Building Trusting Family-Teacher Partnerships

Always consider families as a resource and help them to recognize themselves as resources. Provide the context for them to feel “empowered.”

- Help families see that they have power, dignity, and authority in rearing their children.
- “Empowering” families is intentional and ongoing; it involves mutual respect, critical reflection, and caring so that families can gain access to and control over resources.

Negotiate roles and responsibilities.

- Include families in decision making for their child.
- Explain to families the importance of families in learning, right away and often.
- Invite and expect families to be partners in classroom management and homework.
- Clarify how they can help provide options.
- Encourage families to be assertive.
- Develop a “family-school agreement.”

Reduce barriers.

- Have contact with every family early in the school year.
- Establish ongoing communication systems; include “good news” phone calls.
- Use two communication formats that are both school → home and home → school.
- Bridge the language gap – strive to have the best communication between school and home with every family, including those who speak a language other than English, by accessing school and community resources; always try; ask students to help identify ways to communicate with their families.

Create a spirit of cooperation and coordination.

- Explore what they want school to accomplish.
- Devise opportunities for involvement that they see as practical and meaningful – this can be supporting learning at home.
- Work to coordinate learning at home and school.
- Reach out to families with warmth and sensitivity.
- Acknowledge that sharing power with families is not abdicating your role; rather, it provides an opportunity to understand interests and goals of families and learn how to achieve them.

Engage in perspective taking.

- Identify why families might not be involved:
  - Diverse school experiences of families.
  - Economic and time constraints.
  - Diverse linguistic and cultural practices.
  - Different values.
- “Resistance” is always a form of communication. Families may be seen as “resistant,” or they may simply hold different perspectives. Lack of communication about what is important to each party leads to notions of some parents being “resistant” or “hard to reach.” Genuinely attempt to develop a relationship with every family.

Response to Intervention (RtI) is incorporated within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
Make your classroom welcoming and family friendly.

- Consider physical appearance that is inviting, open to all.
- Consider affective climate that fosters warmth, sensitivity, and trust.
- Hold class “open houses” with students and families at variable times so that there can be shared learning experiences.

Other Strategies

- Use multiple efforts – no one way will work for all families.
- Make events fun!
- Plan for logistical barriers and build on flexibility.
- Invite families to help determine the best way for them to be involved.
- Meet families on their turf.
- Identify a family who can help spread good messages.
- Make sure roles are meaningful.
- Identify why families might not be involved and try to take their perspective; reach out.

School-Home-School Note*

**Definition:** A School-Home-School Note serves as a two-way communication and intervention system that can identify, monitor, and support a student’s new academic or behavioral learning at school and at home.

**Steps to Establishing A School-Home-School Note**

- Have a conversation with teachers and family members.
- Include the student in explaining and planning at an appropriate time.
- Identify strengths and prioritize any concerns.
- Determine how goal(s) will be defined.
- Determine the criteria for success.
- Design the School-Home-School Note with two-way communication capacity, including the student.
- Establish responsibilities.
- Identify possible rewards for home and school – with student.
- Establish a reward system.
- Monitor and modify the system.
- Provide feedback for everyone.
- Troubleshoot or maintain or fade as needed.

* Or Home-School-Home Note


Response to Intervention (RtI) is incorporated within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
Sample School-Home-School Note or Sample Home-School-Home Note

Name: ___________________ Date: _______________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Spelling</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Homework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follow Directions 1st Time</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish Assignments</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Short Break When Needed</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
<td>0 1 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS**

*Teacher Initials*  
*Family Initials*  
*Student Initials*  

Successes: __________________________________________________________

School Comments: __________________________________________________

Home Comments: _____________________________________________________

**KEY**

0 = No  
1 = Somewhat...  
2 = YES!!

Goal for Today: ________ (Number or %)  
Total for Today: ________ (Number or %)
DO NOT TRY TO FIX ME BECAUSE I AM NOT BROKEN. SUPPORT ME. I CAN MAKE MY CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY IN MY WAY.

RESPECT THE PERSON

USE MY NAME, NOT MY LABEL

SEE MY HUMANITY

PEOPLE FIRST

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HAVE A LOT TO OFFER - NOTICE WHAT WE CAN DO!

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A 'SPED KID'

Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee

Colorado Department of Education
Office of Special Education
1560 Broadway, Suite 1175
Denver, CO 80202
303-866-6694
www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/CSEAC.asp
There are no 'sped kids'
When we think and use respectful language, we see that saying things such as ‘the sped kids eat lunch together” or 'that's the sped class“ or “those are my special ed students” or “that's the autism room” we are not using person-first language. Teachers, staff, parents and students can support each other to use respectful language at all times, in all places.

