

Best Practices for Designing and Implementing the Home-School Note: Presenter Notes

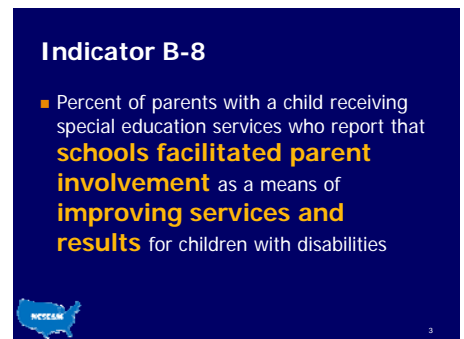
Slide 2:

- Today we are going to focus on discussing the importance of family involvement
- We will be discussing specific strategies that if applied correctly can improve the school's approach to family friendly practices
- Finally we will discuss how these strategies impact our environment & how we can take steps towards improving partnerships with families in our schools.



Slide 3:

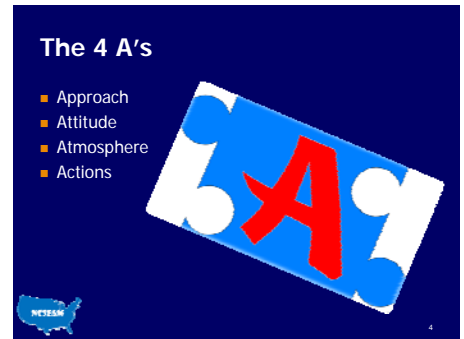
- Review the definition of Indicator 8 of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Focus on the importance of involving families in the education process and strengthening partnerships between families and schools.
- Every state is responsible for taking positive steps to include families. The Department of Education monitors parents perception of how well schools reach out to families and how this improves services for their students.



Slide 4: The 4 A's

* More information is contained in the PowerPoint presentation at the end of this document*

- For flourishing family-school partnerships to occur, certain conditions should be met.
 - These include:
 - An *approach* that invites and expects family involvement
 - Positive *attitudes* educators hold regarding family involvement
 - A welcoming *atmosphere* created by educators.
 - Once these conditions are in place, effective family-school partnerships can take place (*actions*).



Slide 5:

- Discuss how the approach, attitude and atmosphere must be appropriate **before** parent friendly "action" can be taken. Conduct a discussion with the audience of suggestions of how these areas can be improved within your school environment.
- This is a schematic to better understand how the 4 A's connect



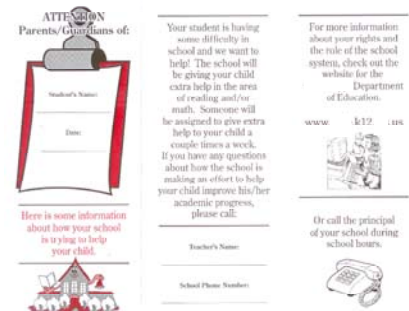
Slide 6:

- Paint a picture of anyone of these typical children who happens to be struggling with either an academic or behavior problem.



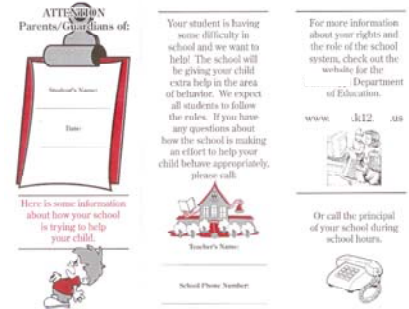
Slide 7:

- Imagine this is the note sent home to “inform” the parents of the child’s academic difficulty. What problems do you see with this method? Consider the approach (impersonal), attitude (“attention”) and atmosphere (the school is the expert and is going to solve the problem without family support) of this note.



Slide 8:

- Imagine this is the note sent home to “inform” the parents of the child’s behavior difficulty. What problems do you see with this method? Consider the approach (impersonal), attitude (“attention”) and atmosphere (the school is the expert and is going to solve the problem without family support) of this note.



