stories, draw pictures.

New student transition could mean that the new student may need to:

- Learn who is who in the school.
- Understand the physical lay-out of the school.
- Know where to get questions answered.
- May need help meeting new friends and fitting in socially.
- Adapt to curriculum differences.
- Help to succeed academically.
- Handle adjustment worries—what if I can't open my locker; who will I sit by at lunch.

Transition to middle school may involve:

- Understanding how middle school differs from elementary school.
- Understanding how middle school is the same as elementary school.
- Learning how to be better prepared to handle middle school.
- Changing teachers and classrooms hourly or even more frequently.



New to this culture transition may involve:

- Learning what to expect of the American school system.
- Understanding what the school expects of the family.
- Finding out where to go for help.
- Learning about resources for Limited English Proficiency or English as a Second Language Learners.

A welcoming school environment is a priority. Suggestions include:

- Posting welcome signs in the different languages spoken by the families and school staff in highly visible areas around the school entryways and in the main office. (*See Appendix for example, page A-90*).
- Developing New Student and Family Handbooks, which include a Who's Who staff description, school rules and expectations, discipline policies and special activities for students. (*See Appendix for samples, page A-107*).
- Offering new student group for middle school students facilitated by a mental health professional.
- Creating a Welcome Buddy program matching new students with a peer. (*See Appendix for example, page A-91 to A-100*).

Facilitating the **transition to school for kindergartners** can include consultation with kindergarten teachers and parents to determine student needs. The following strategies can be useful:

- Classroom observations.
- Consultation with teachers regarding class dynamics. Some groups of students contain a high number of very active students who have trouble paying attention to the teacher's instructions. Consultation about ways to structure the classroom, give directions slowly, with visual aids and ideas about how to organize the room can help reduce the disruptions in the classroom.
- Class psycho-educational lessons, such as "Making Friends, Learning and Following the Rules," and so on.
- Kindergarten friendship/social skills groups for students in need of additional small group attention (*see Appendix for example, pages A-60 to A-63*). Obtaining parent consent is required prior to group participation.
- Individual counseling for students needing individual attention (parent consent needed).

The transition from sixth grade to **middle school** can be particularly anxiety producing. The social and emotional concerns of students can be addressed by strategies that helped ease this transition for students and families:

- Provide an informational evening for parents of 6th graders to interact with a panel of middle school parents.
- Provide a panel of current middle school students to talk with and answer questions of current sixth graders (*see Appendix for example, pages A-105 and A-106*).
- Provide a one-time class interactive group for sixth graders. This group provides information about the school rules, dress codes, orients students to the building and

introduces them to key staff members. It helps students meet other new students and begin to form relationships with peers and adults at the school.

- Conduct a Transition to Middle School Group for current sixth graders (*see Appendix for description, page A-103*).



Keys to Success:

- Help staff to recognize the importance of transitions and how addressing this issue can avoid problems later.
- Identify and meet the specific needs of the students and families in the school.
- Translate all information into relevant languages.



Challenges:

- Limited resources/time to address these needs.

Sample - Support for Transitions Survey

Please provide your opinions on the following:	Check one			Check Yes or No	
	Yes	Yes, but more needed	No	If no, do you want this?	
				Yes	No
A. What programs for establishing a welcoming and supportive community are at this school?					
1. Are there welcoming materials/ a welcoming décor?					
a. Are there welcome signs?			→		
b. Are welcoming information materials used?			→		
c. Is a special welcoming booklet used?			→		
d. Are materials translated into appropriate languages?			→		
2. Are there orientation programs?					
a. Are there introductory tours?			→		
b. Are introductory presentations made?			→		
c. Are new arrivals introduced to special people such as the principal and teachers?			→		
d. Are special events used to welcome recent arrivals?			→		
e. Are different languages accommodated?			→		
3. Is special assistance available to those who need help registering?			→		
4. Are social support strategies and mechanisms used?					
a. Are peer buddies assigned?			→		
b. Are peer parents assigned?			→		
c. Are special invitations used to encourage family involvement?			→		
d. Are special invitations used to encourage students to join in activities?			→		
e. Are advocates available when new arrivals need them?			→		
B. Which of the following transition programs are in use for grade-to-grade and program-to-program changes for students?					
1. Are orientations to new situation provided?			→		
2. Is transition counseling provided?			→		
3. Are students taken on "warm-up" visits?			→		
4. Is there a "survival " skills training program?			→		
5. Is the new setting primed to accommodate the individual's needs?			→		

