Indicators in ACTION™

School Community Workbook

The Curriculum of the Home

Shared Leadership and Goals and Roles

Implementation: The Compact

Implementation: Homework
and Studying and Reading at Home

Implementation: A Welcoming Place
and A Connected Community

Academic Development Institute

Academic Development Institute
121 N. Kickapoo Street
Lincoln, Illinois 62656
217-732-6462

Information   Tools   Training

Positive results for students will come from changes in the knowledge, skill, and behavior of their teachers and parents. State policies and programs must provide the opportunity, support, incentive, and expectation for adults close to the lives of children to make wise decisions.

Table of Contents

Module I: The Curriculum of the Home

No Handouts or Worksheets for this Module

Module II: Shared Leadership and Goals and Roles

Module III: Implementation: The Compact

Module IV: Implementation: Homework and Studying and Reading at Home

Module V: Implementation: A Welcoming Place and A Connected Community

Success Indicators

Shared Leadership: School Community Council

- A School Community Council (SCC) consisting of the principal, parent facilitator, social worker or counselor, teachers, and parents oversees family-school relationships and helps parents to be better equipped to support their student's learning at home.
- A majority of the members of the School Community Council are parents of currently enrolled students and are not also employees of the school.
- The School Community Council (SCC) meets twice a month and keeps an agenda and minutes of the meetings.

Goals and Roles: Parent Involvement Policy and Mission Statement

- The school's Mission Statement is distinct, clear, focused on student learning, and includes the important role of the family.

Goals and Roles: Compact

- The school's Compact outlines the responsibilities (expectations) of teachers, parents, and students.
- The school's Compact includes responsibilities (expectations) of parents drawn from the curriculum of the home.

Goals and Roles: Homework Guidelines

- The school's homework guidelines require homework at all levels.
- The school's homework guidelines stress the importance of checking, marking, and promptly returning homework.
- The school's homework guidelines make homework a part of the student's report card grade.
- The school's homework guidelines show the minimum amount of daily study time at home by grade level.

Goals and Roles: Student Report Card

- The student report card provides parents an opportunity to report on the student's home-based study and reading habits.
- The Student Report Card includes the student's progress toward learning standards.

Goals and Roles: Parent Visits to Classroom

- The school's Parent Involvement Policy, Compact, and Classroom Visit Procedures encourage parents to visit classrooms.
- Classroom Visit Procedures are clear, constructive, welcoming, and available for visitors in the office.

Goals and Roles: Accomplishment

- School celebrates its accomplishments.
- School recognizes the individual accomplishments of teachers.
- The school recognizes the accomplishments of teams (e. g., teacher teams, School Community Council (SCC), and parent-teacher organization).

Communication: Key Documents

- The school's key documents (Parent Involvement Policy, Mission Statement, Compact, Homework Guidelines, and Classroom Visit Procedures) are included in the school improvement plan and other official documents.

Communication: Teacher-Family Communication

- The "ongoing conversation" between school personnel and parents is candid, supportive, and flows in both directions.

- Teachers are familiar with the curriculum of the home (what parents can do at home to support their children's learning) and discuss it with them.
- The school uses Open House as an opportunity to convey to parents that what goes on at home impacts student's academic performance. All teachers differentiate assignments (individualize instruction) in response to individual student performance on pre-tests & other methods of assessment.

Communication: School-Family Communication

- The school regularly communicates with parents about its expectations of them and the importance of the curriculum of the home (what parents can do at home to support their children's learning).
- The school provides parents and other visitors a friendly document that outlines the ground rules for visits to the school and classrooms.

Education: Family Resource Library

- The school provides a family resource library that includes materials with information about parenting and parents' role in children's education.

Education: Courses and Workshops for Parents

- The school offers parent education programs focused on building skills relative to the curriculum of the home (what parents can do at home to support their children's learning).
- The school provides parents with practical guidance to establish a quiet place for children's studying at home and consistent discipline for studying at home.
- The school provides parents with practical guidance to encourage their children's regular reading habits at home.
- The school provides parents with practical guidance to model and encourage respectful and responsible behaviors.
- Parent education programs include some multi-session group experiences with specific agendas.
- Parent education programs are led by trained parent leaders.

Education: Parent-Child Interactions

- The school provides parents with practical guidance to maintain regular and supportive verbal interactions with their children.
- All-school events (e.g., Family-School Nights) include parent-child interactive activities.

Education: Professional Development for Teachers

- Professional development programs for teachers include assistance in working effectively with parents.

Education: Training for Parents and Other Classroom and Office Volunteers

- The school provides "intra-generational associations" in which parents or community volunteers assist in the classroom.
- The school encourages parents to volunteer and provides orientation and training for them.

Connection: Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences

- Parent-teacher conferences are held at least twice per year and include students at least once a year.
- Parents are given opportunities at parent-teacher conferences to discuss both their children's progress in school and their children's home-based study and reading habits.
- All teachers use a common agenda with Next Steps for teachers, parents, and students in the parent-teacher (and parent-teacher-student) conferences.

Connection: Family-School Nights

- Family-School Nights include interactive, parent-child activities.
- The school provides Family-School Nights where families and school personnel get to know each other and discuss their mutual roles in students' learning.

- The school provides "intra-generational associations" in which students of different ages are brought together to learn.

Connection: Welcoming Place

- Office and support staff are trained to make the school a "welcoming place" for parents.
- The school team annually conducts a "walk-through" the school, parking lot, and grounds to suggest ways to make the school a more welcoming place.
- Signs at all school entrances clearly welcome and guide families and visitors to the main office to sign in.

Connection: Home Visits and Home Gatherings

- The school maintains a program of home gatherings, with groups of parents meeting in a home with a teacher.
- The school maintains a program of home visits by teachers, staff, and/or trained community members.

Connection: Other

- The school provides a room for parents to meet.

School Community Module Objectives

Module Objectives:

Through participation in these course modules, you will be able to:

- Define school community and the roles members play in supporting student success

- Employ the building blocks for a strong school community—develop strong key documents, regularly communicate roles and responsibilities, educate members on performing roles and responsibilities successfully, connect people with each other for meaningful bonds of association, and continuously improve and strengthen the school community.

- Recognize and describe why the home-school relationship is a critical component of student success and implement strategies to cultivate it.

Module II: Shared Leadership and Goals and Roles

Success Indicators

- A School Community Council (SCC) consisting of the principal, parent facilitator, social worker or counselor, teachers, and parents oversees family-school relationships and helps parents to be better equipped to support their student's learning at home.

- A majority of the members of the School Community Council are parents of currently enrolled students and are not also employees of the school.

- The School Community Council (SCC) meets twice a month and keeps an agenda and minutes of the meetings.

- The school's Mission Statement is distinct, clear, focused on student learning, and includes the important role of the family.

- The school's Compact outlines the responsibilities (expectations) of teachers, parents, and students.

- The school's Compact includes responsibilities (expectations) of parents drawn from the curriculum of the home.

- The school's homework guidelines require homework at all levels.

- The school's homework guidelines stress the importance of checking, marking, and promptly returning homework.

- The school's homework guidelines make homework a part of the student's report card grade.

- The school's Homework Guidelines show the minimum amount of daily study time at home by grade level.

- The school's key documents (Parent Involvement Policy, Mission Statement, Compact, Homework Guidelines, and Classroom Visit Procedures) are included in the school improvement plan and other official documents.

- The school's Parent Involvement Policy, Compact, and Classroom Visit Procedures encourage parents to visit classrooms.