Slides 9 & 10:

- Let’s discuss an improvement for this note!
- Home School Notes are also referred to as Daily Behavior Report Card, School Note, School-Home Daily Report Card
- These 2 slides outline the evidence based steps necessary to design and implement a home school note

Steps to Establish a Home School Note

1. Conduct a conference
2. Select areas for improvement
3. Determine how the goals will be defined
4. Determine the criteria for success
5. Design the Home School Note
6. Establish responsibilities

Adapted from William E. Pelham www.ccf.buffalo.edu; Kelley, M.L., 1990

Steps to Establish a Home School Note

7. Explain the Home School Note to the child & obtain input about rewards
8. Establish the reward system
9. Monitor and modify the program
10. Feedback for everyone
11. Troubleshoot or Maintain & Fade

Adapted from William E. Pelham www.ccf.buffalo.edu; Kelley, M.L., 1990

Slide 11: Conduct a Conference

- Convenient time – when setting up a conference with the parent, ask the parent about a convenient time for them to meet. Establishing meetings should not *always* be about when it fits best into the teacher’s schedule.
- Convenient location – perhaps the school building is not easily accessible for a parent (due to location, transportation issues, etc.). Consider a meeting place outside the school (e.g. a local library, coffee shop, restaurant, any other convenient location).
- Mutual input – be sure that parent opinion and input is sought. Make sure not to act as the expert in this conference. Parents know their children as well as the teacher so be sure to ask for their input.



Slide 12: Select Areas for Improvement

- Be aware of issues a child may be having in either behavior or academics. Discuss possible areas for improvement with family members and agree upon those which should appear on the home school note.
- IEP goals should also be considered. This is an especially good method for constant communication on progress towards these goals. This is relevant for both record keeping on the school’s behalf and information rather than just as quarterly reports for the family.



Slide 13: Determine Definition of Goals

- Measurable – target behaviors must be able to be observed and counted by the teacher
- Mutually understood - target behaviors must be very clearly defined in a way that the child, teacher, & parents all understand.
- Meaningful – goals should have relative importance for the child’s educational career. They should not be things that are not ultimately important in assisting for overall improvement for educational purposes, be it in the area of behavior or academics.

Some examples:

- **Academic Productivity**
 - Completes X assignments within the specified time
 - Starts work X or fewer reminders
- **Behavior Outside the Classroom**
 - Follows rules of the bus with X or fewer violations
 - Walks in line appropriately
- **Following Classroom Rules**
 - Follows directions with X or fewer repetitions
 - Raises hand to speak with X or fewer reminders
- **Homework**
 - Brings completed homework to class
 - Home School Note is returned signed the next day by parent
- **Peer Relationships**
 - Shares/helps peers when appropriate with X or fewer reminders
 - Fewer than X fights with peers
- **Responsibility for Belongings**
 - Has materials necessary for class/subject area
 - Brings Home School Note to teacher for feedback before leaving for next class/activity
- **Teacher Relationships**
 - Appropriately asks an adult for help when needed
 - Respects adults (talks back fewer than X times per period)



Slide 14: Determine Criteria for Success

- 2-8 goals (2-3 goals is best to start with) – the number of goals selected to appear on the home school note should be limited to between 2-8. It is important that when beginning and especially for younger children to limit the number of goals. Overwhelming students with too many goals to focus on, makes the home school note less potent and confuses the student, often resulting in less than desirable results.
- Frequent monitoring – monitoring of goals is critical to the success of this intervention. Monitoring should take place *at least* twice a day (e.g. lunch time & end of school day). When first beginning the program, monitoring at least once per class period will likely be necessary. For younger students frequent feedback is critical and may need to take place about every 10 minutes. This is also true for high frequency behaviors (i.e. behaviors that occur a lot during a short period of time, e.g. calling out, not raising hand, etc.).
- Reasonable targets – It is of great importance not to set targets too high for students. Data collection to inform where these goals should be set is vital. These goals should be something the student is able to obtain and experience success with the program, most especially at its outset.



