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ABSTRACT

In recognition that character and knowledge are critical to shaping the whole child, the state of Wisconsin has made a commitment to developing partnerships to ensure that home and school build upon their mutual efforts with children and youth. This guide offers practical, useful strategies, tools, and examples of "what works" for uniting Wisconsin students, teachers, and parents around common goals presented by classroom management, Standards of the Heart, and youth service learning. The guide's introduction describes the work of the partnership action team, comprised of 8 to 10 persons (parents representing families attending the school, teachers from different grade levels, support staff, administrators, community members, and students) who use partnerships to strengthen family participation in classroom management or citizenship efforts. Part 1 of the guide focuses on classroom management and student discipline, and includes information on the connection between classroom management and teaching, the role of school counselors and psychologists, students' role and motivation, and the importance of good nutrition in classroom management. This part also compiles parents', teachers', and principals' ideas for classroom management and student discipline. Part 2 describes ways in which schools and parents can promote Standards of the Heart, the term describing the efforts and programs in school to foster positive character development, and offers tips for encouraging and recognizing family volunteers. This part also includes a 37-item annotated bibliography of children's literature appropriate for teaching character from prekindergarten through high school. Part 3 addresses youth service learning and describes how parents can be involved in youth service learning, delineates questions to assess the quality of service learning projects, and suggests ways to add meaning to learning projects. (KB)

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Connecting
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Connecting Families to the Classroom

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Madison, Wisconsin

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Connecting Families to the Classroom

Table of Contents

Foreword v
Acknowledgements vii

Introduction

Using the Partnership Action Team to Pull it All Together 3
Useful Websites 5

Part 1: Classroom Management and Student Discipline

Classroom Management and Good Teaching: How Are They Connected? 8
A Teacher's Perspective: The Best Discipline is a Good Curriculum 9
School Counselors and School Psychologists: What Can Parents Expect? 11
Role of Students in Expectations and Classroom Management 12
What Are Teachers Taught About Good Teaching and Student Motivation? 13
Parents' Ideas That Work 14
Teachers' Ideas That Work 17
Useful Forms for Teachers 18
- Goal-Setting Plan by Parent, Teacher, and Student
- Parent-Teacher-Student Compact
- Help Me Know Your Child

Principals' Ideas That Work 23
Good Nutrition and Classroom Management: Productive Partners for Children's Learning 24
Nutrition-Friendly Ideas for Parents 26
Nutrition-Friendly Practices for Schools 27

Part 2: Standards of the Heart

What Are Standards of the Heart? 31
Parents Can Promote Standards of the Heart at Home 31
Connecting Parents to Standards of the Heart 32
Sample "No Taunting" Pledge 33
A Resolution that "We Care" 34
Using Children's Literature to Teach Character 35
Putting the "Family" into Family Volunteering: Ways to Tweak What You Do 39

Part 3: Youth Service-Learning

Youth Service-Learning and Parents: A Great Combination! 43
Youth Service-Learning in Wisconsin 44
Wisconsin Service-Learning 4-Point Test 45
Ways to Inform and Educate Parents About Youth Service-Learning 45
How Can Parents Be Involved in Service-Learning? 46
A Parent's Perspective on Service-Learning: An Open letter to Teachers 47
Designated Dates for Service-Learning in 2002-03 48
Add Meaning to Learning: Move from "Community Service" to Service-Learning 49

February 2003

Foreword

"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically... Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education." — *Martin Luther King Jr.*

Wisconsin schools recognize that character and knowledge are critical to shaping the "whole" child. Educators recognize that character education begins at home. Wisconsin parents work hard to instill, by word and example, basic values such as effort, honesty, responsibility, and respect for self and others. Educators who teach character education in classrooms across the state strive to reinforce these same fundamental traits that contribute to our happiness as individuals as well as our survival as a society. But how do home and school connect to and build upon their mutual effort?

In communities across our state, we must have a shared sense of responsibility. Schools must build exciting, challenging programs that are creative and diverse in the way we teach children. The New Wisconsin Promise, our commitment to ensure the opportunity of a quality education for each child, also recognizes that this task is achievable only with the active participation and support of parents and community members.

This *Learning Together* packet, one of a continuing series of easily read and reproducible booklets from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, is our attempt to jump-start the natural connections between school and home that each Wisconsin student carries with him or her each day. This packet offers practical, useful strategies, tools, and examples of "what works" for uniting Wisconsin students, teachers, and parents around common goals presented by Standards of the Heart, classroom management, and youth service-learning.

I hope the ideas in this booklet for enhancing communication, learning, and care for each other will strengthen those precious, essential home-school bonds.

Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent

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Introduction

Using the Partnership Action Team to Pull It All Together
Useful Websites

8

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Using the Partnership Action Team To Pull It All Together

To shape them into reality, all good ideas need a group of committed people willing to offer time and leadership. Whether your school has chosen to focus on improving classroom management and student discipline or to cultivate citizenship among students, helping students become productive, caring, and responsible learners and citizens is a team effort, requiring the effort of individuals inside and outside of school.

Here are some frequently-asked questions and ideas for assembling an "Action Team" to assess, plan, and review how families are involved in citizenship, classroom management, or youth service-learning efforts.

Action Team Membership

A total of eight to 10 people should be on the Action Team, including:

- Two or three parents willing to represent families whose children attend the school
- Two or three teachers from different grade levels
- Support and pupil services staff
- The principal or other school administrator
- One or two community members to connect the school effort to issues, resources, and events outside of the school building.
- One or two students, especially at the middle and high school levels.

One Action Team member should also serve on the school improvement team and another member should be willing to act as a liaison with the school's parent-teacher organization.

Action Team Steps

The Action Team can use partnerships to strengthen family participation in classroom management or citizenship efforts in one to three years.

The following steps are a guide for setting up a school or district Action Team:

1. Create an Action Team for Partnerships
2. Select a Chair for the Action Team who has the respect of others and can communicate well
3. Designate funds
4. Gather information
5. Identify strengths and starting points
6. Write a One-Year Action Plan
7. Develop a Three-Year Outline
8. Enlist staff, parents, students, and community members to help conduct activities
9. Evaluate implementations and results
10. Conduct annual celebrations and report progress to all participants
11. Continue working toward a comprehensive, on-going, positive program of partnerships.

Funding Sources

Schools can allot some of their Title IV/AODA funds to establish and support an Action Team exploring classroom management or citizenship issues. In addition, Wisconsin schools have used the following sources to fund other partnership efforts:

- Rotary, Optimists, Lions, and Kiwanis Clubs
- Joining Forces for Families Initiative
- 21st Century Community Learning Center Grants
- America READS grants
- Comprehensive School Reform funds
- Gratis services of local printers, designers, restaurants, grocery stores, and students
- PTAs and PTOs
- SAGE (Student Achievement Guarantee in Education)
- AmeriCorps/VISTA
- Federal Titles I, IV, and V of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
- Principal's Budget
- Various school fundraisers
- Community Friends of the Arts group
- School Improvement funds
- Families and Schools Together program (FAST)
- Fatherhood organizations
- Corporation for National and Community Service/ Youth Service-Learning grants

Gathering Information

Wisconsin schools and action teams gather information from parents and other members of the school community through:

- Written surveys
- Telephone surveys
- Parent forums
- Family and community town suppers
- Suggestion boxes placed at school entrances
- Panelists of parents and teachers
- Lunches or breakfasts with the principal
- Focus groups
- Home visits
- Home-school folders or journals

Using the Partnership Action Team to Pull It All Together (Continued)

Questions to Consider

There are five basic areas any Action Team considers as it gathers and reviews information: present strengths, needed changes, expectations for students, sense of community, and links to student achievement goals. Use the following questions to prompt discussion about how your school's partnerships with families and the community can help strengthen and achieve goals for each program (citizenship, classroom management, or youth service-learning):

- Which partnership practices are presently strong in each program? Which practices are weak? Which should continue? Expand? Be dropped? Be added?
- How do partnership practices address families' needs and parents' desire to keep informed and involved in their children's learning?
- How do partnership practices strengthen the learning goals that teachers have for students and the help or time needed to achieve those goals?
- Are practices coherent and coordinated or fragmented? How are families being reached? What are inclusive ways to bring people to the school?
- What do students expect their families to do to help them with school life and homework? What do students want their schools to do to inform and involve their families?
- How can partnership goals contribute to citizenship, classroom management, or youth service-learning programs this year? How can families contribute to those programs?
- How do you want your family-school-community partnership efforts to look three years from now?