OVER

Sample - Support for Transitions Survey

	Check one			Check Yes or No	
	Yes	Yes, but more needed	No	If no, do you want this? Yes	No
C. What programs are used to meet the educational needs of personnel related to this programmatic area?					
1. Is there ongoing training for team members concerned with the area of Support for Transitions?			→		
2. Is there ongoing training for staff of specific services/ programs? (e.g., teachers, peer buddies, office staff, administrators)?			→		
3. Other? (specify)			→		
D. What programs/ services are available to assist those students who change schools in mid-year?					
1. Is academic achievement information provided to the new school?			→		
2. Is transitioning counseling provided?			→		

E. Please indicate below any other ways that are used at your school to provide support for transitions.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

F. Please indicate below other things you want the school to do to provide support for transitions.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Survey adapted from the *Mental Health and School-Based Health Centers*, School Mental Health Project, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA

VI: Community Involvement

Goals for this area are to:

- Provide a comprehensive and integrated continuum of support and mental health services.
- Improve the effectiveness of school and community mental health and social services.
- Support all youth and their families.

Another component of Adelman and Taylor's framework to enhance student supports is outreach to the community to build linkages and collaboration. "The emphasis here on outreaching to the community is to develop greater involvement in schooling and enhance support for efforts to enable learning. Outreach may be made to (a) public and private community agencies, colleges, organizations and facilities, (b) business and professional organizations and groups, and (c) volunteer service programs, organizations and clubs. (Adelman and Taylor, *The Enabling Component*, 1996, UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, Department of Psychology, P.O. Box. 951563, Los Angeles, CA 90095, p. 11.).

Enhance effectiveness of school and community resources

- Meet with the school's Principal and Parent-Community Liaison/Coordinator to determine current level of community involvement. Ask the principal to establish priorities/expectations/ desires for what community involvement would look like in the school. *See the Community Involvement Survey, pages 46-48.*
- Participate in the school's Parent-Community Involvement Committee, available in most schools.
- Learn from teachers and administration how the school currently utilizes volunteers.
- Survey teachers about their need for volunteers.
- Help the school establish a "point-person" in the building to coordinate and organize volunteers.
- Attend school advisory committee meetings (e.g., Site Council) to gain the perspectives of community representatives, their interests and goals, re: involvement in the school. Become familiar with the School Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP) as it pertains to community involvement.

Provide a comprehensive and integrated continuum of support services and mental health referral sources

- Develop a relationship with the community center or social service agency located closest to the school. Find out what services or activities the center or agency has to offer. Provide this information to school staff, students and families via flyers, announcements, etc.
- Distribute information to the Community Center or social service agency about school events (carnivals, celebrations, plays, art shows, musical performances, athletic events), inviting the larger community to attend and participate.
- Invite community health clinics or agencies (e.g., medical, dental, mental health) to set up tables at the school's Parent Conferences, Open Houses or "Family Fun Nights" to provide direct services (e.g., dental screenings, applications for insurance) and information about their respective resources.

Support all youth and their families

- Offer classes for *adults* at the school, like ELL, citizenship, and computer literacy, inviting both the school's parents/caregivers and adults from the community to participate.
- Offer after-school and/or summer programming for children who attend the school and/or live in the community. Some community agencies have staff that will lead programs in the school if the building is open and staffed with security during non-school hours.

- Consider the schedules and needs of working parents when programming classes or activities, i.e., offer programming during school vacations (winter, spring and summer breaks.)
- Make programming available to all members of the community regardless of language differences, financial limitations, or physical disabilities. Help arrange for transportation to the programs for those who need it.



Keys to Success

- Survey school staff to gain information and understand how teachers, administrators, and parents identify the needs they have regarding connections to the community.
- Don't expect to do this all on your own. Coordinating volunteers can be a full-time job.
- Once you've connected with someone at the local Community Center, introduce him/her to the Principal and to the school's Parent/Community liaison. If you attend any community-based meetings, take someone (preferably one of the above) from the school along with you. This will strengthen the connection between the school and the community and this person can help support your efforts in getting buy-in from the rest of the staff.
- Assess the needs/interests of the parents (surveys are good tools) when planning to offer adult classes in collaboration with a community agency.