Slide 15: Design the Home School Note

- Layout – a design in which the goals are easy to read and the way in which it is rated is easy to understand is important to consider. The child, student and teacher all must be able to easily interpret the home school note. Perhaps picture cues will be necessary for younger students who are not able to read yet. There should also be discussion about a place for written feedback between the teacher and parent.
- Rating schedule – easy systems for interpretation and understandability for the student are necessary. Some examples of different rating systems include: yes/no; 1 – 2 – 3; smiley face rating system (very effective with younger students); 1-2-3-4-5; not at all- a little bit-sometimes-all the time.
- Transportation logistics – How will the note find its way to the parent? Will it go home with the child everyday (consider any issue that may be associated with this; will the child want to bring it home if they haven't had a good day? Will a special folder be necessary? What about another sibling at the school? Consider email.



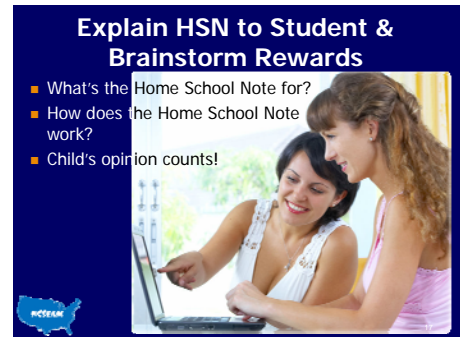
Slide 16: Establish Responsibilities

- Teacher – what role does the teacher play? (creating note; providing to child each morning; data collection; feedback; etc.)
- Child – what role does the child play? (remind teacher for note each morning; bring with them between classes; try their best on goals; etc.)
- Parent – what role does the parent play? (asking child for the home school note each evening; providing rewards based on success; feedback for the child and teacher, etc.)



Slide 17: Explain Home School Note to Student & Brainstorm Rewards

- What’s the home school note for? Explain that the home school note will be used to help him/her focus on important things during the day.
- How does the home school note work? Explain the procedure that will be used with the report card.
- Child’s opinion counts! Explain that he/she will be earning rewards for behavior and academic performance at school, based on their goals. Ask the child what they are interested in earning? What do they want to work for?



Slide 18: Establish the Reward System

- The rewards provide motivation for the child to work towards a good home school note, and they are thus a necessary component.
Rewards must be selected by the child (in consultation with the parents).
- What gets rewarded? Mutual decision making between teacher and parent about how many “yeses” or successful ratings in a day should be rewarded. What is the criteria?
- Daily vs. weekly – level of rewards are necessary. The same reward should not be used for 100% performance and 60% success although both efforts should be applauded. There should also be a difference between items or activities a child may earn on a daily basis versus a weekly reward for meeting all targets all week. Consideration of these differences is necessary.
- Level of desirability - Rewards should be arranged such that less preferred rewards can be earned for fewer positive ratings, and more desired rewards are earned for better performance.

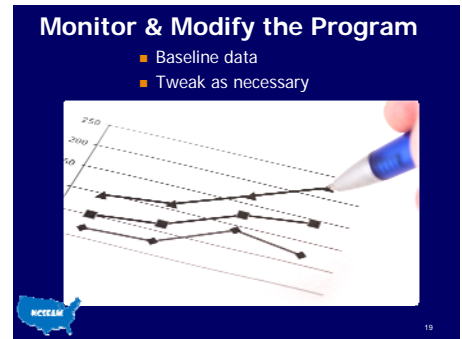
Some examples (additional examples are provided in handouts and at the websites www.interventioncentral.org and www.ccf.buffalo.edu)

- **Daily Rewards**
Snacks or Choosing radio station in car
- **Daily or Weekly Rewards**
Going over to a friend’s house to play
- **Weekly Rewards**
Renting movie, video, going shopping
- **School Rewards:**
Children should be given a menu of rewards from which to choose. The following rewards* can be added to the home-based rewards system:
Free time for X minutes
Eat lunch outside on a nice day
Be teacher’s helper
Grade papers



Slide 19: Monitor & Modify the Program

- Baseline data – It is difficult to know exactly where to start targets for students when data has not been collected on the specific goal. This target should not be “guessed” about rather the teacher needs to collect baseline data (i.e. data collected before any intervention has been put into place) to base a starting point on.
- Tweak as necessary - Gradually shape the child into increasingly better performance by making the targets harder once the child has begun to meet the established target regularly. All decisions should be based on data collection.