Parent Contributions

Parents can serve as:

1. Members of task forces
2. Advisory committee members
3. Program evaluators
4. Co-trainers for pre-services or inservices
5. Paid program staff
6. Mentors for families
7. Grant reviewers
8. Participants in the needs assessment process
9. Reviewers of audiovisual and written materials
10. Group facilitators
11. At-home or in-school volunteers
12. Community advocates
13. Participants in focus groups
14. Fund raisers
15. Participants at conferences
16. Participants in long-range planning or improvement initiatives
17. Planners and distributors of school surveys
18. Planners and workers at school events
19. Tutors of students
20. Other

Gathering Data

Taking a look back at how and what your school accomplished with partnerships doesn't have to be complicated, but it should be attempted. It may help your Action Team decide what changes or new goals and activities it might set for the coming year.

Necessary to the end-of-the-year evaluation process is the start-of-the-year designation of how your team will measure partnership results. Measurements don't have to be scientifically accurate, but should reflect expectations for how the program or effort will work.

Here are some ways that Wisconsin schools gather data to help measure partnership results:

- Student test scores
- Survey results
- Anecdotes, quotes, or stories from participants
- Attendance at events
- Student grades
- Other student measures: rate of daily student attendance, homework completion, discipline referrals, or suspensions/expulsions
- Participant evaluations
- Meeting minutes
- "Report cards" completed by parents
- Number of hours devoted to working on project/goal
- Parent-student-staff suggestion or observation forms
- Newsletter or newspaper articles; other media coverage
- Number of families served (i.e. by school's family center)
- Number of people who volunteered
- Number of books read or hours spent reading
- Amount of funds or materials collected or materials used
- Value of in-kind contributions
- Suggestion box results
- School referendum results
- List of activities completed; other documentation

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Useful Websites

Classroom Mangement and Student Discipline

The Behavior Home Page
www.state.ky.us/agencies/behave/homepage.html

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support www.pbis.org

Disciplinary Action Advisor www.dpi.state.wi.us
(and go to Disciplinary Action Advisor on left)

Love and Logic www.loveandlogic.com

Character Education

Character Counts www.charactercounts.org

National Dropout Prevention Center
www.dropoutprevention.org

Center for the Fourth and Fifth R's
www.cortland.edu/www/c4n5rs

Character Education Partnership
www.character.org

Center for Civic Education
www.civiced.org

Character Works
www.characterworks.com

Idealist.org Action Without Borders www.idealist.org/kat/volunteercenter.html

Youth Service-Learning

Close Up Foundation: Service-Learning Programs
www.closeup.org/servlern.htm

Compact for Learning and Citizenship/Education Commission of the States www.ecs.org

Do Something! www.dosomething.org

Learn & Serve Wisconsin
www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/slhmpage.html

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
www.servicelearning.org

National Service-Learning in Teacher Education Partnership www.az.com/~pickeral/partnership.html

Youth Service America www.ysa.org

Family-School-Community Partnerships

The National Network of Partnership Schools
www.partnershipschools.org

The Family Education Network
www.familyeducation.com

The National Parent Information Network
http://npin.org

The National Coalition for Parental Involvement in Education www.ncpie.org

National PTA www.pta.org

The National Association of Partners in Education www.napehq.org

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/Family-School-Community Partnerships
http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/fcsphome.html

"As part of its mission, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's website resource list has links to many other websites. The department, however, is not responsible for the content of other sites nor should links to other sites be inferred as an endorsement of those sites."

Part 1

Classroom Management and Student Discipline

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Classroom Management and Good Teaching

How Are They Connected?

By Linda Krantz
DPI prevention education consultant

Classroom management has been a continuing concern of educators as well as the general public over the past 20 years. National Education Association polls and other surveys of public opinion typically show 'managing classroom behavior' as the most pressing and most-mentioned challenge. Most educators would agree that the majority of children, regardless of grade level, want orderly and disciplined classrooms, and respond well to good management practices by the teacher. Having a well-managed classroom environment goes a long way in reducing disruptive problems. Teachers and administrators must be equipped with a wide range of skills and knowledge to effectively manage all students within a classroom and work with challenging students.

Classroom management cannot be addressed simply by asking educators to be better disciplinarians. The effective management of school classrooms needs to be addressed within the larger context of what is going on in the school building, the school district, and the community. Current research points to several common factors that must be part of school-based behavior management, including:

- creating and sustaining a supportive learning community;
- well-established and organized approaches to supporting positive behavior;
- involving families, students, school staff and the surrounding community; and
- developing and implementing standards and measures to support continuous improvement based on data.

The Department of Public Instruction has developed a toolkit to help schools address the issue of classroom management and creating positive learning environments. Many of the articles in this Learning Together packet have been excerpted from the toolkit. Because schools are charged with providing an educational environment that nurtures learning in all its forms, the articles are designed to help teachers, principals, pupil services staff and parents understand the importance of both school-wide and classroom-specific student behavior plans.

For example, the "bag of tricks" section contains useful strategies and ideas from teachers, pupil service staff (school counselors, school psychologists and school nurses) and parents from around the state. These ideas highlight the positive things each of these groups is already doing to support and expect positive behavior from students.

Providing children with safe, orderly, well-managed schools is a goal that teachers, administrators and parents can all agree on and work toward. Students thrive when

- schools and communities communicate with one another on teaching practices, school activities, and school governance, including classroom management.
- communities support school staff who cultivate a warm atmosphere of respect, dignity, trust, consistency, and fairness, based on a concern for all students as individuals.
- schools and communities have high expectations for everyone's behavior and support teachers in their efforts to engage all students in learning.

Role of Parents in Creating a Positive School Climate

What can parents do to help schools maintain a well-disciplined school learning environment? Parents can:

- share with school staff their cultural and societal expectations for children's behavior.
- lend their perspective as parents to school committees, task forces, and activities.
- become familiar with the school's plan for classroom management and student discipline
- show civility, courtesy, and other positive behaviors at home.
- offer their comments and opinions about the appropriateness of school instruction, policies, and classroom management.

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A Teacher's Perspective

The Best Discipline is a Good Curriculum

"Running a classroom can be easier when both students and teachers care about what's being taught."

By Kelley Dawson
Kelley Dawson teaches fourth grade at La Escuela Fratney in Milwaukee and is an editor of *Rethinking Schools*.

During my first year of teaching, I tried everything to get my students to behave. Behavior charts, individual plans. Class incentives. Class consequences. Tricks, incentives, threats. Rewards, punishments. Strict attitude, friendly attitude. Yelling, reasoning, sweet-talking, pleading for sympathy.

One day, I wrote the word "celebration" on the board and promised the class they could have a party if they behaved for the whole day. I crossed each letter off one by one. By noon we all knew they'd never make it.

In short, I was desperate.

Discipline is an exhausting part of the job that never really goes away. The message that most of us get is that to be a good teacher, you must first be a good disciplinarian. You must control your students' behavior. Only then, when your classroom is under control, can you begin to teach.

I disagree.

No teacher has to wait until the students are "under control" to start teaching them worthwhile stuff. It's actually the other way around. Over and over again, I have found that the moment I start to teach interesting, engaging content, I experience immediate relief in the area of discipline.

During my first year, my classroom was pretty wild. (Don't hold it against me; I know you've been there!) But it made sense to me that my students acted the way they did. I was a brand-new teacher, totally inexperienced. My students wanted more than I could offer them, and they were bored and confused much of the time. I didn't really see how forcing them to behave would change that.

I took some time, but eventually I quit working so hard at controlling my students' behavior and started focusing on my own: What was I teaching? What methods was I using? What was I doing to engage, to *teach* students so that they would not be bored and disruptive?