Use my name not my label
People first language is about respect, about seeing the person. It is about valuing the person as an equal. It is about seeing the child/teen/adult as a person and realizing that labels really don’t matter when you get to know a child or a person with a disability.

"Do not admire me. A desire to live a full life does not warrant adoration. Respect me for respect presumes equity." - Norm Kunc

Language influences what we think
The minute we put a label on a person, their future is changed. If the language is respectful, caring and empowering, it has a positive effect. If the language has a negative connotation, it can damage confidence and self-esteem. Labels can help us understand an individual’s needs but we have to be sure we see the person before the label and use the label to help, not hurt.

Some people value their differences
And prefer to be called an ‘autistic’ person. They feel that their brain differences are not separate from who they are and want to be seen as whole and not a person with a part of them that is ‘broken’.

Spread the Word to End the Word
When people use the r-word and other derogatory terms towards themselves or others they are displaying not only a lack of respect but intolerance. Take the pledge to end the use of the r-word (from www.r-word.org)

I pledge and support the elimination of the derogatory use of the r-word from everyday speech and promote the acceptance and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

Journalists and reporters
Anytime you write, speak or refer to a person with a disability, please use person-first language:
⇒ He is a boy with Down syndrome.
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This brochure is published by the Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee
Multi-Tiered Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) Supports Checklist

This Checklist was developed to assist family members, school staff, and community collaborators in assessing how their site or situation currently operationalizes partnering throughout the tiers or layers of support. Another term, “differentiated partnering” (Edwards, 2011), has been used to describe this idea – that there needs to be a continuum of partnering actions so as every student and family is successfully included in a school community. The goal is to ensure seamless partnering for every student’s success, matching supports to needs. This tool was created using the fifty plus years of research findings that specify the importance of family participation in students’ positive educational outcomes. Originally, this Checklist was developed to guide use of actions and tools as provided in the Response to Intervention (RtI) Family & Community Partnering: “On the Team and At the Table” Toolkit (Colorado Department of Education, 2009). It has since been adapted and revised according to stakeholder feedback, Colorado legislation, the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2008), and the Dual Capacity-Building Framework (U. S. Department of Education, 2013). Items represent the evidence-based actions identified in these various initiatives and documents within a tiered framework.

This Checklist can also be used in action planning. As individuals answer the questions, they have the opportunity to assess what they observe, experience, and know from their unique perspective. Individuals and/or different stakeholder groups can collect and analyze results as a whole and/or disaggregate to identify specific patterns or needs. Data can be used in strategically planning, implementing, and evaluating partnering activities. Using a team-based approach may allow for different individuals (educators, families, or community members) to share expertise they might have about supports that are aligned to certain areas of need. The Checklist can be used as an evaluation tool to help assess growth and effectiveness. In addition, the items in this assessment can be used to formulate specific partnering “job descriptions” for a specific role or set of responsibilities. The Checklist could be considered during performance evaluations or when developing professional growth goals, as well.

Response to Intervention (RtI) is incorporated within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
## Multi-Tiered Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) Supports Checklist

**Date:**  
**School:**  
**Role (Educator, Family, Community):**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please check those that you observe in your site or situation; note NA if not aware.

### Universal Supports - All Families/Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL: Our school administrators and all staff members are...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>__1. Creating a welcoming, culturally and linguistically responsive environment with multiple visiting and volunteering opportunities (home and school).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__2. Providing a shared understanding of the evidence and legal base for partnering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__3. Communicating partnering beliefs: (a) <em>Education is a shared responsibility between home and school</em>; (b) <em>Families are active partners</em>; (c) <em>Student success is always the focus</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__4. Integrating partnering practices and language into all documents, procedures, and team processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__5. Ensuring every family uses the school technology - parent portal, email, website, texting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__6. Ensuring every family member knows the importance of his/her actions in supporting learning at home: (a) <em>Frequent and systematic discussions about school</em>; (2) <em>Encouraging their children regarding schoolwork</em>; and (3) <em>Providing or working with resources to provide supervision, support for homework and after-school time</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__7. Sharing the school’s tiered MTSS or RtI framework with all staff and families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__8. Providing family education on learning-related topics, based on identified needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__9. Including families in school decision-making and on leadership teams (SACs, DACs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__10. Using data systematically to improve and expand family partnering practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__11. Allocating time for a staff person to support personnel and families in partnering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__12. Collaborating with community resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__13. Implementing federal and state legislated partnership responsibilities, such as cited in ESEA, IDEA, SB 09-163, SB 09-256, SB 10-191, SB 13-193, ECEA, and READ Act.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CLASSROOM: Our teachers and specialists are...