- Classroom Visit Procedures are clear, constructive, welcoming, and available for visitors in the office.
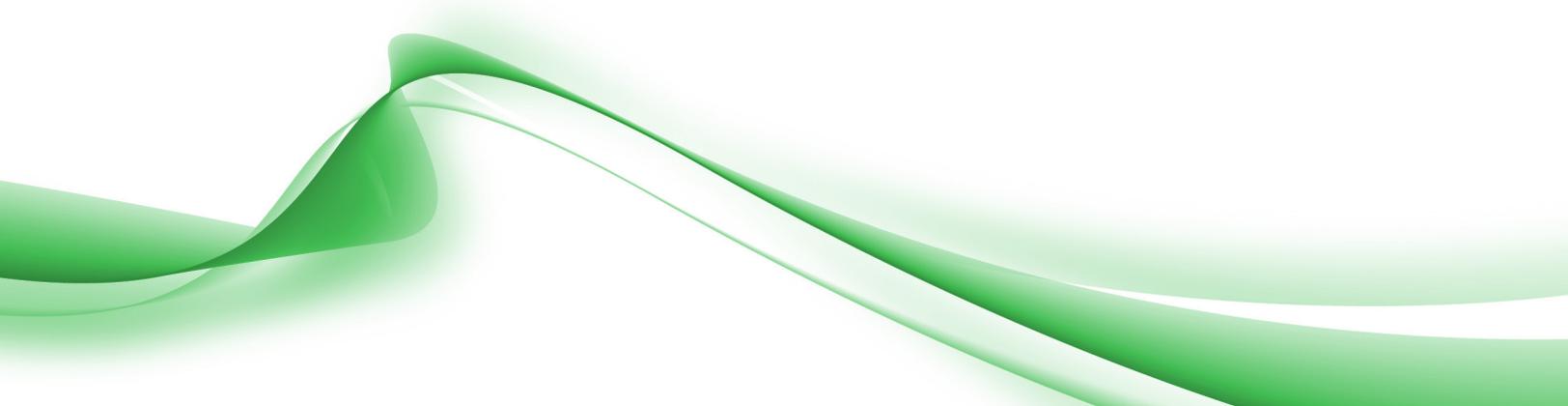
Building a Strong School Community Council

Building a strong school community requires focused and consistent attention, and a School Community Council (SCC) is designed for that function. The SCC is typically composed of the principal; Solid Foundation® Facilitator (staff person assigned that role); teacher or social worker; and at least four parents. Always, the parents should constitute the majority of the members, and should be parents of currently-enrolled students who are not employees of the school. This formula for forming an SCC ensures that the institutional authority of school personnel is balanced by the vested interest of students' families, resulting in shared leadership.

The SCC meets twice each month for meetings of no more than 90 minutes, guided by an agenda and resource materials. In addition to these "business meetings," the SCC will meet occasionally for larger blocks of time to carry out its work.

The SCC is a central steering group for the school community, making plans that require the input and participation of many other people. For this reason, the SCC maintains regular communication and coordination with other decision making groups, such as school boards, school and district leadership teams, school governance committees, student councils, parent-teacher organizations, and other groups.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. When Can We Meet?

You will want to make sure you can accommodate your parent member schedules. Most SCC meetings are after school or in the evening.

2. Where Should We Meet?

If possible, make the meeting place convenient, quiet, and somewhat secluded. It might be the library, the guidance office, the principal's office, or someone's classroom.

3. How Often Should We Meet?

A monthly meeting is a bare minimum for SCC meetings. A few large blocks of time interspersed with regular meetings help get work done.

4. How Do We Meet? What Should We Do?
- Notify everyone where to meet.
- Be punctual.
- Meet for a scheduled time and end on time.
- Use an agenda and follow it.
- Have someone mind the time and keep discussions on schedule.
- The secretary will record the SCC minutes, with copies kept by the team and also by the principal.

School Community Council Members
(SCC Member Worksheet)

Date: _____

School: _____ District: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Principal:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Solid Foundation Facilitator:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Social Worker/Counselor (or other teacher if the school does not have one):

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Teacher:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Term: _____

Teacher:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Term: _____

Parent:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Grade level of child attending this school: _____

Term: _____

Parent:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Grade level of child attending this school: _____

Term: _____

Parent:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Grade level of child attending this school: _____

Term: _____

Parent:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Grade level of child attending this school: _____

Term: _____

Parent:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Grade level of child attending this school: _____

Term: _____

Parent:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Grade level of child attending this school: _____

Term: _____

**School Community Council
Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Meeting Location: _____

Time Meeting Began: _____

Time Meeting Adjourned: _____

Members in Attendance:

Name	Association with School
	Principal
	Facilitator
	Teacher
	Teacher
	Parent
	Parent
	Parent
	Parent

Guests Present: _____

Topic(s) addressed: _____

Meeting Chaired by: _____

Approval of Minutes from previous meeting

    Motion to approve by: _____

    Seconded by: _____

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

Action on agenda items:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other Business:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Meeting Adjourned: _____

Date of next meeting: _____

Time of next meeting: _____

Location of next meeting: _____

The school community needs a constitution to guide its work.

By answering a series of questions, you will develop a School Community Constitution. Before answering each question, take time to discuss each one. Then you will place your answer in a motion, and second the motion. Then you will vote to approve the answer. The recording secretary will record each motion, second, and each vote before entering it into the worksheet.

School Community Constitution Worksheet

Answer the questions below, approving each answer by a majority vote of the School Community Council. The principal votes only to break tie votes.

1. By what vote may the constitution be amended?
   a. 2/3 of School Community Council
   b. Simple majority of School Community Council
   c. Consensus of School Community Council; must be approved by all members
   d. Other

Enter answer here (a/b/c/d): _____

If other, specify: _____

2. Who will chair the School Community Council meetings?
   a. Principal
   b. Member of the SCC elected annually by the School Community Council
   c. Other

Enter answer here (a/b/c): _____

If other, specify: _____

3. How will the School Community Council make decisions to govern its planning and actions?
   a. 2/3 of School Community Council
   b. Simple majority of School Community Council
   c. Consensus of School Community Council; must be approved by all members
   d. Other

Enter answer here (a/b/c/d): _____

If other, specify: _____

4. How will School Community Council members be selected in the future?
   a. Appointed by the principal
   b. Appointed by the School Community Council
   c. Other

Enter answer here (a/b/c): _____

If other, specify: _____

By filling in the blanks on the following School Community Constitution, we will develop a constitution tailored to our school community. Use the sample constitution on the following pages, make modifications as necessary, and approve a constitution for your school community.

Constitution of the _____ School Community

<div align="center">(Name of School)</div>

Preamble

A community is a collection of people who share common goals and work together to achieve these goals. A school community is a collection of people associated with a school who share common educational goals and work together to achieve these educational goals for all students. The students, parents, teachers, administrators, and staff members of _____School form a school community in order to articulate their educational goals and work together to achieve these goals. This constitution may be amended and major decisions made, by _____(See answer to question 1).

A. Leadership of the Principal

The principal is the educational leader of the school community. Vested in the position of the principal is the responsibility to empower teachers, parents, school staff, and students to integrate the educational goals of the school community into the practices of the school and the home. The principal executes the plans adopted by the School Community Council.

B. School Community Council

Purpose and Responsibilities

The _____ School Community will maintain a School Community Council (SCC). The School Community Council will consist of the principal, facilitator, a teacher, a counselor or social worker (or another teacher), and four parents.

The School Community Council's responsibilities and powers are subordinate to those of the Board of Education, and the School Community Council shall, in no way, act in a manner contrary to the policies of the Board of Education.

School Community Council Meetings

The School Community Council meets a least once each month for meetings of no more than 90 minutes throughout the school year and special meetings as necessary. Special meetings may be called by the principal or a majority of the SCC members.

The meetings of the SCC will be chaired by _____ (See answer to question 2).

Each year, the School Community Council will appoint one member to serve as the recording secretary. The recording secretary will keep and distribute for approval the minutes of the SCC meetings.