I looked at what I was doing in social studies: plodding through a textbook that was inaccurate, boring, and disconnected from my students' lives. I decided to teach some lessons about the civil-rights movement, and to have the class write and perform a play about the Montgomery bus boycott. It was an extremely rough first attempt at writing and teaching my own curriculum, but for our purposes, it worked. I was engaged, the students were engaged, and we all spent a lot less time dealing with discipline.

In my second and third years of teaching, I've had similar experiences. Every time there's a slump in my teaching—yes, even though I work hard, it happens—kids get bored (I get bored, for that matter) and discipline gets hairy. It's like a rumbling that slowly turns to a roar and ultimately demands action: If you don't plan some good curriculum, things are really going to get out of control.

Of course, it's important to have rules and consequences, and to apply them consistently while teaching interesting content. I find it works well to remind kids frequently why an ordered environment helps them learn, to show them how rules and consequences help create a classroom where real learning can happen. Also, when I'm teaching something I really believe is worth my students' time, I feel much more authority to demand a high standard of behavior.

Even the best curriculum can't magically solve all behavior issues. Our society creates a lot of pressures and problems for kids, and they often bring these to school. Students witness violence, live in poverty, struggle to help hard-working parents, and watch a ton of TV, much of it inappropriate. Some students have serious problems that will not go away without specific intervention. It may help to work with the school psychologist, social worker, or administrators in these cases. Teachers can also push for school-wide preventive programs like anti-bullying, anger management or peer mediation. These can have a great impact on behavior.

I'm now in my fourth year of teaching, and I'm still struggling to create all the curriculum I need to motivate and engage my fourth graders for six hours a day. Whenever I feel overwhelmed by the size of that task, I try to remind myself to think small: I go back to my first

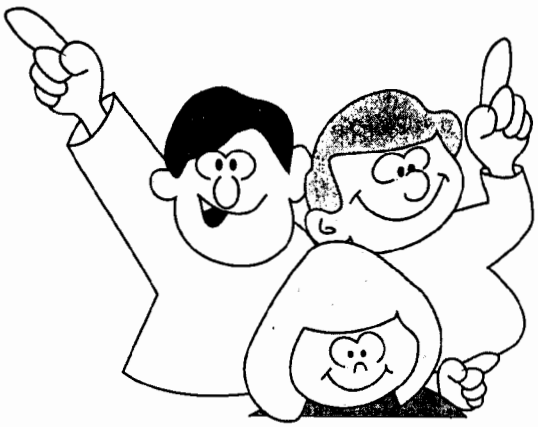
A Teacher's Perspective: The Best Discipline is a Good Curriculum (Continued)

year and remember that back then, even one good lesson was sometimes enough to tip the scales from boring, intolerable, and out of control to what I could at least call "manageable."

Each year, I am building upon those lessons and offering better and better curriculum to my students. I know discipline issues will never completely disappear from my classroom. But I also know good curriculum goes a long way toward making my classroom run smoothly. And engaging curriculum is more than just a fix for behavior headaches. It can also get kids to think deeply, care about our world, and help them learn to make positive changes.

As a bonus, I feel less foolish now that I don't have to stand at the front of the class and take away my students' celebration one letter at a time.

This article from ***RETHINKING****SCHOOLS*, Fall 2002, is reprinted with permission.



Start Simple

Advice for experimenting with content and discipline:

- Choose topics that relate to your students' lives and experiences. Have kids study or write about their neighborhoods, cultural heritage, families, or favorite memories.
- Plan a modest two-week unit on a topic that is relevant to the students and interesting to you. If your topic emphasizes fairness, kids will likely catch on right away. Some topics new teachers I know have tried are: civil rights, job discrimination, human rights, child labor, immigration, workplace rights, indigenous rights, standard and nonstandard English, sexism, racism, racial profiling, girls' rights.
- Look for lesson plans, teaching ideas, and resources on the Internet: rethinkingschools .org and teachingforchange.org are two good places to start. If possible, talk with colleagues who have taught about your topic.
- Let your enthusiasm for the material come through. Get the kids inspired about the topic. Your high level of interest will motivate and engage them.
- Assign projects—books, plays, presentations. They give students an active way to learn and share their learning with others.

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School Counselors and School Psychologists

What Can Parents Expect?

By Karen Corning-Wydeven, DPI school psychology consultant and Deborah Bilzing, DPI school counseling consultant

Most parents know who their child's teacher is and who their building principal is. Many parents also know their school's bus driver, custodian, and even the cook. However, many parents are unacquainted with another group of professionals who work in their child's school—the "pupil services" professionals. In many schools the pupil services professionals include the school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, school nurse and sometimes the school safety officer. This article is intended to highlight the roles of two of these pupil service professionals: school psychologists and school counselors.

Role of the School Psychologist

Although school psychologists are employed, at least part time, in virtually every public school building in Wisconsin, many parents are unaware of who they are, what they do, and what services they provide to children and families.

School psychology is a relatively young profession, becoming most prominent in public schools in the United States in the mid-1970's. During this time a federal law was passed which required all public schools to educate children with disabilities. School psychologists were hired by districts and became involved primarily in the assessment of children thought to have educational disabilities.

In addition to assessment, school psychologists also played a significant role in planning programs for children with disabilities. Many parents whose children do not have an educational disability are often unaware of the presence of the school psychologists in their building, but school psychologists are trained to do much more than testing and assessment.

As professionals trained in child development, school psychologists

- can work with teachers to develop strategies that help children be more successful in school.
- can be a resource to parents with concerns about their child's behavior or learning.
- can help individual and/or small groups of children who may need specific intervention in order to work through a problem such as a death in the family; anger management issues, or learning how to make and keep friends.
- collaborate with parents, teachers, and other school staff to help create the best educational outcomes for children.

In many Wisconsin schools, school psychologists work with school counselors to help create an environment which promotes school success and academic achievement for all students.

Role of the School Counselor

School counselors, like school psychologists, are professionals with master's degrees. School counselors receive training in personality and human development, including career and life-skills development; learning theories; student appraisal; multicultural and community awareness; educational environments; curriculum development; professional ethics; and program planning, management, and evaluation.

School counselors are trained and expected to work with all students as well as school staff, families, and members of the community. And like their partners, school psychologists, school counselors play an integral part in the overall education of children.

School counselors facilitate and take a leadership role in their school's comprehensive developmental guidance program. They also provide individual planning, group and individual counseling, crisis counseling, consultations with staff and parents, community outreach and management functions.

In the past, school counselors have been primarily responsible for crisis intervention and planning for college. More recently, however, the scope of school counseling services has broadened to include the school's curriculum, instruction, and assessment system. Lifework planning has become central to many guidance programs which promote school success through academic achievement, prevention and intervention activities, advocacy, and personal, social, and career development.

Role of the Parent

First, find out who these resources are in your child's school, rather than wait until a time when you have a problem or need some support. Next, find out the different "roles" these professionals have in your district. Ask your principal what the role or "job" of the school counselor in your child's school or district is and what programs he or she coordinates. Do the same for the school psychologist.

School Counselors and School Psychologists (Continued)

In addition to finding out who the pupil services staff are, inquire about when you might be able to meet them: during school open house, at parent-teacher conferences, or at another time you might be in the school.

School counselors and psychologists receive many calls from parents with concerns about their child, sometimes at the teacher's suggestion. Because they must balance required duties with voluntary activities, they vary in what services they are able to provide from one school to another and from one school year to another. For example, the school psychologist's required duties might include special education testing and other identified activities that are more focused on preventing problems, developing skills, or catching problems early.

Increasingly, school psychologists and school counselors are spread thin as school districts facing severe budget restraints assign them to multiple school buildings or job responsibilities.

In conclusion, parents should be encouraged to find out

- who the school counselor and school psychologist are in their child's building or school district
- what their job responsibilities are and
- how to access them in times of needed support.

The primary goal of the professionals who make up the pupil services team in your district is to promote and enhance student learning by reducing the barriers that interfere with student success. All school staff, including school counselors and psychologists, want children to complete school academically and socially prepared to choose from a wide range of postsecondary options.