| __1. Contacting every family personally to create ongoing, two-way communication. |
| __2. Ensuring each family, including students, understands class and homework success expectations, and how everyone will partner if a student struggles in learning. |
| __3. Providing information on current class content so families can reinforce learning at home. |
| __4. Asking families what they need to support learning at home and following up. |
| __5. Sending progress data regularly to families, with opportunities for discussion. |
| __6. Telling students that school and home are working together for their success. |

### Targeted and Intensive Supports - Some or Few Families/Staff (Includes All Universal)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our specialists/intervention teams, with teachers and administrators, are...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>__1. Designating people and processes to reach out and individually encourage families and staff who may be hesitant or uncomfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__2. Including families as active partners throughout the individualized MTSS problem solving process, providing information and participation in decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__3. Supporting teachers and families in mutually developing and implementing individual student plans such as IEP, Behavior, READ, Truancy, and Advanced Learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__4. Ensuring families understand and participate in the implementation of small group (standard protocol) instructional academic and behavioral interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__5. Individualizing family-school partnering plans and support when needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__6. Providing school, family and community wraparound when needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__7. Accessing conflict resolution support and processes when needed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Universal School: __7/13; Total Universal Classroom: __6/6; Total Upper Tiers: __7/7; |

**SUPPORTS SUMMARY: Strengths:**

**Concerns:**

*Aligned with the *National Standards for Family-School Partnerships* (PTA, 2008), the research which relates specific, intentional family-school partnering to increased student success (Christenson and Reschly, 2010), and the Dual Capacity-Building Framework (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).*
Respectful Language
People First & Person-Centered

Do not try to fix me because I am not broken. Support me. I can make my contribution to the community in my way.

Respect the person

Use my name, not my label

See my humanity

People with disabilities have a lot to offer, notice what we can do!

Never use the R-word

There's no such thing as a 'sped kid'

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⇒ My child receives special education services.

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Case Study Joey

Joey is a high school freshman who receives English Language services. He has missing assignments, incomplete assignments, and is doing poorly on tests and quizzes. Teachers feel that an Evaluation for Special Education services might be appropriate. He is very easily distracted by social interactions in class.

Joey was born in China with a heart anomaly. He was adopted at 5 years old. Upon arrival he had surgery to repair his heart condition. He was also identified as having developmental delays.

- In Kindergarten, he received daily EL support. He tested as Non-English Proficiency (NEP)/Level 1 (out of 6 levels).
- In 1st grade he made progress in English Language Proficiency (Limited English Proficiency/Level 3. At this time, his parents brought up concerns around Reactive Attachment Disorder. An RtI plan was developed for him.
- In 2nd grade he remained at LEP/Level 3. He was moved to a Level 3 on his RtI plan and was identified as having Dyslexia.
- In 3rd grade he moved within District to another school. His teacher noted a potential gifted ability in Art. His language proficiency went up to an LEP/Level 4.
- For 4th grade he transferred to an online homeschool program.
- In 5th grade Joey moved back to the school he attended for grades K-2. His language proficiency test continued to show progress. He went back on an RtI plan because he tested at a 3rd grade level for spelling and was exhibiting the need for support with organization and study skills. Parents would not sign consent to evaluate for Special Education services.
- Over the next two years his language proficiency seemed to plateau.
- By 8th grade his language proficiency decreased slightly (Writing). During this school year, his parents divorced.
- In 9th grade Joey had a 1.8 GPA. Teachers described how he would often “flip a switch” midway through an assignment, drastically changing the quality of his work. His classroom behavior was unfocused, chatty and disrespectful of classroom norms and instructions. He had a very hard time turning in assignments on time and completed. There seemed to be an entire lack of academic motivation.
Case Study Abby

Abigail is a second grader with a diagnosis of Autism. She had struggled in her previous environment and was new to public school this year.