Slide 20: Feedback for Everyone

- Child – should receive frequent verbal feedback from both the teacher & parent
- Parent – should hear about any changes that are necessary on the school’s end. How could this system be improved?
- Teacher – should hear from the parent about how it’s working at home and any modifications that may be necessary



Slide 21: Maintain & Fade or Troubleshoot

- Judging success – if a child is routinely meeting goals consider making the targets more rigorous or adjusting the note to reflect other goals if those initially selected have been mastered.
- When to stop? – if all goals have been explored and met with success perhaps it is time to stop the note. This is a process that should take place over time and should not be stopped abruptly. The feedback from the teacher should gradually become less frequent, eventually getting down to once at the end of the day. Goals may be removed after child is still successful with this infrequent feedback. With the less frequent feedback and eventual removal of goals, the home school note will gradually fade away, becoming nonexistent.
- Troubleshooting FAQs: <http://ccf.buffalo.edu> – this website provides many answers to the most common questions and problems with the home school note. A simple chart with some suggestions for troubleshooting is also included in your handouts.



Slides 22 - 25:

- Several examples of home school notes, including different rating schedules, layouts and formatting (i.e. picture cues for younger children who cannot read).

Sample Home School Note

Sample Daily Report Card Date: _____

Child's Name: _____

Follows class rules with no more than 3 rule violations per period.

	Special	Language Arts	Math	Reading	SS/Science
Completes assignments within the designated time	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N
Completes assignments at 80% accuracy	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N
Completes with teacher requests (no more than 3 instances of non-compliance per period)	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N
No more than 3 instances of missing per period	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N

OTHER

Follows lunch rules (no more than 3 violations) Y/N

Follows recess rules (no more than 3 violations) Y/N

Total Number of Days: _____

Percentage: _____

Teacher's Initials: _____

Comments: _____

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Sample Home-School Note (Center for Effective Parenting, 2000)

School-Home Note

Name: _____ Date: _____

Completed _____ % of classwork YES NO

Obedied class rules YES NO

Got along well with others YES NO

Teacher signature: _____

Comments: _____

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Daily Progress Report – Alex

😊 = 3 Points received
😊 = 2
😊 = 1

Daily goal reached:
 Yes No

GOAL	READING 0-30 min	READING 30-60 min	READING 60-90 min	MATH 0-30 min
I will complete my work	😊😊😊 😊😊😊 😊😊😊	😊😊😊 😊😊😊 😊😊😊	😊😊😊 😊😊😊 😊😊😊	😊😊😊 😊😊😊 😊😊😊
I will stay in my assigned area	😊😊😊 😊😊😊 😊😊😊	😊😊😊 😊😊😊 😊😊😊	😊😊😊 😊😊😊 😊😊😊	😊😊😊 😊😊😊 😊😊😊

