

# **Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement**

**(Including: Sample Practices, Challenges, Redefinitions, and Expected Results)**

## **TYPE 1: PARENTING**

Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

### **Sample Practices**

- Suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level.
- Workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child rearing at each age and grade level.
- Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy.)
- Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services.
- Home visits at transition points to pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school. Neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families.

### **Challenges**

- Provide information to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.
- Enable families to share information with schools about culture, background, children's talents and needs.
- Make sure that all information for and from families is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school.

### **Redefinitions**

- "Workshop" to mean more than a meeting about a topic held at the school building at a particular time. "Workshop" may also mean making information about a topic available in a variety of forms that can be viewed, heard, or read any where, any time, in varied forms.

### **Results for Students**

- Awareness of family supervision; respect for parents.
- Positive personal qualities, habits, beliefs, and values, as taught by family.
- Balance between time spent on chores, on other activities, and on homework.
- Good or improved attendance.
- Awareness of importance of school.

### **Results for Parents**

- Understanding of and confidence about parenting, child and adolescent development, and changes in home conditions for learning as children proceed through school.
- Awareness of own and others' challenges in parents.
- Feeling of support from school and other parents.

### **Results for Teachers**

- Understanding families' background, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of their children.
- Respect for families' strengths and efforts.
- Understanding of student diversity.
- Awareness of own skills to share information on child development.

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### **TYPE 2: COMMUNICATING**

Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

#### **Sample Practices**

- Conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed.
- Language translators to assist families as needed.
- Weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for review and comments.
- Parent/student pickup of report card, with conferences on improving grades.
- Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications.
- Clear information on choosing schools or courses, programs, and activities within schools.
- Clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, and transitions.

#### **Challenges**

- Review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and nonprint communications.
- Consider parents who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type.
- Review the quality of major communications (newsletters, report cards, conference schedules, and so on).
- Establish clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.

#### **Redefinitions**

- "Communications about school programs and student progress" to mean two-way, three-way, and many-way channels of communication that connect schools, families, students, and the community.

#### **Results for Students**

- Awareness of own progress and of actions needed to maintain or improve grades.
- Understanding of school policies on behavior, attendance, and other areas of student conduct.
- Informed decisions about courses and programs.
- Awareness of own role in partnerships, serving as courier and communicator.

#### **Results for Parents**

- Understanding school programs and policies.
- Monitoring and awareness of child's progress.
- Responding effectively to students' problems.
- Interactions with teachers and ease of communication with school and teachers.

#### **Results for Teachers**

- Increased diversity and use of communications with families and awareness of own ability to communicate clearly.
- Appreciation for and use of parent network for communications.
- Increased ability to elicit and understand family views on children's programs and progress.

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## **TYPE 3: VOLUNTEERING**

Recruit and organize parent help and support.

### **Sample Practices**

- School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents.
- Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, resources for families.
- Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.
- Class parent, telephone tree, or other structures to provide all families with needed information.
- Parent patrols or other activities to aid safety and operation of school programs.

### **Challenges**

- Recruit volunteers widely so that all families know that their time and talents are welcome.
- Make flexible schedules for volunteers, assemblies, and events to enable parents who work to participate.
- Organize volunteer work; provide training; match time and talent with school, teacher, and student needs; and recognize efforts so that participants are productive.

### **Redefinitions**

- "Volunteer" to mean anyone who supports school goals and children's learning or development in any way, at any place, and at any time -- not just during the school day and at the school building.

### **Results for Students**

- Skill in communicating with adults.
- Increased learning of skills that receive tutoring or targeted attention from volunteers.
- Awareness of many skills, talents, occupations, and contributions of parent and other volunteers.

### **Results for Parents**

- Understanding teacher's job, increased comfort in school, and carry-over of school activities at home.
- Self-confidence about ability to work in school and with children or to take steps to improve own education.
- Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school.
- Gains in specific skills of volunteer work.

### **Results for Teachers**

- Readiness to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school.
- Awareness of parents' talents and interests in school and children.
- Greater individual attention to students, with help from volunteers.

