PaTTAN’s Mission

The mission of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) is to support the efforts and initiatives of the Bureau of Special Education, and to build the capacity of local educational agencies to serve students who receive special education services.
PDE’s Commitment to Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Our goal for each child is to ensure Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams begin with the general education setting with the use of Supplementary Aids and Services before considering a more restrictive environment.

Today’s Focus:

- Parent & Family Involvement
- Parent & Family Collaboration
- Parent & Family Training
- National Standards
- PaTTAN Autism Initiative Site Review
- Before the School Year Starts
- IEP Meetings
- Communication Beyond the Classroom Teacher
Here is My Heart

• “Here is my heart. Please, take care of it. It’s so precious, so special to me. I don’t know what I’d do without it. Please don’t let it get hurt.”
• “What can we do to make sure every school, every classroom, every student, every child, will thrive?”
• Parents & families are the best advocates for their children!

What is Parent & Family Involvement?

• “Parent Involvement generally refers to the participation of significant caregivers (including parents, grandparents, stepparents, foster parents, etc.) in the educational process of their children in order to promote their academic and social well-being.” (Wolfendale, 1983)
Always Evolving

• The true definition of parent & family involvement is constantly evolving.
• Research is quite extensive in the area of the importance of the role of parents/families in children’s academic achievement, yet still has limits and areas for advancement.
• The actual effect of the relationships between families/teachers/schools on children’s actual outcomes is still developing as an area of study.

What is Parent & Family Collaboration?

• “Home-school collaboration refers to the relationship between families and schools where parents and educators work together to promote the academic and social development of children.” (Christensen, Rounds, & Franklin, 1992).
• Shepard and Carlson (2003) acknowledged the positive impact of improved communication between home and school.
Parent & Family Collaboration

• One Way
  – Teacher \rightarrow Parent
  – Parent \rightarrow Teacher

• Two Way
  – Teacher \leftrightarrow Parent
  – Parent \leftrightarrow Teacher

Parent & Family Collaboration- Additional Things to Consider

• Families may find it difficult to be involved in activities that require participation at the school
• Barriers to family engagement
What is Parent & Family Communication?

• May involve impressions created or words expressed
• Loosely put, families and teachers (including other school personnel), collaborating to address academic, social, and behavioral needs of a child.
• Within school psychology, parent communication is sometimes referred to as “parent consultation”
• **Aim for the interactive dialogue between teachers and families!**

Expressed Parent & Family Communication

• **One Way**
  – Teacher ➔ Parent
  – Parent ➔ Teacher

• **Two Way**
  – Teacher ↔ Parent
  – Parent ↔ Teacher
What is Parent & Family Training?

• Working with parents & families to increase a desired behavior in their child
• Improving parent-child interactions
• Educating parents & families

Parent & Family Training

• Parents and families must have opportunities to support the educational process at school and in the home in ways that work (Eccles & Harold, 1993).
• Explicit parent and family training yields more success for students!
Parent & Family Involvement

• Meaningful family engagement is associated with:
  – Better school attendance
  – Higher test scores
  – Higher grades
  – Better social skills
  – Better adaptation to school
  – Post secondary education more likely
(Top Five Reasons Schools Need to Engage Parents, PaTTAN publication & Henderson & Berla, 1994)

Parent & Family Involvement

• “Evidence suggests that active parental involvement in the schools is a critical factor in a child’s educational success at all grade levels.” (Eccles & Harold, 1993)
• Schools that have parental involvement benefit from:
  – Improved teacher morale
  – Increased support from families; and
  – Improved collaboration across the schools’ communities
And Most Importantly…

• Parental & family involvement leads to **positive student outcomes**.
• “When we know that meaningful family engagement has a direct positive impact on student achievement, it leaves us with the responsibility to make engagement meaningful.”

Parent & Family Involvement

• Parent & family goals, perspectives, and concerns should be considered in educational planning
• Parent & family training and communication will assist parents in becoming an **active participant** in their child’s education
• Should be consistent with evidence-base & what is best for student
Important to Note:

• It’s not always easy!
• Establish a partnership!
• Parent & family involvement makes a bigger difference when it is **collaborative** and with all those involved (school staff, community members, etc.)
• You are working toward a common goal!
• More progress will be made and will be easier to achieve when everyone is on the same page

Barriers to Engagement

• Some but not all barriers:
  – Schools have been the target of negative reports
  – Cultural differences
  – Parents’ own negative school experiences
  – Economic and time constraints
  – Lack of technology
  – Use of “jargon”
  – Lack of knowledge/feelings of incompetence
  – Failure to understand the role parents can play
  – School and teacher practices/characteristics themselves!
It’s Essential!