The SCC will make decisions by _____(See answer to question 3).

Selection of Members

Parent members of the School Community Council may not be employees of the school and must be the parents of currently-enrolled students. Parent members should represent the demographics of our school's population. SCC members, other than those who serve by virtue of their position (principal and facilitator, for example), will be selected by _____ (See answer to question 4).

Terms of Office

The principal, facilitator, social worker/counselor or other teacher, will serve on the SCC by virtue of their positions. Other members will serve two-year terms. Members of the first School Community Council (excluding the

principal, facilitator, and social worker/counselor) will draw lots to determine which half of them will serve an initial term of one year and which half of them will serve an initial term of two years. Subsequently, the term of half the members will expire each year.

Vacancies

Vacancies on the School Community Council will be filled within 30 days by _____(insert "appointment of the principal" or "appointment of the School Community Council") to complete the term created by the vacancy. When a teacher ceases to be on the faculty of the school, that teacher will no longer serve as a team member. When a parent ceases to have a child enrolled at the school, that parent will no longer serve as a team member. When a parent accepts a position of employment with the school, that parent will no longer serve as a team member. When an SCC member misses three consecutive meetings, the principal will contact the member to determine his/her status. Members who are not able to attend regularly will be replaced.

Use of Funds

The school has received or has set aside funds that will be used to implement parent and family activities. The SCC will discuss the budget and determine how the funds will be used.

Homework Guidelines

We know that homework is a powerful means for increasing children's learning. We know that homework helps students form the habits of independent study. We know that homework is the school's primary extension into the home. We also know that homework is a source of conflict between many parents and children. Homework is also the topic of complaint many parents raise against schools. Parents who accept the responsibility for seeing that their children attend to their homework are often perplexed that homework practices vary so widely from teacher to teacher and grade to grade. Parents are confused that some educators tell them that homework is important but some teachers do not assign it. They find that some teachers grade homework and some do not. In some classes, homework is counted toward the report card grade and in some classes it is not. Parents are surprised to hear from their children that they have completed their homework at school. What is homework if it is done at school rather than at home?

Because a school community wants its teachers, parents, and students to work in harmony, with clearly understood roles in the education of children, homework is a topic that every school community must address. Because school communities are concerned with children's habit formation, they know that positive habits are best built with consistent reinforcement from home and school. Self-directed learning is an important habit, and homework can be a strong tool for helping children acquire this habit.

Sample Elementary Homework Guidelines

The purpose of homework should—

- provide practice and reinforce skills presented by the teacher(s)
- broaden areas of interest through enrichment
- provide opportunities for parents/guardians to know what their child is studying
- encourage interaction between parent and child

Teachers assign homework to complement classroom instruction. It should be planned and evaluated with respect to its purpose, appropriateness, and completion time. Homework is most effective when it is checked or graded by the teacher and returned to the student promptly with helpful comments. Each grade level assigns the appropriate weight for homework to a final grade for core subjects. Teachers discuss this during grade level meetings for parents at the beginning of the school year, and at conferences.

Our school community believes that establishing a homework routine is important for student success. Parents can help by providing a consistent homework time in an undisturbed study area, and by being available if the child needs help.   As stated in our school community compact, parents should make sure the homework is done and returned to school daily. The homework assignment notebook should be checked to ensure completion of all assignments, and note important dates for testing and projects. Praising the child when homework is completed encourages pride in his or her accomplishments, and motivates the child to continue good effort.

Students that may not have homework on any given day should uphold the routine of doing homework by reading independently, practicing math facts or vocabulary and reviewing content for upcoming quizzes and tests. The homework assignment notebook includes the dates for tests. Students who are absent should make up all necessary homework upon their return.

Time guidelines for homework or study time 5 days per week at the elementary level are as follows:

- Kindergarten – as needed to practice skills and increase parent/child interaction
- First Grade – 10 minutes per night
- Second Grade – 20 minutes per night
- Third Grade – 30 minutes per night
- Fourth Grade – 40 minutes per night
- Fifth Grade – 50 minutes per night

Good study habits in the completion of homework and study time practice will help our students, your children, develop the necessary skills to become lifelong learners.

Homework Guidelines Rubric Worksheet

Elements of effective homework guidelines	Score	Criteria for Scoring The homework guidelines…
Score Guide: 0 = no evidence of criterion being met, 1 = evidence that criterion is met		
1. Importance - Explains why homework is important.		Provides a general explanation of the value of homework in extending learning time and developing independent study habits and skills.
2. Roles - Clearly states the role of teachers, parents, and students in the assignment and completion of homework.		Explains what is expected of teachers, parents, and students in the assignment and completion of homework.
3. Frequency - Provides guidelines for frequency of homework (e.g., 5 days a week).		Provides guidelines for teachers on how frequently homework should be assigned, which also gives parents and students an expectation for the frequency of homework.
4. Quantity - Provides guidelines for amount of time students might be expected to spend on homework (e.g., 10 minutes per grade level).		Provides guidelines for teachers on how much time a student might spend on homework each day, which also gives parents and students an expectation for time devoted to homework.
5. Weight - Establishes the weight of the homework in determining report card grades.		Establishes that homework may count for a percentage of the report card grade.
6. Correction/Returns - Establishes guidelines for prompt return of graded and marked homework to students by teachers.		Establishes the importance of teachers marking, grading, and promptly returning homework to enhance its effect on student learning.
Total Score		

Classroom Visits

The classroom visit guidelines explain the necessary procedures that parents will follow when visiting so that teachers can carry out their classroom instruction. These guidelines might be printed in a school handbook, posted on the parent bulletin board and/or school website and available at the office upon request.

There are, of course, other purposes for visiting the classroom (i.e., assisting with a school party; a special presentation by request of the teacher) that would follow the guidelines for general visits to the school, or the stated guidelines at the time of a special activity (i.e., Take your Dad to School Day; Career Symposium).

Sample Classroom Visit Guidelines

Parents are an important part of a child's education and learning. They are welcome to visit their child's classroom to observe instruction and class activities. Parents: Please follow these guidelines to schedule and visit your child's classroom. Thank you.

1. If you wish to visit your child's classroom, please contact the principal at least one- two days in advance at (phone number; email address). The principal will notify the teacher of the time and date of the arranged visit.

2. When you arrive at the school, please stop in the office to sign the register and get a VIP visitor's badge.

3. While visiting the classroom, parents are asked to quietly observe, or provide assistance to the teacher or students, if requested. To ensure the privacy of all students, please do not take photographs or use video or audiotapes in the classroom.

4. We ask that you limit observational visits to one (1) class period per month per child, in order to minimize disruption of the classroom schedule and educational program.

5. During your visit, the classroom teacher will continue to provide instruction to students. Any questions should be addressed to the teacher at a later time. The teacher will provide a short form before you leave the classroom with contact information.

Part III: Implementation: The Compact

Success Indicators

- The "ongoing conversation" between school personnel and parents is candid, supportive, and flows in both directions.
- The school's key documents (Parent Involvement Policy, Mission Statement, Compact, Homework Guidelines, and Classroom Visit Procedures) are annually distributed to teachers, school personnel, parents, and students.
- The school regularly communicates with parents about its expectations of them and the importance of the curriculum of the home (what parents can do at home to support their children's learning).
- Teachers are familiar with the curriculum of the home (what parents can do at home to support their children's learning) and discuss it with them.
- The school provides a family resource library that includes materials with information about parenting and parents' role in children's education.
- The school offers parent education programs focused on building skills relative to the curriculum of the home (what parents can do at home to support their children's learning).
- The school provides parents with practical guidance to establish a quiet place for children's studying at home and consistent discipline for studying at home.
- The school provides parents with practical guidance to encourage their children's regular reading habits at home.
- The school provides parents with practical guidance to model and encourage respectful and responsible behaviors.
- Parent education programs include some multi-session group experiences with specific agendas.
- Parent education programs are led by trained parent leaders.
- Parent-teacher conferences are held at least twice per year and include students at least once a year.
- Parents are given opportunities at parent-teacher conferences to discuss both their children's progress in school and their children's home-based study and reading habits.
- All teachers use a common agenda with Next Steps for teachers, parents, and students in the parent-teacher (and parent-teacher-student) conferences.
- The school uses Open House as an opportunity to convey to parents that what goes on at home impacts student's academic performance.
- Family-School Nights include interactive, parent-child activities.
- The school provides Family-School Nights where families and school personnel get to know each other and discuss their mutual roles in students' learning.
- The school provides a room for parents to meet.
- The school provides parents with practical guidance to maintain regular and supportive verbal interactions with their children.
- All-school events (e.g., Family-School Nights) include parent-child interactive activities.