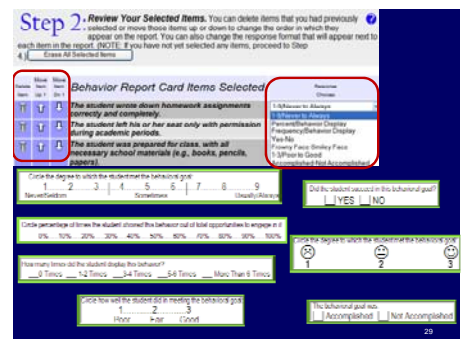
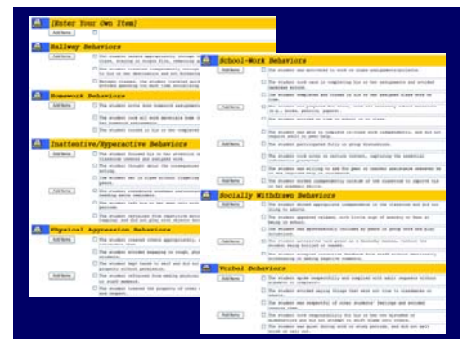
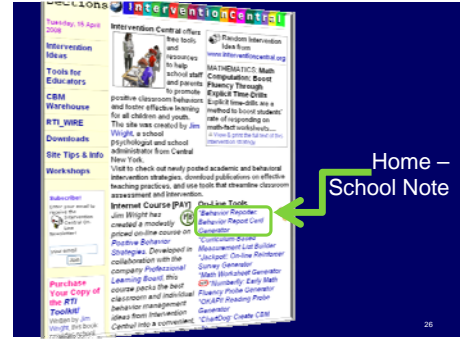
Name: _____ Date: _____

I can earn smiley faces for reaching my goals. If I get at least 7 smiley faces –I can choose a special activity. I can do it!

Time	I stayed in my work area.	I completed my work.	I had safe hands.	I used an inside voice.

Slides 26 – 29:

- This is a sample of the resource available for home school notes on www.interventioncentral.org
- Selections pertaining to the goals (and unique goals can be typed in – you are not restricted to the pre-made goals); rating schedules; font size; directions, etc are available.



Slide 30-32

- Daily, weekly and monthly progress monitoring forms are available.

Daily Behavior Report Card

Student: _____ Date: _____
 Teacher: _____ Classroom: _____

Directions: Review each of the Behavior Report Card items below. For each item, rate the degree to which the student showed the behavior or met the behavior goal.

The student traveled independently through the hallway, walking directly to his or her destination and not bothering other students or adults along the route.
 Circle how well the student did in meeting the behavioral goal:
 1.....2.....3
 Poor Fair Good

The student wrote down homework assignments correctly and completely.
 Circle how well the student did in meeting the behavioral goal:
 1.....2.....3
 Poor Fair Good

The student remembered academic instructions and directions without needing extra reminders.
 Circle how well the student did in meeting the behavioral goal:
 1.....2.....3
 Poor Fair Good

The student left his or her seat only with permission during academic periods.
 Circle how well the student did in meeting the behavioral goal:
 1.....2.....3
 Poor Fair Good

Weekly Monitoring Report

Student: _____ Date: _____
 Teacher: _____ Classroom: _____

Directions: Review each of the Behavior Report Card items below. For each item, rate the degree to which the student showed the behavior or met the behavior goal.

Behavioral Target	Date						
	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
The student traveled independently through the hallway, walking directly to his or her destination and not bothering other students or adults along the route. Select degree to which the goal was met: 1.....2.....3 Poor Fair Good	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
The student wrote down homework assignments correctly and completely. Select degree to which the goal was met: 1.....2.....3 Poor Fair Good	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
The student remembered academic instructions and directions without needing extra reminders. Select degree to which the goal was met: 1.....2.....3 Poor Fair Good	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
The student left his or her seat only with permission during academic periods. Select degree to which the goal was met: 1.....2.....3 Poor Fair Good	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3

Monthly Monitoring Report

Student Name: _____
 Start Date: _____ End Date: _____


	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
The student traveled independently through the hallway, walking directly to his or her destination and not bothering other students or adults along the route.	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair
	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S
The student wrote down homework assignments correctly and completely.	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair
	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
	M	T	W	Th	F	S	S

Slide 35:

- Discussion points for your school staff

Questions for you. . .

- What are the potential barriers for using this model?
- How can we overcome these barriers?
- What support is necessary from administration?
- What support is necessary from other school staff?
- How will we ensure this support is offered and barriers are overcome?