Role of Students In Expectations and Classroom Management

What do teachers expect of students as teachers strive to maintain orderly, learning-centered classrooms? Parents can benefit from being aware of what expectations teachers and other school staff have for students, themselves.

Teachers want students to actively participate, according to their developmental age, in setting expectations for their own academic performance and behavior. In addition, students are expected to

- **Take their education seriously.** As students understand that education is designed to help them succeed in life, they will hopefully be motivated to actively participate in it. Teachers encourage students to view math, language, science, and history not merely as separate subjects, but as knowledge-based skills that will add to their enjoyment of life.
- **Understand that they will benefit from high expectations.** Teachers try to help students understand that high expectations come from others' beliefs in their ability to succeed and be their best. Students who understand this can transform power struggles with parents and teachers over expectations they may believe are unreasonably high into common goals for success in learning.
- **Share the responsibility for maintaining a positive classroom environment with their teachers and their school.** Students learn well in an environment that supports and nurtures their academic exploration and discovery. They should also be involved in creating this environment by monitoring their own behavior to match classroom goals. Active student participation in classroom discussions is very helpful.
- **Be active players in the partnership amoung home, student, and school.** Teachers and parents who work to help students recognize from a young age on that they are partners in their education, equip students with the ability to effectively communicate their interests, needs, and concerns to adults and peers.

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Good Teaching and Student Motivation

What Are Teachers Taught?

Good teaching and student motivation are the foundations of effective classroom management. Teachers who excel consider students as real people with diverse interests, concerns, and intellectual potential. In return, motivated students regard their teachers as caring adults and entrust the teachers as a special sort of friend, protector, and challenger.

Research suggests that teachers need to view students as naturally motivated to learn. "To a very large degree, students expect to learn if their teachers expect them to learn," researcher Deborah Stipek (1988) notes. Further, teachers must believe that learning flourishes in environments where students are supported in their efforts, and key subject matter is made personally meaningful and fun.

Good teachers become a bridge between their subject matter and the students they teach. They are willing and eager to help each learner cross that bridge. Furthermore, as students are given more responsibility for their own learning, for example, by making learning choices such as designing class projects, choosing learning partners, or setting classroom rules, "teachers' roles change from maintaining control to providing appropriate instructional supports or scaffolding, modeling thinking and learning strategies, and being co-learners," Meece (1991) points out.

Tips for Teachers

- Teach classroom rules and procedures at the beginning of the year and review frequently.
- Contact parents to give positive feedback, not only to discuss problems.
- Make instruction engaging for all types of learners; know how each student learns best.
- Praise and encourage *every* student.
- Talk less than your students do.
- Design instruction so that students engage in a variety of activities such as listening, writing, talking, designing, creating, and solving.
- Tell students what they need to do to succeed in your class.
- Reward success.

Classroom climate is an important element of student motivation. Students who believe their classroom is a safe place psychologically, physically, and emotionally, will participate in the learning that takes place there. To create such an environment, teachers must build mutual respect, caring, and support. Teachers who have established their classrooms as safe places to learn generally subscribe to the following principles.

They:

- create a sense of safety and community in the classroom
- make all messages clear and consistent
- involve parents in what children are learning
- have high and positive expectations for all students
- treat students fairly and individually and distinguish between consequences and punishments
- are aware of what is going on in the classroom at all times and encourage students to monitor their own behavior
- communicate expectations with parents and ask for their feedback
- use multiple teaching strategies
- take more time to teach fewer concepts and skills from a variety of perspectives.

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Parents' Ideas That Work

The following strategies submitted by Wisconsin parents were excerpted from the DPI Classroom Management and Student Discipline Tool Kit.

What strategies work in your family with your child's school? It's worth taking a few minutes to think over, talk about, or write down the things your family does to emphasize the importance of learning with children. You may be surprised by the number of things you do, the similarities you share with other parents, or at how tailoring someone else's "good idea" to fit your family may work especially well.

Expectations and Classroom Management

The main thing I do with my children is talk a lot about school. I try to talk to them about school every day—the good things that happened and the bad, as well as the importance of following rules, paying attention, and doing your best. My son needs the talking the most. I try to drop everything and listen.

I think it's important to help children figure out how school works and what it (including teachers) expects of them. For instance, for my first grader, we've discussed what to tell other children who say things that hurt your feelings or physically hurt you, what upsets the teacher, and what behavior let's her know that you are thinking and working hard.

Our school has adopted a program that entails a system using "above the line" and "below the line" to label behavior. Consequences for "below the line" behavior are enforced and rewards are given for "above the line" behavior. It is easy for my child to be reminded to behave well. The program teaches him that there are consequences, good and bad, for all behaviors.

The teachers also use a notebook to correspond. The teacher writes about my child's behavior and my son brings the notebook home. My son knows that not only will consequences apply at school, but at home as well.

We talk about the importance of following rules at school and doing a good job on assignments (neatness, etc.). We pray each morning before school. I also try to get my son in bed early because I know things are a lot harder when he's tired. We're working on responsibility at home, which should follow through into school—such as getting his clothes ready at night and having library books or necessary things ready for school. Reading and spending family time together is important to us. We celebrate successes at school with a family party.

I find out the teacher's behavioral expectations and which ones are most difficult for my grandson. When I talk with him about his day I use a scale of one through five. Five means he was almost always successful at the appropriate behavior, one means almost never, three means half the time, and so on. I ask what his number is for that day or what number his teacher would give him that day. No matter what the number, I ask the same question "How did you do that?" This focuses on successes and gets him to think about and verbalize his strategies. I ask what he thinks he would have to do to move up just one notch for tomorrow. This also helps him think through and verbalize strategies.

We listen to what our children have to say and respect what they feel. We never use negative statements about our children. We point out to our children, other children who show good and bad behaviors in public. We try to have them see another's point of view and try to set a good example.

I review homework and positively support the results. I let the kids know how important school is and encourage them to have fun. With older children, I emphasize that school or classroom time is meant to be spent listening and working. Recess and after school is play time. I believe my son behaves better during class time and gives his all at recess. His report card has improved.

Good Teaching and Motivating Students

At suppertime, we sit down and talk about the kids' homework and what they did in school and what's due. Before bedtime we make sure backpacks are packed and ready to go. It saves time in the crazy mornings. We like to read a short story before bedtime, too!

I check the children's school bags when they get home. If they have homework, it must be done before TV or play. This is our routine.

I don't think anyone can overestimate the importance of listening to what the child is trying to say when the child initiates it, and then talking about it in a calm, objective manner.

We try to reinforce good work and good behavior with a few rewards that cost little or nothing. If my son has had a good week at school, he gets to pick out a rental video (with some guidance) at the local video store and have a "camp out" on Friday night (i.e., he gets to eat popcorn and put his sleeping bag where he wants to in our house). So far, that's been a big adventure for him, but we'll have to find other things as time goes on. His sister, who's always been a good student, is occasionally allowed to have a friend sleep over.

I appreciate the times when the teacher has called our home to let us know right away that something needs attention. It's much easier to do something about it right away. We receive a progress report halfway through the semester, which is helpful, so action can be taken to improve grades or make up work.

There is no replacement for teachers who care about the whole child—what the child does well and what the child needs to work on, kindness toward others, as well as challenges. Parents can sense caring right away, and are much more supportive of reinforcing classroom management principles at home.

When my child has accomplished a major goal, I ask her to tell me how she feels rather than me telling her how I feel. She will then internalize her positive feelings about the accomplishment.

I think of some reward or event my children really enjoy and desire (as long as it is positive) and say that when they accomplish their homework or housework, they will get to do or have the thing they want. If they don't do what they are supposed to do, they do not get the thing they desire.

We feel it is very important to support the teacher and school in discipline and educational efforts. Even if we don't agree with a tactic or something done, we don't undermine the teacher's authority, but instead question her privately. This way, our son has never gotten the idea that he can pit school against parents, and vice versa.