- Autism Diagnosis Age 3
- Preschool through First Grade were completed at a private parochial school. Abby struggled increasingly in this environment. By the early part of first grade, parents were contacted several times per week to pick their daughter up early from school due to behavior.
- Parents decided to reach out to the school district in early Spring of her first grade year to find out what their options might be. They were very reluctant to contemplate a move to public school despite becoming increasingly aware that Abby needed a different environment. Parents had been told by their current school that they could no longer meet Abigail’s needs.
- Parents were fearful of public school influences and perceived dangers. Several elementary schools were taken into consideration before deciding on one that they felt would most closely meet their needs.
- At the beginning of second grade Abby was immediately referred for an evaluation for special education. Behaviors included inattention, disruption, attempting to leave the premises, attempting to board a school bus that was not hers. She had a very strong imagination and spent a lot of time inhabiting that realm.
- She qualified for Special Education Services under Autism. Testing also revealed a very high full-scale IQ.
- Parents felt the need to continually apologize for Abigail’s behavior and were reluctant to accept Special Education services because they viewed that as an entitlement and didn’t want their daughter to receive special consideration or be enabled in her behavior.
Case Study Cayden

Cayden is an 8th grader who is on a 504 plan. His academics are very good, but he struggles with peer interactions and behavior in school.

- Cayden was on an IEP starting in Kindergarten. He struggled with classroom routines, peer interactions and physical aggression towards peers and teachers.
- By second grade he was increasingly unsuccessful at school and parents were becoming very frustrated. An alternative placement was discussed, which parents ruled out of the question. They opted to remove Cayden from school and he received homebound services for the remainder of the year.
- At the beginning of 3rd grade, Cayden transitioned to a center based highly specialized program at another elementary school.
- Over the next few years, he made good progress and became increasingly successful in the school environment.
- By the end of Elementary School, Cayden was in the general education classroom greater than 80% of the time.
- Parents have always been very supportive of their son and like to be involved in processing any incident that may have occurred at school. They were concerned in anticipation of the transition to Middle School.
- In Middle School Cayden was placed on a 504 plan. Parents were strongly in favor and felt that he did not need direct Special Education services, but would benefit from robust accommodations around behavior and social interactions.
- He continued to struggle with behavior in school and peer relationships and missed having a connection with his former Special Education teacher.
- Parents are concerned about a transition to High School next year.
Case Study Ally

Ally is a 5th grader who was adopted from a Russian orphanage at the age of 3. During the first few years after her adoption she received a number of different and conflicting diagnoses before ultimately being diagnosed with Complex Trauma.

- Ally entered preschool shortly after being adopted towards the end of the school year. Her behavior included aggression, self-harm and the inability to interact appropriately with peers and adults both at school and at home.
- Parents were not happy after her brief tenure in preschool.
- Parents were reluctant to enroll Ally in school and opted to homeschool her for a period of time.
- Behaviors continued to be of great concern to parents. They sought outside assistance to help them address behaviors they were seeing at home.
- Parents decided to re-enroll her in school for first grade. An evaluation for Special Education eligibility was started immediately. Parents were reluctant to label their child as having a disability. They felt that her struggles were not the result of any disability but rather a result of the trauma she sustained while living in the orphanage.
- During 2nd grade, Parents became increasingly unhappy with the notion of Special Education as a whole, and decided to revoke Special Education services and homeschool Ally again.
- While at home, parents elected to focus on relationship and to limit exposure to academics.
- During 4th grade, they began accessing enrichment opportunities at the school and ultimately decided to re-enroll Ally at the beginning of 5th grade.
- An evaluation for Special Education was initiated toward the end of first semester and she was found eligible for services.
- She attended school with relative success and had periods of very good days along with some struggles that were successfully resolved at school. During this time, her behavior at home began escalating to a level that put the family in crisis. The family felt that her attendance at school was causing the change in behaviors at home and elected to keep her home indefinitely.
Case Study Jason

Jason is a 14 year old 8th grader with a diagnosis of ADHD who moved here from out of state shortly before the beginning of this school year with his mother and step-father.

- He had over 50 discipline referrals in his previous school and had dis-enrolled at the end of last school year to avoid expulsion.
- He had been evaluated for Special Education eligibility at his previous school and did not qualify at that time.
- His transition to a new environment and culture was difficult. He felt like he did not fit in with his peers at his new school and missed his home he had left behind.
- He immediately started accruing discipline referrals at his new school.
- Jason had several incidents outside of school, as well. One involving law enforcement.
- The new school put a number of interventions in place that, in their opinion, were not successful.
- Testing for Special Education eligibility was initiated. He did not qualify for services.
- Jason was placed on a 504 plan to give him access to accommodations.
- His behaviors in and out of school continued to escalate.
- While most of his behavior consisted of being habitually disruptive, several of his discipline referrals were due to physical aggression toward peers and staff.
- After several suspensions, it was determined at a Manifestation Hearing that his behavior was not a result of his documented disability of ADHD.
- The school initiated an Expulsion hearing and Jason was expelled.
- The family had experienced a number of setbacks and his mother has had some serious health challenges.
- Mom then sought an outside Neuro-Psychological Evaluation in the hopes that any new information would help Jason be more successful in school.