• “Effective communication is essential to create strong school-home partnerships to increase parental involvement.” (Graham-Clay).

• Every positive interchange will help increase trust and build stronger relationships!

Questions for Parents & Families to Ask

• Encourage parents & families to ask these questions (or address for them!)
  – Quality- Is my child getting a great education?
  – Ready for success- Will my child be prepared to succeed in whatever comes next?
  – Safe and healthy- Is my child safe and cared for at school?
  – Great teachers- Is my child engaged and learning every day?
  – Equity and fairness- Does my child have the opportunity to succeed and be treated fairly?
Enhancing Parent & Family Engagement

• IDEA

• State Performance Plan – Indicator 8:

Using the NCSEAM Survey, the percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.

Enhancing Parent & Family Engagement

• IDEA

• State Performance Plan – Indicator 8:

  • How the data is collected:

  • Each year, parents of school-aged students with disabilities in approximately one-fifth of the state's LEAs receive the NCSEAM survey by mail and are asked to complete it. The survey consists of 25 questions designed to measure schools' efforts to partner with parents.
NCSEAM Survey

**Enhancing Parent & Family Engagement**

- [http://penndata.hbg.psu.edu/](http://penndata.hbg.psu.edu/)

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**State Performance Plan – Indicator 8:**

- FFY 2005 (baseline): 34.10%
- FFY 2006: 34.02%
- FFY 2007: 31.98%
- FFY 2008: 34.50%
National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

- Building family-school partnerships for student success

- “When families are involved in their children’s learning both at home and at school, their children do better in school.”
  - Finding 1: Involvement programs that link to learning improve student achievement
  - Finding 2: Speaking up for children protects and promotes their success

National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (continued…)

- Finding 3: **All** families can contribute to their children’s success
- Finding 4: Community organizing gets results
National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

- PTA’s National standards for Family-School Partnerships
  - Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community
  - Standard 2: Communicating Effectively
  - Standard 3: Supporting student success
  - Standard 4: Speaking up for every child
  - Standard 5: Sharing power
  - Standard 6: Collaborating with community

Work Together

- “In this complex world, it takes more than a good school to educate children. And it takes more than a good home. It takes these two major educational institutions working together.” – Dorothy Rich
Are Teachers Prepared?

- Many teachers are not specifically trained in the skills they need to communicate effectively with parents (Hradecky, 1994; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004)

Site Review

- Parent & family communication and training section of site review

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Where to Begin?

• Prior to school starting:
  – Send home to families:
    • Preference assessments & caveats!
    • Parent Handbook
    • Information about the teacher
  – Meet with families & students:
    • Invite them to come in to classroom/school, begin initial pairing!
    • Obtain information on family priorities
      – Communicate…communicate…communicate with families all year!!

Communication

• “Written communication is probably the most efficient and effective way we can provide valuable ongoing correspondence between school and home.” (Williams & Cartledge, 1997).
• Consider the format and content
• The goal is to organize concise, accurate information for parents & families to read and understand
Communication

• Initial positive, collaborative interactions set the stage for more continued collaborative interactions as the school year progresses.
• Parents & families want to be treated with respect and as equals
• Develop a “personal touch” in your communication style
• Parents & families have an authority and wisdom of their child that is EXTREMELY valuable to you as the teacher!
• The parents & family are an ally!

Put Your Heart Into It!

• Truly committing to parent & family communication, collaboration, and training requires your heart!
• When you do this, it’s so much easier to keep parents & families in the loop, support what you do, and trained (if needed!)
• Without parent & family support and involvement, the job is much more difficult!
Beginning of the Year Communication

Dear Families,

Welcome back! I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer. My name is Beth Gulles and I am the new Assistant Principal of Classroom Management for your first grade of the fall.

After spending this year our wonderful classroom and I have been working hard to make sure that our students are ready for a successful school year. We are very excited to welcome a new group of students to our classroom. This year we will be working together to create a positive and supportive learning environment that will allow each student to reach their full potential.

I want to express my deepest appreciation to all of the parents who have already helped us get started. Your support and encouragement make all the difference.

This week, we will be conducting preference assessments to help us better understand each student’s interests and needs. These assessments are an important part of our classroom management plan and will help us create a personalized learning experience for each student.

Please take a few minutes to answer these questions:

1. What do you feel is most important for your child to learn?
2. In what ways would you like to see your child grow academically?
3. In what ways would you like to see your child grow socially?