School-Family Compact

Strengthen Your School Community Through Your School-Family Compact

What is a Compact? The Mayflower Compact was the first governing document of the Plymouth Colony. The Mayflower Compact was a contract in which the settlers consented to follow the compact's rules and regulations for the sake of survival.

Similar to the Mayflower Compact, a School Community Compact is a contract necessary to achieve common goals. Teachers, parents, and students all play important roles and share critical responsibilities for students' academic achievement and social learning. A School Community Compact, then, is your opportunity to develop clear, written agreements among teachers, parents, and students about how they will work together.

Many schools have developed compacts or agreements that outline the responsibilities of students, teachers, parents, and sometimes principals. A school needs only one compact–whatever it is called. However, this compact should be developed by a school leadership team; ratified by parent, teacher, and student representatives; and updated on a regular basis, such as every two or three years.

While compacts can strengthen any school community, they are required for schools that receive Title I federal funds.

If your school community does not have a current compact, now is the time to accomplish that task! The sample compacts will help you consolidate your thoughts and opinions to encourage best practices for student achievement within our school community.

Sample Elementary School Community Compact

We, the (School/District Name) community, establish this compact to foster the success of our students. We believe this is accomplished through the planned partnership of parents, families, students, teachers, and administrators. Goals that ensure academic achievement of the state standards; help every student develop a sense of responsibility and respect of self and others; and, provide guidelines for meaningful two-way communication between home and school are guaranteed through the following responsibilities in this agreement.

Teachers will provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables our students to meet (state's name) academic standards. (See key Academic goals for this school year in _____). In addition, I will:

Reading/Literacy

- Keep parents informed of the reading and math skills their children are learning, and how they can reinforce these skills at home.
- Guide students in selecting reading materials that match their interests and independent reading levels.

Study habits/Self-directed learning

- Teach students how to study and encourage active listening skills.
- Provide homework assignments relevant to daily instruction in accordance with the school homework guidelines.

Respect/Responsibility

- Model and display responsible decision making and citizenship in all aspects of daily life.
- Maintain appropriate student behavior in the classroom so that all students can learn and be safe.

Community

- Communicate frequently with parents about their children's progress through quarterly report cards, and by notes, phone calls, and emails.
- Respond promptly to families' concerns, messages and requests for information.
- Hold parent-teacher conferences, bi-annually, during which this compact will be discussed as it relates to the individual child's achievement.
- Encourage families to participate in school community programs and events.

Teacher Signature _____

****

Students benefit when adults in their school community are bonded by strong relationships. They recognize that they, too, are partners with their parents and teachers in their success. I will:

Reading/Literacy

- Read regularly for pleasure as well as to learn.
- Ask my family to read with me or read to me 15 minutes each day 5 days a week.

Study habits/Self-directed learning

- Listen to my family, teachers, and others who help me learn, and ask questions when I need help.
- Complete my homework on time and in a thorough and legible way.

Respect/Responsibility

- Come to school on time, and ready to learn.
- Always try my best.
- Respect myself and the rights of others.

Community

- Deliver messages from school to home and home to school to help inform my parents and teachers of events and activities that help support my learning experience.

- Encourage my family to participate in events and programs sponsored by my school community (e.g., Open House, Family Nights, Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences.)

Student Signature _____

****

Parents/Families understand that involvement in their child's education is the number one determining factor in a child's academic success. To make education a top priority in our home, I will:

Reading/Literacy

- Read to or with our child 15 minutes per day 5 days a week.
- Help to reinforce our child's reading and math skills with direction of the teacher.
- Know our child's interests and encourage reading for pleasure.
- Discuss our child's progress in reading and math in ways that show our high expectations.

Study habits/Self-directed learning

- Make sure our child has a routine for homework that works for our family and follows our school's homework guidelines. If our child doesn't have homework on any given day, we will encourage independent reading time, (or read together if in K or 1st grade), review reading or math skills, or prepare for projects, quizzes or tests.
- Review our child's homework and sign student planner each night.
- Discuss our child's effort and potential in ways that show high expectations.

Respect/Responsibility

- Make sure our child attends school regularly, is on time, and is prepared to learn.
- Stress the importance of school and classroom behavior expectations in family conversations.
- Encourage my child to demonstrate respect for school personnel, classmates, and school property.

Community

- Communicate promptly with my child's teacher whenever a concern or question arises.
- Respond promptly to my child's teacher or the school regarding requests or information.
- Attend/participate in open house, parent/teacher conferences, Family Nights or other school events.

Parent Signature(s) _____

****

Our school helps to strengthen the family-school partnership to enhance student learning through our School Community Council, Parent Teacher Organization, Family Nights, parent workshops, classroom visits by parents, and communication about students' progress toward learning standards and state assessments. Family activities are posted on the school's website, the parent bulletin board in the foyer, and distributed through student delivery.

If you are interested in volunteering for our school, please complete the survey available at Open House or on the website at _____ . There will be orientation and training for all interested family and community members.

Please read and sign this Compact, then return it to your child's teacher. Please post your copy in a place that can serve as a reminder of each school community member's responsibilities toward the success of each and every child in our school community. We will refer to this compact at parent-teacher conferences and meetings that confirm our family-school partnership to enhance our students' learning.

Principal supports and encourages the efforts of all family-school partnerships in this school community.

Principal Signature _____

Middle School Community Compact (Sample)

(Insert School Year)

We, the (Name) Middle School community, encourage and reinforce the value and practice of high-quality curriculum and instruction provided in supportive and effective learning environments that enable our students to meet (state's name) standards. (See key academic goals for this school year in _____).

In addition, we establish this compact in the belief that early adolescence does not signal a time of autonomy of students, parents, and teachers, but an opportunity to strengthen a mutual belief in fostering educational aspirations. We believe this is accomplished through the planned partnership of parents, families, students, teachers, and administrators. Within that partnership, we will focus our mutual support toward responsibilities that encourage meaningful communication between home and school; educational opportunities that engage all school community members —teachers, parents, students; decision-making platforms that solicit voices from all; and collaborative community-building activities that support the goals for students according to the state standards in these middle school years.

To accomplish these goals, the School Community Council asks *Teachers* **to commit to the following:**

Reading/Literacy
- Give time for students to read and discuss their reading in ways that develop comprehension and critical thinking skills.
- Encourage students to use media and technology in ways that support literacy, reading comprehension, and critical thinking.

Study habits/Self-directed learning
- Encourage organizational and collaborative learning skills along with study and self-directed learning skills.
- Assign homework relevant to daily instruction and in accordance with the homework guidelines.
- Assign family interactive homework assignments, weekly (in agreed upon rotation by instructional team members).

Respect/Responsibility
- Teach and maintain classroom expectations for behavior and responsible actions.
- Encourage students to demonstrate respect for school personnel, classmates, and school property.