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The 4 A's: Creating Conditions for Family-School Partnerships

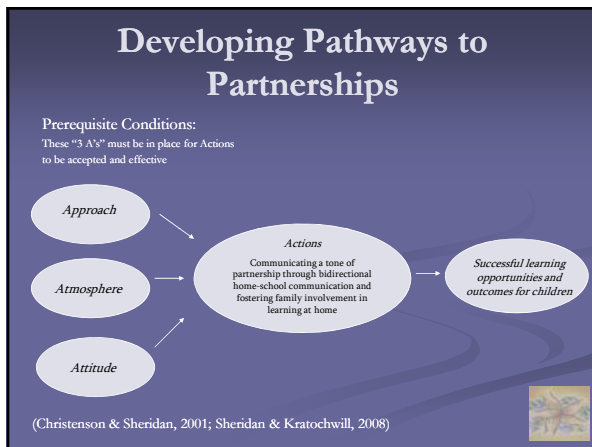
The Future of School Psychology Task Force on Family-School Partnerships

Susan Sheridan, Jenny Burt, Ashley Taylor, Andy Garbacz, Katie Black, Katie Magee, Laura Mullaney, Katie Hraban, Kelly Rasmussen

Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

The Four A's

- Certain attitudes and beliefs need to be in place before any family-school intervention can be effective
- Four A's (Approach, Attitudes, Atmosphere, and Actions) define the conditions that are necessary for effective family-school partnerships



Approach

Approach: The framework for engaging in positive interactions with families

- *Belief in shared responsibility* is central to family-school partnerships
- *Both families and educators are essential* for children's growth and development
- Emphasis placed on *relationships* between family members and educators, rather than on separate roles that each assume

Approach

- How To Engage in a Partnership Approach:
 - Request parental assistance – create opportunities for dialogue and empowering parents
 - Encourage a role for parents – share information and resources to solve concerns
 - Provide rationales and expectations for families and schools to work together
 - Structure interventions that require cooperation and communication (e.g., home-school notes, home reinforcement for school performance)
 - Increase responsibility for successful outcomes by including all participants (parents, teachers, and child when appropriate)

Attitude

Attitude: The values and perceptions held about family-school relationships

Includes attitudes that:

- All families have strengths.
- Parents can help their children succeed in school -- they must be provided with the opportunity and necessary information and support.
- Parents have important information and perspectives that we need to help educate their children.
- Parents and educators each bring unique and important perspectives and expertise to the table as co-equals.

Attitude

- How To Adopt a Partnership Attitude:
 - Attempt to take parents' perspectives whenever possible.
 - Ask yourself:
 - Do I put myself in the parents' place and mentally reverse roles to consider how I would feel as the parent of the child about whom there are concerns?
 - Do I really believe that parents are equal to me as a professional and are experts on their child?
 - Do I consistently value the comments and insights of parents and make use of their reservoir of knowledge about the child's total needs and activities?
 - Do I listen to parents, communicating with words, eye-contact, and posture that I respect and value their insights?
 - If I had a child in this situation, what information would I want and how would I like to be treated?



Atmosphere

Atmosphere: The climate in schools for families and educators to engage as partners.

- The affective climate in interactions among families and schools.
- The physical climate in schools that make them inviting and "family-friendly."
- All families must feel welcome!
 - Differences in parent backgrounds & experiences must be recognized.
 - Personal difficulties in school or previous conflicts may be prominent.
 - Ethnic, linguistic, religious, class differences can widen the gap.



Atmosphere

- How To Create an Inviting Atmosphere:
 - Recognize and appreciate diverse family structures, circumstances, and responsibilities, and how they may impact roles
 - Make your classroom welcoming and family-friendly
 - Spend time getting to know families and developing on-going relationships
 - Refrain from making assumptions and generalizations about families



Actions

Actions: What schools do to build partnerships and shared responsibility for education with families through effective communication.