For example, my son is an excellent math student, but last week he came home with a slip regarding his below-standard performance on the timed math fact sheet. He was told he needed to miss recess for two days and spend the time practicing. He was very upset by this, probably because he is not used to struggling in math. My husband sat with him and explained the concept of time management, and taught him how to move more quickly through the problems. The end result was great improvement, and my son met the benchmark. The teacher agreed to accept the timed sheet that my son completed at home. We were able to minimize the missing recess, by using the "on a scale of 1–10, how big a deal is this?" strategy.

When my kids were younger, I would spend 10 to 20 minutes every night reviewing three questions with each child: How was your day? What was the best thing? What was the worst thing? Because we began this ritual when they were preschoolers, they are willing to share with me even as adolescents. Some sessions have lasted up to an hour as we tried to work out ways to solve their problems. Others were brief if things were okay: The best thing was "School" and the worst was "I can't remember anything, Mom." To this day (my kids are 19, 17, and 15), we still have some of our best sharing sessions in the evening as they get ready for bed.

My son likes attention! I take him aside to talk to him one-on-one in a nice but serious manner. He's told acceptable and unacceptable manners—consequences too! We are working on kindness, manners, and attitude. He's definitely feeling out where his place in the world is. I give lots of love, guidance, and patience. Compliments, recognition, and praise are a must.

Individual Student Behavior

My husband and I take turns volunteering in the classroom and working one-on-one with students. It's really given us an idea of what the teacher has to deal with daily and what her perspective must be. It also lets our children know that we are there in the classroom, in their life at school, and in another sense also, there for them.

Parents' Ideas That Work (Continued)

I don't have my son do his homework as soon as he gets home. I let him watch TV or go outside and play for at least one-half hour. I also break up the homework, for instance, one half before supper, the other half after. I often sit at the table with him and make it fun. He reads 15 minutes a day, every day and we use a timer for that!

I emphasize how important it is to listen and follow directions. I give my daughter a household chore to do. When she's done, we talk through it together to see if she followed all directions.

If my son's behavior is not up to par or his homework does not get done, he loses time with video games, the computer, or cartoons. When he takes care of his responsibilities, he is rewarded.

Don't be shy about talking to your child's teacher. Don't wait if you are seeing signs of trouble in your child. It's possible now to reach most teachers using e-mail.

Consider if there is a physical cause: Are you sure your child can hear? Can see? Understands the teacher's instructions?

Evaluate the number of organized activities your child participates in.

Establish "Family Night" once a week, when family members can be together. Allow the child to set the activities for the night.

Unplug the television.

Do not allow behaviors at home that you know will not be permitted in school, such as use of foul language or stealing from other children. Know what expectations the school and your child's teacher have for the children.

Never blame others when your child is at fault. Help your child to understand the importance of responsibility and accountability.

If your child is experiencing difficulties in school, understand first you are not alone! Tell yourself your child is not the worst child in the school. There is help available; many services are in place to help your child to succeed in school.

School Philosophy and Climate

The main thing is talking—and hugs and encouragement. We try to emphasize the positive and let them know how pleased we are when they try hard or behave, especially if they've had a challenge. I always make clear that it is not them, but their behavior that occasionally needs work. We tell them often how much we love them and how special they are, and that life will be much easier if they follow a few rules because *everybody* has to follow rules, even Mom and Dad.

Communication is key. At the start of the school year, school faculty might have Ready, Set, Go! sessions for the parents and child to meet the teacher in a relaxed setting. Schools can sponsor a Parent's Day, inviting all parents to attend school for an hour or two with their child and hear about learning expectations, look at textbooks, hear about volunteer opportunities, and just meet the teacher. I've found this to be a helpful, positive way to start the school year.

Each school can set up a Family Center as a sincere gesture on the part of school staff to let parents know they are welcome and belong in the school building. Some schools offer Families and School Town Suppers or Parent Forums to listen to parents, offer them information, and plan to act together.

I always encourage my children to say please and thank you, to treat others the way they want to be treated, and to ask the teacher for help with problems.

My behavior as a parent must at all times reflect the positive behavior and attitude I desire to see in my child. Physical payoffs, (candy, stickers, money, etc.) cannot replace a sincere compliment, caring hug, or proud smile. Above all, my time *spent sincerely* with my child is both my child's school's best ally and mine!

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Teachers' Ideas That Work

Teachers who give honest praise, sincerely care about students, and maintain consistently high expectations for good student behavior create an atmosphere of success for all students. But how do teachers communicate those expectations to families to help students understand that positive behavior and consequences are expected at home *and* school? Following, are a few practices that Wisconsin teachers use.

Call Parents

I help parents connect with their child's school experience by calling two of my parents every week so that I can keep in touch with every parent throughout the year. People who don't have phones get a call at work or a note in the mail. This way I keep parents informed and there are no surprises at conference time.

Elementary School Teacher

Show Them You Care

The most effective strategy I have found in developing and maintaining positive behaviors is based on basic respect, which can only happen through a caring relationship with all students. This process takes time and must start the moment students enter your door, but once established, is a powerful way to manage your classroom. Students need to know that you care for them and will be consistent and fair in your responses to behavior. The trust and respect that develops will cause students to develop their own internal discipline, which is much more effective than anything imposed on them. Give honest praise freely, show them you sincerely care about their well being, and maintain a consistently high set of expectations for their behavior. Students will rise to the tasks we set before them.

Elementary School Teacher

Monitoring School Clothing

Our high school does not allow gang clothing or other inappropriate clothing to be worn to school. In the morning homeroom period or during the day, teachers make note of whom are wearing these items, and send these kids to the office. They also will send an E-mail reminder to all staff. The student is loaned sweat pants or a T-shirt to wear for the day. Students with inappropriate T-shirts are also allowed the option of wearing them inside out. The combination of monitoring and providing the substitute clothing keeps the school free from these negative influences, as well as cuts down on students being sent home to change.

High School Teacher

Positive Reinforcement

This may sound rather basic, but it really does work. I have found that using *lots* of positive reinforcement when a student is behaving appropriately is very effective. It is easy to give attention to negative behaviors and just sigh with relief when things are going well. Most kids don't get very much positive reinforcement and they "lap it up." Catch them being good and pour on the praise.

High School Teacher

Making Choices – It's Up to You

Another strategy that often works at this grade level is to let the student make choices. Tell them "it's up to you," explaining the consequences and/or rewards of their behavior. When you allow the decision to be their own instead of saying they have to do it, they often will make the choice that makes sense—without the power struggle.

High School Teacher

Letter to Parents

I send a letter home with my students that covers classroom expectations. Students receive five extra credit points for returning the letter with parent signatures within one week. I've found that parents are better informed of my rules and expectations. When a disciplinary issue arises, we understand one another better because I've communicated with them clearly and up front about how I deal with discipline.

Elementary School Teacher

Teachers' Ideas that Work (Continued)

Useful Forms for Teachers

Setting Goals for the School Year with Students and Parents *(see form on next page)*

I schedule meetings with my students and their parents before school starts. Calling them on the phone is a better way to get this done. I schedule meetings for late afternoon into early evening hours. I invite parents to bring along siblings of the student, which they appreciate because it cuts down on babysitting costs. Some parents I visit at home.

The meeting is very informal, and I try to engage the parents and child in a conversation that encourages future communication. I do a lot of listening and observing. I learn a lot about how the parent and child interact, as well as what the parents expect from their child as a result of these meetings. There are certain items that I ask for information about.

First, I inquire about what the child's talents are. What are they good at? What would they do all day if they could? By getting feedback from both the child and the parent, my knowledge about the student is enriched, as well as my ability to connect curriculum to student interests.

I also ask both parent and child about friends. Do they have friends in the class? Who are they? Do they hang around with one or two special friends, or are they part of a larger group, or no group at all?

The conversation also involves the concerns of the parents and student. What are they worried about? Are there special academic or behavioral concerns that need to be addressed? What were the concerns from the previous school year, and how were they resolved—or not?