Community
- Communicate with parents about their children's progress through quarterly report cards, and by notes, phone calls, and emails.
- Encourage attendance at parent-teacher-student conferences that highlight student work and review this compact.
- Welcome volunteers in the classroom that highlight "real world" connections, and support basic academic needs of individuals.
- Promote family and student participation in programs and events sponsored by the school community.

To accomplish these goals, the School Community Council asks *Parents* **to commit to the following**:

Reading/Literacy
- Talk about what our child is reading and learning about on a regular basis and encourage a variety of media.
- Discuss our child's progress in reading and other subjects in ways that show high expectations.

Study habits/Self-directed learning
- Support and monitor our child's use of media and technology; encourage that which supports educational and developmental goals; limit time allocated for other uses.
- Make education a top priority in our home—ensure regular school attendance, participation in extracurricular activities, and provide educational materials (i.e., books, internet access, newspapers, magazines) and experiences (i.e., museums, libraries).
- Make sure that our child has a routine for homework and that it is completed according to the homework guidelines.

- Participate in our child's middle school education through interactive homework assignments or projects and parent workshops regarding this developmental stage of life, and in preparation for success in high school and beyond.

Respect/Responsibility

- Model and teach responsible decision making and citizenship in all aspects of daily life.

- Expect our child to demonstrate respect for school personnel, classmates, and school property.

Community

- Stay informed about my child's education by reading all notices from the school or district and responding appropriately.

- Understand how and when to communicate with our child's advisory teacher, the school guidance counselor and other teachers and school personnel.

- Participate in parent-teacher-student conferences, programs, and events sponsored by the school community.

To accomplish these goals, the School Community Council asks *Students* to commit to the following:

Reading/Literacy

- Read daily for pleasure as well as to learn in a variety of media and genres.

- Talk about what I am reading and learning with family members and friends.

Study habits/Self-directed learning

- Complete lessons/activities at home as outlined in the school's homework guidelines. Keep a student planner to record assignments, due dates, work completed, and grades.

Respect/Responsibility

- Attend school regularly, arrive on time, and be prepared to learn.

- Develop and keep a positive attitude about school and learning.

- Make responsible choices in school, at home, and with my friends.

- Respect myself and the rights of others.

In our school community—

Communication is provided through a variety of sources—school and district websites, homework hotline, available contact information for teachers and requested of families, newsletters, bulletin board at the entry of the school and in the family resource area; notices, memos, report cards, student planners, and parent-teacher-student conferences.

Decision-making to support the academic and social growth of our students is offered through a variety of opportunities (i.e., School Community Council, Parent Teacher Organization, School Improvement Team, Student Council, and Booster Organizations). School community members are invited to participate and share their voices.

Educational opportunities are encouraged and often provided for not only our students but teachers as professional development and parents/families through interactive homework and community activities such as Family Nights, parent/teacher and parent/guardian workshops focused on supporting middle school students in the present, and in preparation of their future years.

Collaborative community building activities that support academic goals for each student are offered through the mentor program with local businesses, organizations, and churches and our volunteer programs.

Please read your school handbook carefully. Look for information regarding home-school communication, shared decision-making, educational opportunities, and the collaborative community building activities. Contact information for all of these opportunities is listed in that directory and on the school's website and main bulletin board.

I have read the goals and responsibilities for all school community members, and agree to do my part. I will gladly sign the pledge in the main foyer in commitment to this School Community Compact and our students.

Thank you,

School Community Council   (School Name)

School Community Council members:

(Name, Principal)   (Name, Parent)

(Name, Facilitator)   (Name, Parent)

(Name, Guidance Counselor)   (Name, Parent)

(Name, Teacher)   (Name, Parent)

Family Resource Library

A Family Resource Library is a section of the school's library, a shelf of materials in the parents' room, or even a cart in the hallway that includes books and other materials that parents may check out. The materials can include print and electronic resources on:

- books on parenting,
- materials for parents to help children establish good study habits,
- copies of learning standards and related guides for parents,
- storybooks for reading to children,
- family educational activities and educational games,
- materials for parents to use with pre-school age children,
- materials for parents to help students plan career goals,
- materials for parents to help student select and apply to colleges,
- community resources for families, and
- community and school activities for students.

Materials for the library may be purchased, donated, or made. Publishers and bookstores may donate materials to the library. Perhaps the parent organization will include purchases for the library in its fund-raising plan.

Family Resource Library Plan

Date: _____

Description of location of the library:

_____

_____

_____

Who will be responsible for the Family Resource Library?

_____

_____

_____

What funds will enable us to stock the Family Resource Library?

_____

_____

How will circulation be handled? What will be the check-out policy?

_____

_____

_____

What materials will be included in the library?

_____

_____

_____

Opening date of Family Resource Library: _____

How will parents be informed about the library?

_____

_____

The opening of the Family Resource Library might provide the occasion for a celebration. If that sounds like a good idea, plan the details.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Parent Education Ideas

The family-schools website, (www.families-schools.org) contains a wealth of family education materials that can be used to help parents gain new concepts and skills to help their children, preschoolers through high schoolers, succeed in school and in life.

For elementary school parents, reading is an ideal topic for a school community workshop. For middle school and high school parents, topics that will promote students' academic success, personal growth, and preparation for careers and college may be of more interest.

Additional topics:

- Bullying Prevention
- Project and Time Management Skills
- Balancing the technology in our lives
- Ready for Middle School - Transition
- Ready for High School - Transition
- Pathways to Higher Education and Careers

Student Report Card Evaluation

Date Completed: _____

Elements of a Student Report Card		Score	Criteria for Scoring The student report card...
1.	Provides the student and parents with a clear account of the student's progress toward learning standards for his/her grade level.		Includes key standards or benchmarks relevant to the grade level and subject and an indication of the student's progress toward mastery.
2.	Provides the student and parents with a clear account of the student's level of effort, persistence, and devotion to assigned tasks.		Includes the teacher's impression of the student's work habits at school.
3.	Provides the student and parents with a clear account of the areas in which the student may need to improve.		Clearly shows parents areas in which the student needs improvement.
4.	Provides the student and parents with a clear account of the student's behavior, including an indication of his/her respect for others and sense of responsibility.		Includes the teacher's impression of the student's behavior in relation to others and the student's responsibility for behavior and for fulfilling the obligations of the classroom.
5.	Asks parents to record their observations or ratings of the student's study habits and reading habits at home.		Provides parents an opportunity to record their observations or ratings of the student's home behaviors most related to school success, especially home study and reading habits.
6.	Suggests ways parents might support their child's school success.		Includes a statement of the importance of parents' support at home for their children's school learning.
7.	Reinforces the parent-school Compact, homework guidelines, and importance of parent-teacher conferences.		Includes a reference to the parent-school Compact, homework guidelines, and parent-teacher conferences.
Total Score			
Score Guide: 0 = no evidence of criterion being met, 1 = evidence that criterion is met			

Parent-Teacher Conference

Parent-teacher conferences are opportunities for parents to learn about their children's progress in school; for teachers to learn about their student's home and out-of-school lives, and for students to see their parents and teachers focusing on their school successes and challenges. Mothers, fathers, and other family members bring valuable insights on their children's learning strengths and struggles. In parent-teacher- student conferences, students can show their families what they are learning and how well they are mastering the learning standards for their grades. Teachers guide the process and make sure that each participant has time to communicate what is important to them. Parent-teacher conferences can be a very effective means of communication if a few simple principles are followed:

Principles for effective conferences:

- The conferences are routinely held at least twice a year; however are available to parents upon request.
- The conferences are well publicized and scheduled at times that accommodate parents', as well as teachers', schedules.
- The conferences follow a standard agenda that all teachers and parents know about in advance.
- The conferences model three-way communication among parents, teacher, and student.
- The conferences include a discussion of the School Community Compact, homework guidelines, and learning standards.
- The conferences focus on learning and strive to develop effective strategies to support student learning at school and at home. The student and teacher may share examples of student work at the conference.
- Each conference concludes with agreed upon Next Steps for the parent(s), teacher, and student which is filed and passes from conference to conference, teacher to teacher.

