

EVERYONE WINS! IN SHORT

For 50 years, the evidence has been steadily mounting: Family-school partnerships are essential not only to student success, but also to creating schools that serve all children well.

The studies covered here reveal high-impact practices that have transformational effects on students, educators, families, schools, and communities. When schools intentionally cultivate relationships of trust and respect with families, they create a culture where **EVERYONE WINS!**

Wins for Students:

- Higher grades and test scores
- Better attendance and engagement in class
- More positive attitudes and behavior
- Greater sense of efficacy and self-esteem
- Higher graduation rates and college/postsecondary attendance

Why? Students feel supported and reassured when the most important adults in their lives are working together to help them learn. When this process starts in early childhood, children's developing confidence and motivation encourage their families to remain involved, setting up a positive cycle that persists from cradle to career.

Wins for Educators:

- Shift from deficit- to asset-based beliefs and mindsets about all students and families
- Increased multicultural awareness and appreciation
- Greater success motivating and engaging students of diverse backgrounds
- More support from families
- Stronger morale and professional satisfaction

Why? Teachers gain insights into their students' strengths and challenges, allowing them to enrich instruction and integrate students' experiences into classroom lessons. Collaborating with families also creates shared purpose and reduces their sense of isolation. School leaders gain valuable skills for communicating and working with families.

Wins for Families:

- Stronger parent-child relationships
- Better rapport with teachers and school staff
- Greater understanding of child's progress and how to help
- More knowledge and skill in advocating for child
- Increased deep and supportive social connections

Why? Families gain skills and confidence in helping their children learn, navigating the school system, generating ideas for improved learning opportunities, and working to change policy and practice. Parents move from seeing themselves as "just a parent" to becoming "role models" and the "go-to people" in their families and community.

Wins for Schools:

- More positive school climate
- Higher morale and greater retention of teachers
- Improved facilities, better curriculum, and higher-quality programs
- More responsive to community concerns
- Better reputation and more support from the community

Why? When schools become more welcoming and inclusive, it transforms school climate in ways that benefit everyone. By engaging families with a spirit of partnership, schools become rooted in and reflecting the lives and experiences of their students, families, and community.

Wins for school districts and communities:

- Reduced suspensions and high-risk behaviors
- Increased family and youth involvement in site-based decisions
- Expanded mental and physical health resources leading to improved health
- High levels of participation in afterschool programs
- Increased high school graduation rate

Why? Listening to students, families, and community members helps school districts and community partners improve their policies and practices because of what they learn. Families are experts on their children, their culture, and their neighborhoods. They know what would make their community a better place to live and raise children.

Putting These Findings Into Practice

Here's what you can do...

- 1 Intentionally cultivate relationships of trust and respect.** Center efforts on children's learning and development. Include family partnerships in school-improvement plans that center justice as the long-term goal.
- 2 Start family engagement practices when children are young.** Equip families to navigate the system and continue engaging families up to college and career.
- 3 Communicate clearly and continuously.** Establish ongoing two-way communication with families, make the information accessible in all languages, and link it to what students are learning.
- 4 Focus on equity. Provide extra supports so that all families get what they need to support their children's learning.** Consider the realities of family life, such as childcare, immigration status, and work constraints. Invite families into decision-making as equal partners.
- 5 Prepare educators at all levels to work with families of all backgrounds,** both in pre-service and professional development.
- 6 Extend networks, partnerships, and opportunities for parent and family leadership.** Collaborate with community organizing efforts to share power with families and leverage outside resources.