Finally, I ask both parent and student to set a few common goals for the coming school year. Are there areas they would like to improve in? Are there problems they would like to solve? What are both parent and child willing to do in order to accomplish these goals? These goals are written onto a sheet (see following page for an example of a goal-setting plan) and placed into a folder. Periodically, I have students review these sheets with me, and I will discuss the sheets at parent-teacher conferences as well as during occasional phone calls home. Students get a chance to reflect and write about how they are meeting their goals. Because parents also agree to help support their child's goals, we can also see how that process is going as well.

At the end of the year, students have the chance to see their individual progress toward a stated goal, as well as to evaluate the kind of support they received toward meeting it. I have found this to be an excellent exercise.

Middle/High School Teacher

Parent Information Letter *(see letter on page20)*

I drafted a letter to parents to summarize the methods I use in creating a positive learning atmosphere for my fifth-grade classroom. It is a blending of all I have learned in 23 years of teaching many grades and subjects, both here in Wisconsin and in rural upstate New York.

Elementary School Teacher

Parent-Teacher-Student Compact *(see form on page 21)*

Many teachers find it valuable to start the school year by having students, parents, and teacher read, agree to, and sign a "compact" that establishes clear expectations for responsibilities. The compact also sets the stage for positive, productive relationships to develop as the school year progresses.

Sample Form

Goal-Setting Plan by Parent, Teacher, and Student

Goal-Setting Plan Developed on: _____

For: _____ Reviewed on: _____
(Student's Name)

The purpose of goal setting is to assist with communication and planning the student's learning experiences.

1. Areas of demonstrated strength or ability. Things I am good at in school: _____

_____

2. Things I am good at outside of school: _____

_____

3. Things I would like to learn more about: _____

_____

4. I learn best when: _____

_____

Goals

Academic _____

Behavioral *(optional)* _____

To help me accomplish these goals

I will _____

_____

My parent(s) will _____

_____

My teacher(s) will _____

_____

The following agree by signature to support these goals

_____ _____
Student *Parent(s)*

_____ _____
School Representatives *School Representatives*

Sample Letter

Parent Information

In the interest of providing the best education possible for all children in my classroom, I thought I would share a few things with you. Please review these procedures for this classroom.

Discipline

☹ Say what I mean; mean what I say.
(I do my best to always follow through and be consistent. If I give in just once, children will try to manipulate me every time.)

☺ Catch them being good and be sure they know I noticed.
(Sometimes I change a child's negative behavior by ignoring it and rewarding someone else's positive behavior. Positive rewards: stickers, certificates, smiles, worker of the week parties, pat on the back, extra recess, food, stamp on hand or chart, anything I can think of to praise a child.)

I change children's negative behavior by removing them from the activity or group. We move desks when necessary. These consequences are preceded by the warning that I will do this if I have to speak to them again.

If I need to talk with students about their behavior, I do it at recess or in the hallway to eliminate the class audience and the attention children crave. Children who need attention will take negative attention over no attention. They have learned to "be bad" to "feel good."

Recess Detention

1. During this time (10:15-10:30; 11:25-11:55) students must be silent. They are to be in their seats working. This is not a social time.
2. If there is no classwork or homework to catch up, students should write answers to questions such as the following:
   - Why am I inside during recess?
   - What could I have done differently?
   - How will I remember to follow the classroom rules?

   (Writing the rules 5 or 10 times etc. is appropriate after they have answered this question.)
3. I use several different Behavior Improvement Plan sheets to document the time spent in Recess Detention.
4. If the above plan does not eliminate negative behaviors, I ask for your support in keeping your child after school. I am willing to stay until you are able to pick the child up.

Please feel free to discuss this with me at any time. I can be reached at school during school hours. Leave me a message and I will call you at my earliest opportunity.

Your Child's Teacher

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Sample Form

Parent-Teacher-Student Compact

We believe that all students, parents, and teachers come together with their own unique strengths. With shared responsibility in student learning at home and at school, these strengths emerge as the keys to student success. The purpose of the parent-teacher-student compact is to represent this partnership that reflects shared responsibility for improving student achievement.

All compacts will be reviewed, revised, and re-signed at least once a year by parents, students, and staff.

(School Name) _____

School Mission Statement

In an environment of shared decision making by children, staff, family and community, the mission of _____ is to ensure an extraordinary, child-centered education that empowers all children to reach their highest potential.

Parent Responsibilities

- ❑ Ask my child "What did you learn today?" on a daily basis.
- ❑ Ensure homework assignments are completed daily.
- ❑ Teach my child the value of discipline.
- ❑ Participate in at least one classroom or school activity.
- ❑ Attend two parent-teacher-student conferences per year.

Teacher Responsibilities

- ❑ Provide information about standards and assessment.
- ❑ Provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive learning environment.
- ❑ Maintain open lines of communication between parents, teachers, and students.
- ❑ Provide parents with information and techniques to help their child learn.
- ❑ Participate in two parent-teacher-student conferences per year.

Student Responsibilities

- ❑ Identify personal goals.
- ❑ Work toward achieving curricular expectations.
- ❑ Behave appropriately in class.
- ❑ Be responsible for transporting materials between home and school.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Teacher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Sample Form

Help Me Know Your Child

Date _____

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I invite you to share with me the talents, interests, and habits of your child, so that I may be prepared to teach in the best way possible. Feel free to write on the back of this page or to add pages if you need more room to write. Please share any concerns about your child so we can have a cooperative team approach to education. Call and let me know if you would like to visit our classroom or just to talk about your child. The best time to reach me during the day is from _____ a.m./p.m. to _____ a.m./p.m. at _____ (telephone) or at this email address: _____.

1. My child learns best by

2. Some things I do at home to help my child learn are

3. Right now my child's goal/dream is

4. You will know my child is having problems when

5. The thing my child likes best about school is

6. One difficulty my child has at school is

7. When my child is having difficulty learning something, I find it works best to

8. Questions I would like to discuss at a parent-teacher conference include

Please return this form to me by _____

Teacher _____

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Principals' Ideas That Work

The following strategies submitted by Wisconsin principals were excerpted from the DPI Classroom Management and Student Disipline Tool Kit.

School principals are charged with the significant responsibility of ensuring the educational success of all students by

- providing safe and learning-centered classrooms,
- effectively managing resources, organization, and operation of the school, and
- collaborating with families and community members to further students' best interests.

The key contribution a principal can make towards classroom management is to support staff members by nurturing the individual management styles of teachers, by offering assistance when needed, and by providing teachers the chance to learn and grow. Following, are some ways that one Wisconsin principal has fostered positive classroom management by encouraging teacher-family relationships.

What One Principal Expects of Teaching Staff

My expectations for teaching staff include the following:

- I ask teachers to become familiar with the neighborhood that our school is located in. I suggest that they walk around the neighborhood and drop into businesses and other gathering spots (like parks). If the area is not safe to walk around, I ask them to drive through the neighborhood and stop in stores.
- I make sure that teachers have a list of their students in advance. I expect that they will read through student files, especially those of special education students, to become familiar with their behavioral, medical, and academic concerns.
- I also ask that teachers become familiar with the ethnic, cultural, racial, socio-economic, and language backgrounds of their students. I have several resources for teachers to refer to. Sensitivity to differences is more than knowing when various observances are held.
- Although it is not required, I strongly encourage teachers to send home a welcome-to-my-class letter or call parents with the same message. This helps set a positive precedent for the rest of the year. Teachers who have followed this advice have reported a much easier working relationship with parents.
- New teachers are given our school handbook as well as a list of our school procedures. This helps cut down on the number of interruptions I receive from teachers wondering how to order books and materials, our referral procedure, and other policies.
- Likewise, all teachers receive training in curriculum guidelines, standards, and outcomes. They know what is expected of them for their subject and grade level, and they have time to figure out how to accomplish this in an interesting way.
- I get to know my entire staff and encourage them to get to know each other. I include interesting getting-to-know-you activities in staff meetings so that people feel like a team.
- I assign mentors to new teachers or teachers who are struggling with issues like classroom management. First, I talk with each person (both mentor and mentee) and explain that their relationship is a collaborative one. I help them design outcomes for their relationship. Over the years, this has been a powerful way to help teachers who are struggling with various skills.