Parent-Teacher Conference Agenda (Sample)

Student: _____ Grade Level: _____

Teacher: _____ Date:_____

Present at Conference: (List below those present at conference)

Student:_____

Teacher(s):_____

Parent(s) or other Family Members_____

Other: _____

[Note: In a student-led conference, the teacher would help the student prepare to lead the agenda. Otherwise, the teacher will lead the agenda, with ample opportunity for sharing by the parent(s) and student.]

Welcome

Items to Discuss

- Review of Next Steps from last parent-teacher-student conference
- Review roles and responsibilities in the School Community Compact
- Student and parent updates on student's progress in academic and social areas in school, at home, and in community activities
- Teacher's update on student's academic and social progress on learning standards and performances in class and on assessments
- Student's performance in the teacher's class
- Student's completion and quality of homework [In a student-led conference, the student would show and explain some recent work]
- Student's reading and study habits at home
- Trainings and resources for families offered by school that may be helpful
- Next Steps for student, parent(s), and teacher

Complete Next Steps below during conference. One copy is given to the family, and one copy is placed in the student's conference file to be reviewed at a specific date or at the next conference.

Next Steps

Student:

_____

_____

_____

Parent(s):

_____

_____

_____

Teacher:

_____

_____

_____

Open House

Every school hosts an Open House or similar event to which most parents attend. This is an opportunity to convey to parents the fact that their children's success in school depends a lot on what goes on at home. By discussing the Compact and the homework guidelines, parents will learn what they can do to help their children succeed.

This is also a perfect time to explain programs for parents and families.

For the key events above, we will develop a plan for:

- Discussing the Compact
- Discussing the homework guidelines
- Discussing learning standards
- Explaining parent and family programs
- Explaining the Family Resource Library
- Promoting Family-School Nights

Plan for Our Open House (Or Similar Event) Worksheet

Event: _____

Approximate Date: _____

Who will be responsible for seeing that our plan is followed for this event?

_____

What will be the format? For example, will all parents begin in one location with the principal greeting them, making introductions, and explaining the agenda before parents go to classrooms for discussions with teachers? What if a parent has more than one child at the school and/or the child has more than one teacher?

_____

_____

_____

How will participation be encouraged to get a large turn-out? (Incentives)

_____

_____

_____

How will we discuss the Compact? For example, introduced by the principal and discussed by teacher with parents?

_____

_____

_____

How will we discuss the homework guidelines?

_____

_____

_____

How will we explain programs for parents and families?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Family Event Feedback Form

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Event: _____

Please let us know what you thought about our family event.

1. What did you find most helpful about the event?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What suggestion would you make to improve the event?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Please rate this event (1=Poor   2=OK   3=Good   4=Excellent)

    1   2   3   4

4. Student comments: (parent or student may write)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Family-School Nights

Since Family-School Reading Nights are a common event, let's look at ideas for making a Family-School Reading Night an interactive event that promotes the goal of reading, math, or other academic goals.

Family-School Reading Nights

A Family-School Reading Night should include an emphasis on reading interactively with small children and continued discussion of reading with children of all ages. To do this, the Family-School Reading Night includes activities that encourage parents and children to read together and to talk about reading. Talking about reading is an important family activity, regardless of the child's age.

Reading Ideas!

- Theme Based—Select a theme and plan the evening events on that one idea.
- Storyteller Drama—Invite a local drama group (either high school or college) to act out the plot of a children's book.
- Shared Reading—Ask parents and students to read the same book before the event and to discuss it during the Family-School Reading Night. Participants may be interested in doing regular book club get-togethers in the future.
- Author Night—Invite a local children's book writer to the program or focus the event on the work of one author.
- Host Readers—Invite local community leaders to read a story. Have several community leaders and each one can read to a classroom. Include parent-child discussion following the reading.
- Book Fairs/Book Clubs—Tie the event to book fairs and/or book clubs that are visiting your school. Be sure to include parent-child discussion of the books.
- Make and Take a Book—Have the children create their own books by creating the illustrations and story plot. Parents assist.
- Kick Off Reading Challenge—Use the Family-School Reading Night to launch a reading challenge between students or grade levels. Another challenge could be to have the students read a set number of books and a faculty member will do something funny such as sitting in a dunking booth (funny if you aren't the faculty member).
- Book Character Visits—Take characters from a popular book; have them visit your reading night.
- Puppet Show—Provide a puppet show based on a book.

Family-School Math Nights

Math can be enhanced when we provide opportunities for parent and child interaction. It is a subject often shied away from by parents, or instructional terminology has changed over the years and makes it seem different. Events focused on math skills are fun and informative.

Math Ideas!

- Mystery Night - Families work together to solve math problems that require different skills (i.e. measuring, fractions). The families receive a letter stamp on their crack the code booklet carried to and from each activity. The letters earned must be unscrambled to reveal the code.
- Game Night – Each family receives a toolkit with necessary items to play the games (i.e. dice, markers) and a folder with game boards. Families rotate through 3 stations to complete the games. The evening begins with a simple dinner, and ends with a drawing for door prizes.
- Math Fair - Parents and children in middle and high schools are benefited by the opportunity to know what math classes are available based on the hierarchy of this department. Booths that are set-up (i.e. Algebra 2, Trigonometry) offer basic information, exercises parents and students can work on together, and the teacher available to answer questions. (This might also be done for the Science Department at the same time with booths for Biology, Chemistry, Physics, etc.).

Other Family-School Nights

When considering the goals of your school community there are endless ways to increase the school community members' opportunities for association, and enrich the academic lives of your children.

More Ideas!

- Classroom host the event – Select different grade levels or classrooms to host the Family-School Night, providing student Ambassadors to welcome guests, distribute materials, and explain activities.

- Career Exposition - Invite corporate or local businesses to sponsor the event. It is especially effective when encouraging interest in the industries and businesses that students may one day be employed by. In addition, invite any post-secondary schools or organizations to share in the event. Booths set-up all around a gym or school grounds invite a broad exploration for future student goals. Beginning the conversations as early as middle school encourages positive and focused plans for families. Have door prizes available for children and adults who attend.

- Health and Safety – A variety of subjects can be available for families to explore in this subject. The local police send their "internet detective" to convey precautions. A local car dealer gives expertise on transportation safety. A representative from a sports club encourages gun safety information. Nutritionist provides food and healthy eating tips. And the music and physical education departments at the school can encourage exercise and movement (dance and games) for keeping bodies healthy. This is a family-school night that involves the whole community.

- Scavenger Hunts – School communities that have an environmental park or area surrounding the school that is inviting find this is a perfect family-school event setting (especially in fair weather). And, of course, even inside the school might be fitting. Any subject area is appropriate for families to explore and identify elements that strengthen interaction and skills of the chosen subject. Checklists can be carried by each family to check completion and enter into the end of the evening drawings

Family-School Night Plan Worksheet

Today's Date: _____

Proposed date: _____   Proposed time: _____

Agenda/Program of the Family-School Night:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activities:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Plan for promoting the Family-School Night (don't rely solely on flyers):

_____

_____

_____

_____

Proposed expenditures for the Family-School Night:

_____

_____

_____

Who will serve on the planning team to prepare for the Family-School Night? This is a good time to engage additional teachers and parents. What about transportation for families that may need assistance? Don't forget an evaluation that can be completed by the entire family! That (data) will help in future planning.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Module IV: Implementation: Homework and Studying and Reading at Home

Success Indicators

- The school provides parents with practical guidance to establish a quiet place for children's studying at home and consistent discipline for studying at home.