As we begin the year, I am looking forward to working with you and your child to make this a year of growth and success. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Beth Gulles, Asst. Principal

Preference Assessments

APPENDIX A
Revised Academic Assessment Form

Name: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________
Grade: __________________________

1. What are your child's favorite activities?
   - Sports:
   - Music:
   - Reading:
   - Art:
   - Other:

2. What are your child's favorite hobbies or interests?
   - Science:
   - Technology:
   - Other:

3. What are your child's favorite subjects in school?
   - Math:
   - Science:
   - Social Studies:
   - Language Arts:
   - Other:

4. What are your child's favorite foods?
   - Breakfast:
   - Lunch:
   - Snacks:
   - Other:

5. What are your child's favorite books or stories?
   - Fiction:
   - Non-fiction:
   - Other:

6. What are your child's favorite TV shows or movies?
   - Action:
   - Comedy:
   - Other:

7. What are your child's favorite songs or music?
   - Pop:
   - Classical:
   - Other:

8. What are your child's favorite games?
   - Board games:
   - Video games:
   - Other:

Thank you for completing this form. It will help us better understand your child's interests and strengths.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Preference Assessments

When Communicating

- Establish what information will be communicated via each source by whom, and how often
- Honesty
- “Good news” and “bad news”: it might just be challenging news!
- Avoid “jargon”
- Use titles (Mr., Mrs., Ms., etc.)
- Consider when a face-to-face meeting is more appropriate!
Home and School Communication

• Letters/Newsletters
• Communication log
• Monthly letter
• Weekly probe sheets
• IEP documents
• Report cards/Progress Reports
• Conferences/IEP Meetings (more to come!)
• “Summer” bags
• Use available technology!!!

Home and School Communication- “Real Time”

• Website
• Twitter
• Blogs
• Phone calls
• Text
• Email
• Go To Meetings
• Video Conference
• FaceTime/Skype
• “Good News Calls!”
Sample Family Communication

Welcome to Mrs. Collins’ Autism Support Classroom with the Cool Cats
Room 101

Today’s/next days:

- Day 1:
  - Check for 10:00
  - Check for 1:00

- Day 2:
  - Check for 10:00
  - Check for 1:00

- Day 3:
  - Check for 10:00
  - Check for 1:00

HELPFUL LINKS

Sample Family Communication

Sample Family Communication

HELPFUL LINKS

Sample Family Communication

News Update for Room 101

Week of: May 23rd

Dr. Susan Scott

Hedgehog.jpg

Cracking the Code

Science activity:

- Students will learn about the properties of matter.
- They will explore how matter can be classified into various categories.
- Students will practice identifying different properties of matter.

Math activity:

- Students will engage in a problem-solving activity related to geometry.
- They will use geometric shapes to create designs and patterns.

Social Studies activity:

- Students will learn about the history and geography of different countries.
- They will participate in a research project to explore cultural diversity.

English Language Arts activity:

- Students will participate in a creative writing workshop.
- They will work on developing their writing skills through guided instruction.

Art activity:

- Students will create a mixed-media art project inspired by famous artists.
- They will practice their artistic skills and creativity.

Music activity:

- Students will participate in a music appreciation class.
- They will learn about different music genres and their significance.

Physical Education activity:

- Students will engage in a physical activity designed to improve their overall fitness.
- They will participate in a team-building exercise.

Health activity:

- Students will receive a health and wellness lesson.
- They will learn about importance of a balanced diet.

Guidance activity:

- Students will participate in a career exploration activity.
- They will research different professions and their requirements.

Library activity:

- Students will visit the school library.
- They will learn about different types of media and their uses.

Please note: The schedule is subject to change based on the needs of the students and the requirements of the school.
Sample Family Communication

Communication Take Away

• Strive to use a variety of effective communication strategies
• Make communication with families as informative and interactive as possible
• Incorporate new communication methods
• Maintain the “human touch”!
• Daily and honest communication is key!
• Communication should be thoughtful, planned, and promote the home-school partnership to better student learning!
Site Review

- Parent & family communication and training section of site review

Parent/Family Engagement | Yes | No
--- | --- | ---

25. Is there a system of training for parents, caregivers, and other community members that regularly interact with the students? Evidence of this item needs to be documented. **Trainings must focus on content that is relevant to students' instruction and that allows an increased collaboration and involvement as well as enhance parents' ability to make informed decisions.**

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- Communication is designed to keep parents informed about their child’s specific program and progress.
- Communication allows parents to provide feedback and information to teacher.

