

Partnership Academy

Partnership Academy: An Example of a School With a Comprehensive Home-School-Community Partnership Plan for Monitoring Student Progress.

Welcome to your tour of Partnership Academy. The first part of the tour will be guided, as we take you through each of the key centers at our school that impact our Home-School-Community Partnership Plan. After the initial tour, you will have the option of returning to any particular location that interests you to do further investigation regarding that aspect of our plan.

The Entrance: As you enter Partnership Academy, the first thing most people notice is our welcome banner. The banner states, "Welcome to Partnership Academy. It is our goal that ALL activities that occur at our school are designed to improve your child's learning. Please sign our Visitor's Book at the Greeters' Table and enjoy your visit." We will be able to tour our building following the eye-catching signs displayed on the walls. You will find them outside each door and at the beginning of each hallway. As we start down the hall please notice our family pictures displaying families learning together at our current weekly academic session on the bulletin board that displays our Home-School-Community Agreement. This document states the roles everyone has in the achievement of students in our school, at home and in our community. As you can see, is signed by all who partner with our school. We feel we have a strong responsibility to keep our community informed about the effects of the work we are doing at our school and want everyone to know as soon as they enter our building that we are focused on student learning. The current school data and School Report Card are also displayed and we find it has been an effective way of notifying visitors and reminding us and our students of the purpose of coming to school each day. As we continue the tour, please feel free to ask questions of any student or staff we meet along the way.

Partnership Research Center: Across the hall from the ILT Room, is our Library/Information Center. Most of the books for students have been coded by reading level and moved into classrooms where they will get more use. As a result, computers that are connected to the Internet for research by students, parents and faculty now occupy most of our Partnership Research Corner. This corner contains a great number of books and articles about different cultures, school practices and social issues that our staff has collected from classes, journals, and the web. Study groups of teachers, administrators, and parents were formed to examine what the research says about appropriate home-school-community partnerships that would help us monitor progress toward our partnership goals within the school improvement plan. One of our current goals is to strengthen our community partnerships. To meet this goal we provide a desk over here for our local social agencies to come in and meet with families. On the wall you will find a list of community resources, translators, employment & educational resources our families/staff may need to access for their children or themselves. Next to the list is a schedule of when community groups offer tutoring and/or homework programs before and after school to insure that instructional time is not interrupted.

Partnership Resource Corner: As we move to the rear exit of the Library, we come to a small room that we call our Partnership Resource Center. In this area are educational materials, which families use with their children at school and/or home to help them in the academic areas data has shown to be weaknesses. These materials are also used on the home visits to all new families and on Neighborhood Walks done by the school staff and parents. There is a staff person dedicated to maintaining materials in this center. Professional development workshops are held in this area for staff and parents on the current instructional methods and on barriers and methods to increase home-school community. Parents in collaboration with staff then provide workshops to other parents on how to assist their children with homework and how to be more involved with their children's achievement.

Partnership Conference Room: The next stop on our tour is the Partnership Conference Room. This room is actually used for many different purposes each day, but some of the most important work that goes on here is Data Review by the ILT and Home-School-Community Action Team (HSCAT). The HSCAT is comprised of stakeholders from the home, school, and community. At the beginning of creating our school improvement plan, all existing data on home-school-community engagement was collected and carefully reviewed by the HSCAT. Using a prioritizing process (Parent Involvement Analysis Tool) the ILT and HSCAT identified several specific areas of low home-school-community engagement and wrote Smarte Goals to address those. The SMARTe Goals targeted improvement of how the home-school-community partnership could support our schoolwide focus of literacy. One of our current SMARTe goals is to improve our 2-way communication around the school's instructional focus. An outside evaluator through online and paper surveys completed by families, staff and the community members does an external measure regularly. Families and staff are asked to complete evaluations at all school related activities as an internal measure and these are reviewed by the HSCAT at its monthly meetings for future planning. Our entire school community—staff, students, families, business and community partners—was involved in finalizing and approving these SMARTe goals growing out of our internal and external measures.

Partnership Conference Room- Sharing Power: Our tour schedule suggests that we return to the Partnership Conference Room at this time. What you will see there now is a group of teachers, parents and support staff collaborating in a process called Looking at Student Work. Teachers look at student work all of the time in their own classrooms, of course, but this process allows them to compare the student work to specific standards, exemplars, and standardized assessment objectives in a collaborative setting. Having other teachers, parents, and support personnel involved in the study of the students' work provides multiple perspectives and serves as a resource to increase a teacher's repertoire of alternative instructional strategies that are shared with parents. The creation of a homework policy is developed at each grade level following this process that supports instruction and student work.

Classroom in Action: Walking down the hallway of our West Wing, you can notice the classroom signs, which identify staff name(s) followed by the educational certificates they hold and the schedule for the room. You will notice students are comfortable with visitors in the room because we have an open classroom visitation policy, which is given out in the Learning Support Office. As you enter the classroom please write the title of your favorite book on a card and add it to our “We ALL Read” display. In the corner you may notice the well-stocked classroom library with an inviting area for students to enjoy reading books. You will notice there are two books at each student’s seat. One book is the current theme book for whole class/small group instruction and one is self-selected for enjoyment reading. The teachers have all made home visits/personal contacts to their students in which they learn more about each family’s home life. This display shows students engaged in an activity the teacher created using aspects of his students’ family life. Regularly the teacher weaves what he has learned about student’s family culture, such as repair work, financing, cooking, etc into the curriculum to make it relevant. On this wall is the schedule of student led conferences held twice a year with their parents and teacher.

Learning Support Office: Another very important place for us to visit is just down the hall and to the right. This is our Learning Support office, where there is a sign "Head Learners" over office door. The sign serves as a constant reminder to all of us that we are all, including principal and support staff engaged in continuous improvement, constantly learning how to do our job better. Inside the door we will be warmly greeted again by one of our head support personnel, school secretary. She provides visitors with directions, a copy of the visitation policy and/or other information about our school, which is done orally or in a written form in their native language. The heart of the Home-School-Community Plan is to provide us with data to help steer that continuous improvement process. Our principal, instructional coaches, and other Head Learners spend a lot of time reviewing student data to identify trends or patterns and developing materials to share this information regularly with the staff and parents. Everyone in our entire school community knows that student learning is the number one priority of our principal and other support staff and they are continually trying to learn how to help us all back in the Partnership Conference Room. Last month's LASW sessions identified a weakness in most grades with students writing clear explanations of how they solved problems in math. We will be having one of our ongoing workshops this afternoon with our literacy coordinator as part of our 18 hours of Professional Development that will focus on modeling strategies to address this weakness. Our principal will go over the data with our school improvement coach before the session. One component of the professional development will be for teachers to develop focused learning activities that will be utilized by our community tutors and by families at home.