- The school provides parents with practical guidance to encourage their children's regular reading habits at home

- Parents are given opportunities at parent-teacher conferences to discuss both their children's progress in school and their children's home-based study and reading habits.

- The student report card provides parents an opportunity to report on the student's home-based study and reading habits.

- The Student Report Card includes the student's progress toward learning standards.
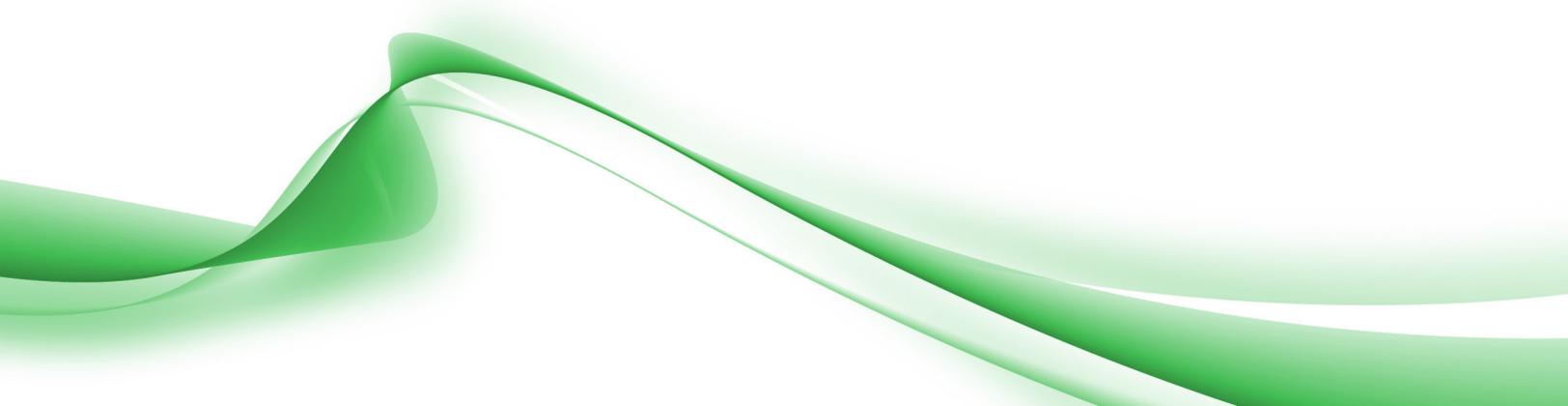
Homework Monitoring

Once each year, it is good to monitor homework practices to see how teachers, students, and parents are doing. The results will help you decide if you need to adjust your guidelines. The results will also let you know how you might support teachers, parents, and students with their homework practices.

Consistent homework practices benefit teachers, students, and parents. That is why you have homework guidelines. To know how well your homework guidelines are working and to identify problems, to make necessary adjustments, and to provide training for teachers and parents.

A simple way to monitor homework is to ask each teacher to submit to the principal a weekly summary of homework assignments made the previous week. This may be done for a month each year so that results can be compared from year to year. The summary would include:

- assignments made each day,
- number of students who completed assignments to the satisfaction of the teacher each day, and
- number of students who did not complete assignments to the satisfaction of the teacher each day (other than for reasons of excusable absence).

Gathering this information will enable you to monitor the effectiveness of your homework guidelines and take steps to improve them. Monitoring homework helps draw attention to the importance of consistency for teachers, students, and parents.

A form for teachers to report information about homework could look like the one on the following page. You can tabulate the results of the reports for the month and prepare a summary report, similar to the one that is displayed below (after the reporting form).

Teacher's Homework Report

Please submit this report to the principal's office each Friday for the week that ended the previous Friday.

Teacher's Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

For Week Beginning (Monday's Date): _____ / _____ / _____

Subject:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Assignment					
Estimated Time					
Students Completing					
Students Not Completing					

Subject:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Assignment					
Estimated Time					
Students Completing					
Students Not Completing					

Assignment: Brief description of assigned work. Estimated Time: Time average student would take to complete assignment. Students Completing: Number of students who completed and submitted homework on time. Students Not Completing: Number of students who did not complete and submit homework on time.

Homework Report
A tabulation of the homework reports prepared by teachers for one month.

Beginning Date: _____

End Date: _____

Total Number of School Days Reported: _____

Homework Assignments : Average Number of Days per Week and Average Estimated Minutes Per Day by Subject and Grade

Grade	Reading		Math		Social Studies		Science		TOTAL	
	Days	Minutes	Days	Minutes	Days	Minutes	Days	Minutes	Days	Minutes
K	3.2	5.1	1.1	5.1	.4	4.0	.3	3.9	5.0	18.4
1	3.4	7.3	2.1	6.4	1.3	5.2	1.6	4.5	8.4	23.4
2	4.2	11.8	2.3	10.3	1.8	6.8	2.1	6.8	10.7	35.7
3	4.1	14.3	3.4	8.7	2.2	7.9	2.4	10.7	12.1	41.6
4	4.4	18.6	3.4	11.8	2.3	9.2	2.4	5.8	12.5	54.4
5	4.6	20.4	3.7	12.2	2.1	10.8	2.5	9.5	13.2	52.9
TOTAL	23.9	77.5	16.0	54.5	10.1	43.9	11.6	41.2	61.6	217.1

Homework Assignments: Total Assignments and Percent Completed by Subject and Grade

Grade	Reading		Math		Social Studies		Science		TOTAL	
	Assigned	Percent Completed	Assigned	Percent Completed	Assigned	Percent Completed	Assigned	Percent Completed	Assigned	Percent Completed
K	24	96%	14	92%	8	96%	7	97%	53	95.3%
1	36	94%	18	93%	10	94%	9	95%	73	94.0%
2	42	95%	22	93%	10	96%	9	96%	83	95.0%
3	46	97%	28	89%	14	95%	15	89%	103	92.5%
4	51	92%	28	87%	14	94%	18	84%	111	89.2%
5	58	91%	31	85%	12	97%	20	81%	121	90.0%
TOTAL	257	94.6%	144	89.8%	68	572	78	90.3%	547	92.6%

Module V: Implementation: A Welcoming Place and A Connected Community

Success Indicators

- Office and support staff are trained to make the school a "welcoming place" for parents.
- The school team annually conducts a "walk-through" the school, parking lot, and grounds to suggest ways to make the school a more welcoming place.
- The office staff provides families and visitors with a friendly letter of greeting that explains the School and Classroom Visit Procedures. (different in system: The school provides parents and other visitors a friendly document that outlines the ground rules for visits to the school and classrooms.)
- Signs at all school entrances clearly welcome and guide families and visitors to the main office to sign in.
- The school provides parents and other visitors a friendly document that outlines the ground rules for visits to the school and classrooms.
- Professional development programs for teachers include assistance in working effectively with parents.
- The school provides "intra-generational associations" in which parents or community volunteers assist in the classroom.
- The school encourages parents to volunteer and provides orientation and training for them.
- The school provides "intra-generational associations" in which students of different ages are brought together to learn.
- The school maintains a program of home gatherings, with groups of parents meeting in a home with a teacher.
- The school maintains a program of home visits by teachers, staff, and/or trained community members.
- School celebrates its accomplishments.
- School recognizes the individual accomplishments of teachers.
- The school recognizes the accomplishments of teams (e. g., teacher teams, School Community Council (SCC), and parent-teacher organization).

Welcoming Place Training for School Staff

Everyone has a role in ensuring that our school is both safe and welcoming. Often the support staff members are the ones most likely to interface with visitors. They also interact with parents outside the school, and, of course, they interact daily with our students. You want everyone associated with your school to understand their important role in building our strong sense of community. You want everyone who works in the school to realize the high value we place on families. Often the support staff gets training only in the rudiments of their specific job—clerk, secretary, custodian, cook, for example. Now is the time to plan and provide a workshop for the staff to ensure that they understand their important role in making our school a welcoming place. The Welcoming Place Training Worksheet will guide you in developing the plan.