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### **TYPE 4: LEARNING AT HOME**

Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

#### **Sample Practices**

- Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade.
- Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.
- Information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments.
- Regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class.
- Calendars with activities for parents and students at home.
- Family math, science, and reading activities at school.
- Summer learning packets or activities.
- Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.

#### **Challenges**

- Design and organize a regular schedule of interactive homework (e.g., weekly or bimonthly) that gives *students* responsibility for discussing important things they are learning and helps families stay aware of the content of their children's classwork.
- Coordinate family linked homework activities, if students have several teachers.
- Involve families and their children in all-important curriculum-related decisions.

#### **Redefinitions**

- "Homework" to mean not only work done alone, but also interactive activities shared with others at home or in the community, linking schoolwork to real life.
- "Help" at home to mean encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing -- not "teaching" school subjects.

#### **Results for Students**

- Gains in skills, abilities, and test scores linked to homework and classwork.
- Homework completion.
- Positive attitude toward schoolwork.
- View of parents as more similar to teacher and of home as more similar to school.
- Self-concept of ability as learner.

#### **Results for Parents**

- Know how to support, encourage, and help student at home each year.
- Discussions of school, classwork, and homework.
- Understanding of instructional program each year and of what child is learning in each subject.
- Appreciation of teaching skills.
- Awareness of child as a learner.

#### **Results for Teachers**

- Better design of homework assignments.
- Respect for family time.
- Recognition of equal helpfulness of single-parent, dual-income, and less formally educated families in motivating and reinforcing student learning.
- Satisfaction with family involvement and support.

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### **TYPE 5: DECISION MAKING**

Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

#### **Sample Practices**

- Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees (e.g., curriculum, safety, personnel) for parent leadership and participation.
- Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements.
- District-level councils and committees for family and community involvement.
- Information on school or local elections for school representatives.
- Networks to link all families with parent representatives.

#### **Challenges**

- Include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school.
- Offer training to enable leaders to serve as representatives of other families, with input from and return of information to all parents.
- Include students (along with parents) in decision-making groups.

#### **Redefinitions**

- "Decision making" to mean a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not just a power struggle between conflicting ideas.
- Parent "leader" to mean a real representative, with opportunities and support to hear from and communicate with other families.

#### **Results for Students**

- Awareness of representation of families in school decisions.
- Understanding that student rights are protected.
- Specific benefits linked to policies enacted by parent organizations and experienced by students.

#### **Results for Parents**

- Input into policies that affect child's education.
- Feeling of ownership of school.
- Awareness of parents' voices in school decisions.
- Shared experiences and connections with other families.
- Awareness of school, district, and state policies.

#### **Results for Teachers**

- Awareness of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions.
- View of equal status of family representatives on committees and in leadership roles.

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### **TYPE 6: COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY**

Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

#### **Sample Practices**

- Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services.
- Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students.
- Service integration through partnerships involving school; civic, counseling, cultural, health, recreation, and other agencies and organizations; and businesses.
- Service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g., recycling, art, music, drama, and other activities for seniors or others).
- Participation of alumni in school programs for students.

#### **Challenges**

- Solve turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities.
- Inform families of community programs for students, such as mentoring, tutoring, business partnerships.
- Assure equity of opportunities for students and families to participate in community programs or to obtain services.
- Match community contributions with school goals, integrate child and family services with education.

#### **Redefinitions**

- "Community" to mean not only the neighborhoods where students' homes and schools are located but also any neighborhoods that influence their learning and development.
- "Community" rated not only by low or high social or economic qualities, but by strengths and talents to support students, families, and schools.
- "Community" means all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in the schools.

#### **Results for Students**

- Increased skills and talents through enriched curricular and extracurricular experiences.
- Awareness of careers and of options for future education and work.
- Specific benefits linked to programs, services, resources, and opportunities that connect students with community.

#### **Results for Parents**

- Knowledge and use of local resources by family and child to increase skills and talents or to obtain needed services.
- Interactions with other families in community activities.
- Awareness of school's role in the community and of community's contributions to the school.

#### **Results for Teachers**

- Awareness of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction.
- Openness to and skill in using mentors, business partners, community volunteers, and others to assist students and augment teaching practices.
- Knowledgeable, helpful referrals of children and families to needed services.