Parent & Family Training… But When?!

- In person opportunities:
  - Volunteer opportunities
  - Older learners- job trainings
  - Meetings
  - Back-to-School Night
  - Parent-Teacher Conferences
  - Parent Visitation Day
  - Boot Camps
  - Reach out to your PaTTAN consultants
  - National Autism Conference
IEP Meetings

• Parents & families are a CRITICAL member of the IEP team!

• According to federal law, the IEP meeting “serves as a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel, and enables them as equal participants to jointly decide
  – What the child’s needs are,
  – What services will be provided to meet those needs, and
  – What the anticipated outcomes will be

• Remember- it’s a draft!

IEP Meetings

• Again- It’s a DRAFT!

• Send the draft home ahead of time for parents and families to review
  – Allows parents and families to provide adequate input
  – Allows parents and families to prepare for the meeting
  – Avoids surprises at the meeting!
Heward’s Metaphor for the IEP

• “The IEP is a system for spelling out...where the child [is] with current skills, where she should be going, how she will get there, how long it will take, and how to tell if and when she has arrived. Thus, a good IEP serves as both a road map and a guidebook for meeting the challenges posed by a student’s disability. The annual goals and benchmarks developed by the team identify the destinations for the journey and provide signposts along the way.” (Heward, 2006)

IEP Meetings

• Benefits of the IEP meeting
  – Meet as a team
  – Review progress and services
  – Share what you are doing all day!
  – Make changes
  – Review goals and **obtain parent input**
  – Discuss transitions (schools/work place/etc.)
  – Resources/Tools
  – Training
VB-MAPPs - A Resource Tool

Guiding Parents & Families
Parent & Family Desires

• Parent & family desires and input should always be heard! Remember, they are part of the team as well!
• As stated earlier, parent & family preference is not always consistent with evidence base.

What if you disagree?

• Formally, if parents disagree:
  – Team meeting
  – Mediation
  – State complaint
  – Due process hearing
• Informally, if parents disagree:
  – Try the LAFF, don’t CRY strategy!
### LAFF

<table>
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<tr>
<th>L</th>
<th>Listen, empathize, and communicate respect</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ask questions (and ask permission to take notes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Focus on issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Find a “first step”</td>
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### Don’t CRY

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<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>Criticize others</th>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>React hastily and promise something you cannot deliver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Yakkity-yack-yack</td>
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Parent & Family Training Continued…

• The VB-MAPP
• What if you can’t always do trainings in person?
  – Videos
  – Newsletters
• Teach the parents & families too!

Newsletter Examples
Newsletter Examples

Exton Elementary School

December 2014

The Training Topic this month is Listener Responding

Listener Responding, S.A.S., or Listener Skills. When a child responds to a direction as a listener, he or she may receive the following consequences:

- The child will be able to give a verbal response to the directions.

**Different types of Listener Responding Skills:**

- **Following Directions:** When an adult gives a direction and the child responds.
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  - **Following Directions:** When an adult gives a direction and the child responds.

**What can I do at home?**

- Please continue to check your child’s daily communication sheet for any marked change. Opportunities for 2-3 skills should be built into your child’s everyday. 

**Reminder:** Winter Break December 24 through January 4

**Reminders:**

- Winter Break December 24 through January 4
Site Review

- Parent & family communication and training section of site review

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Parent & Family Communication Beyond the Classroom Teacher

- Support Staff:
  - Prior to school starting:
  - Meet with your classroom staff:
    - Review expectations for classroom and parent communication; establish yourself as the leader
    - Give clear directions on what you want them to do
Parent & Family Communication Beyond the Classroom Teacher

• General Education Teachers:
• Prior to school starting:
  – Meet with general education teachers:
    • Review expectations for shared students and parent communication; establish yourself as a team member!
    • Advocate for your students
    • Continue to discuss how parent communication between you is going

Parent & Family Communication Beyond the Classroom Teacher

• Administration:
• Prior to school starting:
  – Meet with administration:
    • Review expectations for parent involvement with your students
    • Ask for help!
    • Set up routine meetings
    • Reinforce them!
Here is My Heart

• “We expect an awful lot of teachers and schools. I want us to remember that we are all here for the same purpose. It’s about creating an environment where every child can thrive.”

In Summary…

• Continued collaboration is essential for the success of each and every student!
• We are a team!
Resource File

- https://webapps.pattan.net/files/PaTTANAutismResources.zip

Contact Information www.pattan.net

Kerri Collins, M. Ed.
kcollins@pattan.net

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Tom Wolf, Governor
References


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