Welcoming Place Training Worksheet

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Who will lead the training? _____

Who will assist? _____

Who will attend?

_____ Clerks, office staff, secretaries

_____ Cooks and cafeteria staff

_____ Custodians and maintenance staff

_____ Bus Drivers

_____ Teacher Aides

_____ Other, _____

Suggested Welcoming Place Training Agenda (Modify as Needed)

- Welcome and introductions
- Discuss the importance of parents/families in the work of the school.
- Discuss greeting family members and visitors, listening to concerns, answering questions and offering assistance.
- Discuss friendly and helpful ways to answer the telephone and respond to written communication e.g., email and letters.
- Discuss the challenges of assisting families who speak languages other than English and problem solve how to find and use the resources you need to help diverse families.
- Role play greeting visitors to the school: Greet, introduce, shake hands, ask how they can be assisted.

Welcoming New Families Worksheet

How are new families currently welcomed to the school?

By whom?

_____ Principal

_____ Teachers

_____ Other school staff

_____ Parents

When? _____

How soon after the new students have registered? _____

In what ways will we connect with the new families?

_____ Telephone greeting

_____ Mailing

_____ Visit to home

_____ Invitation to visit school

_____ Special welcoming "coffee" or similar gathering at school

_____ Connected with a sponsor family with similar characteristics; i.e., have children in   same grade, similar language or cultural background, to assist them

_____ Personal invitation to come to a PTA/PTO meeting

_____ Other, _____

How could the procedures for welcoming new families be improved? Describe the new procedures.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Sample Welcoming Letter for Families and Visitors

Dear Families and Visitors,

Welcome to our school! We are a school community committed to providing each of our students with the best education possible. We strongly believe in a team effort in school success. We invite you to participate on our team, and welcome your involvement and good intentions to make this school community successful. Each student is special, and successful students have involved parents and supportive community members. We hope that you will take the time to support our students in their academic work, and be involved with events happening in our building.

We also believe in keeping students safe. Please refer to the following guidelines when you are a visitor to our school.

- Enter the building as our welcome signs indicate. All other doors are secured for the safety of our students.
- Follow the signs to the main office of our school. You will be greeted by one of our office assistants.
- Inform them to the purpose of your visit. They will have you sign in and wear a visitor's badge.
- If you are unfamiliar with our school, you will be given a map that indicates your destination. Student or community volunteers often serve as a part of our welcome committee!
- When you have completed your visit, please return to the office, sign out, and return the badge.

If you have concerns or questions after your visit, please contact the teacher, the principal or other appropriate staff via phone or email.

Thank you! We are pleased to have you visit. Please refer to our school website for staff contact information, on-going activities and events, and come again!

Parents wishing to visit their child's classroom(s) to observe instruction: Please refer to our Classroom Visit Guidelines in the handbook, and posted on our website and main bulletin board. Thank you.

Home Visits

A home visit is when a representative of the school visits a single home. Home visits enable a school to reach parents, especially those who might not come to school, with a welcoming message, materials, and helpful advice.

Home visits require training for the home visitors, an agreed-upon group of students whose homes will be visited, materials for the parents and students whose homes are visited, and a system for tracking the results. For example, a school might decide to visit all incoming kindergartners to welcome the families to the school. A school might also decide to visit the homes of second graders in the late spring and summer to boost summer reading. The children would be given books, and the parents would be given information to help them encourage their children's reading habits. The materials for the parents would also include a letter of greeting from the principal and information about parent activities at the school. Information about summer reading programs at the public library or recreation center might be included.

A middle school might decide to visit the homes of incoming sixth graders the summer before they begin attending the school. A high school might visit incoming freshmen. The emphasis for these visits might be on study skills and homework habits. Again, a welcoming letter from the principal and information about the school and its activities for parents would be included.

Home visits might be made by school employees (teachers, parent liaisons, teacher aides) or community members employed especially for this purpose.

How to Have a Successful Home Visit

1. Attend Home Visitor training.
2. Follow the procedures developed by your Home Visit supervisor.
3. Make calls to set up your appointments.
    - Verify names of parents and children in home.
    - Verify address and directions.
    - Use the Home Visit letter for families with no telephone.
4. Allow 15–30 minutes per visit plus travel time.
5. Try to group your visits to specific areas so you do not waste time traveling.
6. Send the Visit Reminder card 3-5 days before your visit.
7. Have Family Folders ready to go. Organization counts.
8. Your appearance should be neat and professional.
9. Be on time: You only get one chance to make a first impression!
10. SMILE and introduce yourself. Listen carefully to the names of the people you meet.
11. Give them eye contact. Repeat their names. Be friendly.
12. Let the family know you are visiting on behalf of the child's school.
13. Don't attempt to handle "complaints" about the school or teachers. Kindly ask the parents to take the matter to the principal and change the subject.
14. Go over the Family Folder with the parent(s) and answer any questions.
15. Keep the conversation positive and happy. Include children in the conversation.
16. Give the parents the Parent Feedback postcard before leaving. Make sure your name and the date are already filled in; the card is stamped and properly addressed to you (or your supervisor).
17. Leave with a smile and a thank you.
18. Send a Thank You postcard the next day.

Common Sense Safety Tips

- Know the neighborhood.
- Know when to visit in pairs.
- Know the best time of day to visit.

- Carry a cell phone.
- Be sure someone knows your schedule for the day: where you will be and when.

Home Gatherings

A home gathering is different from a home visit in a couple ways. For one, a host family invites other parents to meet in their home. A teacher joins them. The SCC plans the event, and several host families volunteer. A teacher is matched with each host family. The host parents and teachers meet to prepare for the event.

Why Gatherings in Parents' Homes?

Home gatherings are a powerful tool in creating stronger alliances among parents and between parents and teachers. The net effects are:

- Parents view teachers as approachable and credible. They see parents as allies in child rearing. Parents also learn first-hand of the school community's expectations of them in supporting their children's learning.
- Teachers gain a fuller understanding of their students, enjoy the parents' personal expressions of appreciation, and acquire stronger parental support for their work.
- Children recognize by concrete example the cooperative relationships between their parents, other children's parents, and their teachers.
- The dynamics of relationships change as teachers are no longer on their own "turf," but come into the lives of their students. The teacher is now a guest. Communication is less formal and becomes more trusting than is often possible when parents and teachers meet at school. Positive relationships form and strengthen, and partnerships are created.

Purposes of the Home Gatherings

Research on home visits typically depicts such efforts as extensions of the school into the community, thus perpetuating the perception that the school and the community are separate entities. With home gatherings, however:

1. parents and teachers are viewed as members of the same school community,
2. the invitation for the visit comes from the home rather than the school, and
3. a group of parents meets. The discussion centers not on specific children, but on the reciprocal roles and responsibilities of parents, teachers, and students in helping children reach goals established by the school community.

The purpose for the gathering consequently shapes the preparations.

Home gatherings are planned for the purposes of:

- Strengthening triangular alliances (student, parents, teachers) focused on children's learning;
- Drawing parents and school personnel into productive relationships with one another; and
- Drawing parents into a supportive relationship with each other.

With home gatherings, members of a school community attain more intimate understandings of each other, calling each other by name.

Action Plan for Home Gatherings

Tasks	Target Date	Who is Responsible?
Recruiting Parent Hosts and Teachers		
Training the Parent Hosts and Teachers		
Holding the Home Gatherings		
Debriefing with Host Parents and Teachers		

For more information, please visit www.indistar.org/Action