- There is no one-size fits all approach
- Examine your current practices for partnering with families, and your willingness to include families and ask for their input
- Effective communication and administrative support are *key!*



Actions: Communication

- How To Practice Effective Communication:
 - Provide regular information to parents about their child's progress (e.g., make "good news" phone calls; use home-school notes; share information through e-mails, weekly folders, newsletters)
 - Engage in effective conflict management strategies by using clarifying statements and problem-solving strategies
 - Use words that convey a partnership (e.g., "we, us, and our" versus "you, I, yours, and mine")
 - Share information about how families can help their child at home



Actions: Communication

- How To Practice Effective Communication:
 - Use statements that express concern for the child
 - Retain focus on the child's goals and how to achieve them together
 - Elicit ideas, information, and perspectives from parents using open-ended questions (e.g., "How?" "When?" "Describe")
 - Paraphrase and validate message from parents to check understanding (e.g., "I hear you saying..."; "You are concerned about...")



Actions: Administrative Support

- Establish policies for partnering with all families
- Include policies for:
 - Requesting parental input throughout all phases of decision-making, not just when problems arise
 - Participation of parents who lack literacy skills or do not speak English
 - Professional development for teachers and staff to enhance their effectiveness with parents
 - Opportunities for parents to assist in the instructional process at school and at home



Key Points to Remember

- The development of effective approach, attitude, atmosphere and actions takes time.
- The aforementioned strategies may not work equally for all students, families, and educators.
- Individual schools may want to discuss what type(s) of programs will best meet their needs and school communities.
- Committing the time and resources while developing and implementing effective strategies will allow the process and outcomes to be most effective.



Evidence-Based Interventions Using Home-School Collaboration

What we know...

Model: (1) Positive school-home notes with reinforcement, and (2) Family problem solving board game

Goal:

- Promote children's ***math performance*** using home notes and a problem-solving board game

Description:

- Good News Notes are sent home for improvements in math performance compared to baseline mean; rewards are earned at home when the child receives a note
- The family problem-solving board game "Solutions," which consists of contingency contracts, the Good News Note, and rewards earned by the child, is played

Intervention Procedures:

- Upon initiation of home-notes, teachers send parents a personal letter regarding the process and possible data collection of their child's results along with possible reward ideas
- Parents are instructed to deliver positive consequences when their child receives a "Good News Note"
- If the student does not exceed his/her baseline mean, no note is sent home and no rewards are earned
- Families are instructed on how to play "Solutions"

Methodological Rigor:

- Randomization
- Control or comparison group
- Equivalent mortality with low attrition
- Appropriate unit of analysis
- Sufficiently large N (N=335)
- Reliable outcome measures
- Multiple assessment methods
- Group equivalence established
- Educational-clinical significance of change assessed
- Program components documented
- Interventions manualized
- Null findings reported
- Measures support primary outcomes
- Implementation fidelity
- Site of implementation
- Tested for generalization of math skills

Results:

- The interventions significantly improved consistency in math performance (i.e., decrease class work scatter, or the standard deviation of daily scores) as compared to the control group
- Children in family problem-solving group maintained their accuracy
- Children in family problem-solving showed generalization to non-reinforced probes, while those in the school-home note only condition did not
- Teachers' opinion of children as "underachievers" did not change despite involvement in the intervention
- Students who were part of the two intervention groups did not show improvement in their math performance during timed tests
- Overall, the results from family problem-solving intervention (including home-note, contingency contracting, and reinforcement) resulted in a broader effectiveness of students maintaining their math accuracy, producing less variability in their math scores, and exhibiting generalization of math probes.

Selected Reference:

Blechman, E. A., Taylor, C. J., & Schrader, S. M. (1981). Family problem-solving versus home notes as early intervention with high-risk children. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 49*, 919-926.

What we don't know...

- Long term outcomes
- Longitudinal effects of home-notes and board game
- Effectiveness of both interventions with diverse populations
- Results of a similar type of program targeting other than "less scatter in class work" in math
- Results used with participants other than those in the 2nd to 6th grades