Challenges

- Some teachers and class activities do not lend themselves to volunteers in their classroom.
- Developing a collaborative agreement with a community agency can be time consuming. Think of accomplishing this in steps instead of working out the entire arrangement in one action.

Sample - Community Involvement and Volunteers Survey

Please provide your opinions on the following:	Check one			Check Yes or No	
	Yes	Yes, but more needed	No	If no, do you want this? Yes	No
A. With respect to programs to recruit community involvement and support:					
1. From which of the following sources are participants recruited?					
a) Public community agencies, organizations, facilities					
b) Private community agencies, organizations, and facilities					
c) Business sector					
d) Professional organizations and groups					
e) Volunteer service programs, organizations, and clubs					
f) Universities and colleges					
2. Indicate current types of community involvement at the school					
a) Mentoring for students and/or families					
b) Volunteer functions					
c) Community resource pool that provides expertise as requested, such as:					
Artists					
Musicians					
librarians					
Health and safety programs					
Other (specify)					
d) Formal agency and program linkages that result in:					
Community health and social services providing services at school					
After school programs providing services at the school					
e) Formal partnership arrangements that involve community agents in:					
School governance					
Advocacy for the school					
Advisory functions					
Program planning					
Fund raising					
Sponsoring activity (adopt-a-school, event sponsor)					
Creating awards and incentives					
Creating jobs					
Other (specify)					

OVER

Sample - Community Involvement and Volunteers Survey

Please provide your opinions on the following:	Check one			Check Yes or No	
	Yes	Yes, but more needed	No	If no, do you want this?	
				Yes	No
B. With specific respect to volunteers:					
a) Nonprofessionals					
b) Parents					
c) College students					
d) Senior citizens					
e) Business people					
f) Peer and cross-age tutors					
g) Paraprofessionals					
h) Professionals: in-home training (specify)					
i) Professionals: pro-bono (specify)					
j) Other (specify)					
2. What do volunteers assist?					
a) Administrators					
b) Teachers					
c) Support staff					
d) Students (explain)					
e) Other staff (specify)					
3. In which of the following ways do volunteers participate?					
a. Providing general classroom assistance					
b. Assisting with targeted students					
c. Assisting after school					
d. Helping address diversity matters (explain)					
e. Helping in the cafeteria					
f. Helping in the library					
g. Helping in the computer lab					
h. Helping in the office					
i. Helping on field trips					
j. Helping with homework help lines					
k. Helping welcome visitors					
l. Helping register and welcome new students and families					
m. Phoning families for reminders (conferences, events, etc.)					
n. Acting as mentors or advocates for students, families and staff					

OVER

Sample - Community Involvement and Volunteers Survey

		Check one		Check Yes or No		
		Yes	Yes, nut more needed	No	If no do you want this Yes	No
o.	Assisting with school upkeep and beautification efforts					
p.	Helping enhance public support by increasing political awareness about the contributions and needs of the school					
q.	Assisting with school upkeep and beautification efforts					
r.	Helping enhance public support by increasing political awareness about the contributions and needs of the school					
s.	Other (specify)					
C.	Which of the following are used to enhance community-school connections and a sense of community?					
1.	Student performances for the community (school sponsored)					
a)	Cultural and sports events for the community					
b)	Community festivals and celebrations					
c)	Topical workshops and discussion groups					
d)	Health fairs					
e)	Other (specify)					
D.	What programs are used to meet the educational needs of personnel related to this programmatic area?					
1.	Is there ongoing training for team members concerned with the area of Community Outreach/Volunteers:					
2.	Is there ongoing training for staff of specific programs?					
E.	Which of the following topics are covered in educating stakeholders:					
1.	Understanding the local community (needs, resources, culture)					
2.	How to recruit, train, and retain volunteers					
3.	How to move toward collaborations with community resources					
4.	How to outreach to hard-to-involve students and families					
5.	Other (specify)					

Please indicate below any other ways that are used at your school to provide support for transitions.

Survey adapted from the *Mental Health and School-Based Health Centers*, School Mental Health Project, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA