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Good Nutrition and Classroom Management

Productive Partners for Children's Learning

By Julie Allington, MS,RD,CD
DPI nutrition education consultant

Can the quality of children's diet affect their behavior in the classroom? Yes! Studies have shown that the quality of children's diet affects their academic performance and in-school behavior.

For example, the Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project (CCHIP) examined the relationship between hunger and psychosocial functions of low-income, school-aged children. The study showed that virtually all behavioral, emotional and academic problems, especially aggression and anxiety, were more prevalent in hungry children. (Kleinman)

In a May 2002 report, the Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee reported that principals and teachers overwhelmingly observed an increase in learning readiness and student attention as a result of School Breakfast Program participation. About half of the principals observed an increase in socialization and improved student behavior, and half of the teachers observed improved student behavior among children who ate school breakfast. (Rosales, Janowski)

Another example is a three-year study in six Minnesota elementary schools which showed that children who ate school breakfast improved their math and reading test scores, were better-behaved, and attended school more often. (Minnesota Department of Children Families and Learning)

The Mission of Schools

Promoting healthy behaviors among students is an important part of schools' fundamental mission to provide young people with the knowledge and skills they need to become healthy and productive adults. Improving student health can increase students' capacity to learn, reduce absenteeism, and improve physical fitness and mental alertness.

Schools, under pressure to boost student achievement, will need to address the impact of a continued decline in the quality of children's diets. Parents, their children's first and most influential teachers, also need to be informed and proactive about the relationship between learning, behavior, and nutrition throughout their children's development.

What can parents and schools do to promote health, learning and classroom management through good nutrition?

Facts Parents Should Know

Breakfast is Important to Learning and Behavior

Children of all socioeconomic backgrounds come to school without breakfast or without adequate breakfasts. Some don't have time to eat. Others aren't hungry when they wake up. Many children of working parents, left to decide for themselves whether to eat breakfast, may choose a can of soda and a candy bar. Other children may eat an early breakfast and are hungry after a long bus ride to school. For some children, food simply isn't available at home.

Surveys on breakfast consumption completed by Wisconsin students showed that 10 percent of elementary students, 25 percent of middle school students, and 30 percent of high school students started school without breakfast. (Wisconsin Good Breakfast for Good Learning Campaign) Many other students come to school with an inadequate breakfast.

Studies show that nutritionally at-risk children who omit breakfast are especially likely to experience cognition and learning problems. Conversely, one landmark study that examined the effects of school breakfast on academic performance, showed that children who ate school breakfasts had significantly greater gains in overall standardized test scores and showed improvements in math, reading and vocabulary scores. In addition the 1,023 low-income third through fifth grade students participating in the study showed reduced rates of school absence and tardiness. (Meyres)

Obesity Presents Health Risks and Low Self-Esteem

Childhood obesity is recognized as a national epidemic. The prevalence of overweight among young people ages 6-17 years in the United States has more than doubled in the past 20 years, (National Center for Health Statistics) and that trend is continuing. Over 4.7 million, or 11 percent of youths ages 6-17 years are seriously overweight. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention[1])

As many as 30,000 children have Type 2 diabetes, a type of diabetes that was once almost entirely limited to adults. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention[2])

It is well-known that overweight in adults increases the risk for cardiovascular disease and premature death. A recent study in Pediatrics reported that more than one fourth of children, ages 5-10, had one or more

adverse cardiovascular disease risk factors. That number rose to nearly 61 percent among overweight children of the same age. Twenty-seven percent of overweight children had two or more risk factors. (Freedman)

The total costs of diseases associated with obesity have been estimated at almost $100 billion per year or approximately eight percent of the national health care budget. (Wolf)

The Health Risks of Inadequate Nutrients

Only two percent of children meet the recommendations of the Food Guide Pyramid. Fewer than 15 percent of school children eat the recommended servings of fruit.

Only 30 percent of school children consume the recommended milk servings on any given day (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) and only 19 percent of girls ages 9 to 19 meet the recommended intakes of calcium. (Healthy People 2010 and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) Between 1989-91 and 1994-95, the average milk consumption of children aged 2-17 dropped by 6% while the average consumption of soft drinks rose by 41%.

Osteoporosis is a growing concern. The American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition in 1999 concluded "that low calcium intakes may be an important risk factor for fractures in adolescents." (American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition)

The Link Between Physical Activity and Behavior

Nearly half of young people aged 12-21 do not engage in physical activity on a regular basis. Physical activity among adolescents is consistently related to higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of anxiety and stress.

Hunger is Among Us

An estimated four million American children experience prolonged periodic food insufficiency and hunger each year, representing eight percent of the children under the age of 12 in this country. Wisconsin also lays claim to disturbing statistics:

- Over 120,000 children in Wisconsin are underfed.
- Of all Wisconsin families with children under 12 years, 28% are reported to be hungry.
- USDA study indicates that 133,000 households (about 386,000 individuals) in Wisconsin are food insecure—that is 6.4% of the state's households.
- Second Harvest study found that 40% of state households that use emergency food programs have at least one working individual.
- Second Harvest study found the 39% of the individuals who use its emergency food programs are 18 years of age or less—17% of its users are elderly individuals aged 65 and over.

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Nutrition-Friendly Ideas for Parents

Start Your Child's Day With a Healthy Breakfast

◆ A nutritious breakfast can be as simple as a low-sugar cereal with fat free or 1% fat milk, juice and toast.

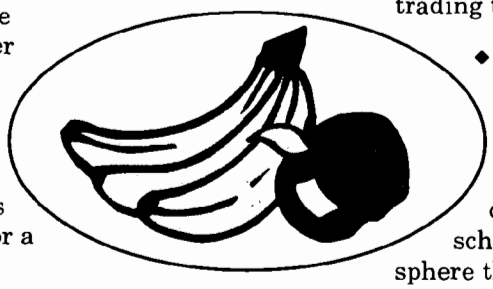
◆ Make breakfast fun by planning it with your child. Decide who prepares what and work together to get it done. If your child doesn't like traditional breakfast foods, don't worry—breakfast can be any food they like, even a slice of pizza.

◆ Parents should model healthy eating habits at the start of their day.

◆ If parents are not home when children get up for breakfast, be sure to have healthy choices available for them.

◆ Short on time? Keep quick-to-fix foods on hand or get breakfast foods ready the night before, such as mixing a pitcher of juice.

◆ If kids use the excuse of not being hungry, start them out with a light bite, perhaps juice or toast. Then send them off with a nutritious mid-morning snack: yogurt, cheese or a bagel.



◆ If a breakfast program is available at school, opt to have children eat there. Review the school breakfast menus and offer suggestions for nutritious items that your child will eat.

◆ If a breakfast program is not available at school, discuss having the school implement one with their school principal and school food service director.

If Children Purchase School Lunches

◆ Become familiar with the menu. Keep a current school lunch menu in your kitchen and go over the menu with your child. Talk with him or her about making choices in the cafeteria line and practice at home.

◆ Get involved. Join the parent advisory committee for the school food service program. If none exists, take charge and work with the school staff to set one up.

◆ Support nutrition education efforts at school. Find out what your child is learning, and try to apply those lessons at home.

If You Pack a Lunch for Your Child

◆ Be sure to include nutritious and safe foods, for example, frozen sandwiches (that will be thawed by lunch time and be at safe temperatures throughout the morning), raw veggies, crackers, string cheese, whole fruit and single-serve pudding are appealing foods that still supply good nutrition.

◆ Let children help plan and prepare school lunches. When they're involved, chances are they will resist trading their carrots for cookies.

◆ Ask the school to provide children with enough time and a pleasant eating environment to enjoy their meals. Children should be made to feel that eating a healthy lunch is considered an important part of the school day. Staff should create an atmosphere that discourages children from eating a few bites in order to rush outside to play. In fact, schools in which children go to recess before lunch find that children are calmer, hungrier, and eat more of their lunch, including vegetables, according to a 1996 study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association.*

Provide Healthy After-School Snacks

Carefully chosen, snacks promote good health and add pleasure to life. They can supply needed nutrients that can be missed in meal choices. Stock your refrigerator and cabinets with ready-to-go snacks: yogurt, cottage cheese, lean deli meats, fruit juice, milk, washed ready-to-eat fruits and vegetables, animal crackers, popcorn and cereal. Your child will appreciate the convenience of grabbing a quick healthy snack as a way to "re-fuel."

Nutrition-Friendly Practices for Schools

Nutrition Policy

School staff and parents should **adopt a coordinated school nutrition policy** that promotes healthy eating whenever food is provided in the school, including school lunch and breakfast programs, ala carte items, vending machines, school store, in-class snacks, class parties, fundraisers, etc. The policy should also ban the use of food as a reward for students. Most food rewards such as candy, chips or soda, are high in fat or sugar.

Role Modeling

Staff role modeling of healthy eating for lunch (and for breakfast, if a school breakfast is offered) is very important to help children develop healthy eating behaviors and understand the expectations.

Nutrition Education

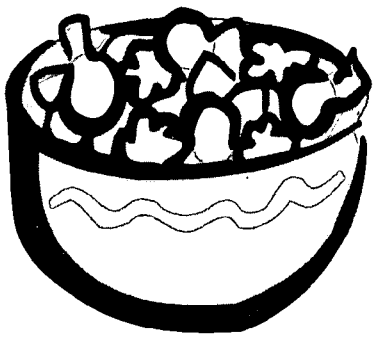
Schools should provide nutrition education at each grade level from Kindergarten through 12th grade. Parents should find out from their children's teacher(s) what is being taught and incorporate those same messages at home.

CDC Recommendations

Recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for schools to promote lifelong healthy eating habits include:

- Provide nutrition education through developmentally appropriate, culturally relevant, fun, participatory activities that involve social learning strategies.
- Coordinate school food service with nutrition education and with other components of the comprehensive school health program to reinforce messages on healthy eating.
- Provide staff involved in nutrition education with adequate pre-service and ongoing in-service training that focuses on teaching strategies for behavioral change.
- Involve family members and the community in supporting and reinforcing nutrition education.

A well-nourished child is a child ready to learn. Food nourishes at every age and stage in a child's life and proper nutrition is crucial for social, emotional, and psychological development. Teaching children how to eat well will give them a lifelong foundation for productive learning and healthy lifestyle choices.



Resources to Promote Good Nutrition

The following resources, and many others, are available from Julie Allington, DPI Nutrition Education Consultant, at 608-267-9120 or by email: julie.allington@dpi.state.wi.us:

1. Fact Sheet. *10 Steps for Parents: Healthy Eating at School/Make Physical Activity Easy*
2. 8-1/2" x 11" Poster. *Breakfast and Learning—Are they Connected?*
3. Information Card. *Smart Families Eat Breakfast*
4. Wisconsin Team Nutrition Website. www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/tn.html

Part 2

Standards of the Heart

What are Standards of the Heart?

Parents Can Promote Standards of the Heart at Home

Connecting Parents to Standards of the Heart

Sample "No Taunting" Pledge

A Resolution

Using Children's Literature to Teach Character

Putting the "Family" into Family Volunteering: Ways to Tweak What You Do

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What Are Standards of the Heart?

By Mary Kleusch, DPI character education consultant

A fundamental goal of public schools in the United States is to prepare youth to take an active and responsible role in their community and the republic. This means students must develop the character traits that enable them to recognize individual differences, acknowledge common bonds, and contribute to the greater good.

Standards of the heart is the term used in Wisconsin to describe the many efforts and programs schools carry out to foster positive character development.

Schools that cultivate standards of the heart are often described in many complimentary ways. Students and staff may say the school has a positive climate; parents may note it is an equitable place where diversity is valued and harassment and teasing are not tolerated. The community might observe that students and staff are often engaged in service to others. In reality, standards of the heart are all of these things and they add a new dimension to the idea of student achievement.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has identified seven ways that schools should strive to effectively promote standards of the heart. They are:

1. Promoting core values such as respect, responsibilty and honesty;
2. Creating a safe and orderly school environment;
3. Fostering family and community involvement;
4. Addressing societal issues that put youth at risk;
5. Developing positive relationships among and between youth and adults;
6. Engaging students' minds within and outside the classroom, and;
7. Establishing high expectations for behavior.

Parents Can Promote Standards of the Heart at Home

◆ Help children recognize when their behavior illustrates the values they learn at home and school. Use the core value terms to describe the positive behaviors your children demonstrate. For example, "Doing your homework without being told to was very responsible." Or, "Helping your brother tie his shoes was a caring thing to do."

◆ Use respectful names when referring to others.

◆ Help your children use peaceful methods to settle conflicts. Model those strategies when you have disagreements.

◆ Read and discuss stories that relate to standards of the heart. (See page 35 for book ideas)

◆ Take your children with you when you volunteer in the community and encourage them to contribute in ways appropriate to their ages. Talk about why you volunteer—the needs, the rewards, and the difference each person's contributions make. Encourage them to provide service to others.

◆ Intervene if you witness children teasing or name-calling.

◆ Encourage your children to write thank-you notes when they are given gifts or help from others.

◆ Support school policies that encourage positive behavior, such as athletic or co-curricular codes.

◆ When older children are invited to parties, phone an adult in that home to be sure an adult will be present and that the party will be alcohol-free.

Connecting Parents to Standards of the Heart

Seven Effective Practices

Some of the following practices that involve parents in developing and carrying out Standards of the Heart have been done by Wisconsin schools, and others are waiting to be tried. Below are parent-friendly practices for each of the seven characteristics of successful schools. The success of these school initiatives will increase with the sense of ownership everyone has in the effort.

To effectively involve parents and other family members, it's wise to

- Invite parents to be involved right from the start in major decisions about focus, direction, and goals;
- Communicate frequently to parents and the community issues, goals, measures to accomplish goals, how parents can offer feedback, and how everyone can volunteer or contribute in other ways to the effort;
- Measure results and set new goals by inviting comments from or surveying parents and community members.

1. Promoting Core Values

- Host a community forum to define the core values or character traits that families and school staff want to develop in youth. Use the Defining Core Values Exercise sheet on the following page to conduct a group process.
- Create self-addressed postcards for parents to use stating, "I saw my child (enact a core value)." Parents complete, sign, and return postcards to school.
- Have videos illustrating core values available for family viewing at no cost. Place them in the local grocery store, library, or other place frequented by families.

2. Creating a Safe and Orderly School Environment

- Offer a family workshop in which parents and children meet separately then together to learn constructive ways to settle differences and resolve conflicts.
- Ask families, students, and staff to contribute their ideas to creating and communicating a school "No Taunting" Pledge. *See the pledge on the next page.*

3. Fostering Family and Community Involvement

Create a Standards of the Heart Action Team with equal numbers of students, parents and school staff to evaluate where the school is doing well in helping students develop citizenship, where it could improve, establish goals what needs to be done, and gauge how families could be more involved. Develop a resolution to spell out the need.

4. Addressing Societal Issues that Put Youth at Risk

Create a Family Youth Service-Learning project to inject the curriculum, learning, and family involvement into a local issue.

5. Developing Positive Relationships Among Youth and Adults

Develop a "Character Trait of the Month" campaign to be supported and spread by families, and community organizations and businesses. Businesses can display signs promoting the Character Trait of the Month and the local newspaper can publicize ideas to help families develop positive citizenship attributes in children.

6. Engaging Students' Minds Inside and Outside of the Classroom

Ask students to brainstorm on how their school and community can become more caring places to help all children learn, grow, and become productive citizens. How do students want to be treated by each other? By adults? What can students do to promote positive relations with others? What can the school do? What can parents and community members do?

7. Establishing High Expectations for Behavior

- Develop a grade-level brochure for parents at the start of the year that communicates what developmentally-appropriate Standards of the Heart will be taught at school and how they can be carried out at home.
- Develop a student-teacher-parent contract that spells out how all children will be expected to do their best and respect others and themselves, and how they will be supported by the adults in their lives. At school open house or parent-teacher conferences, have students present the contracts to parents for all to sign.

Clearly, developing good character is primarily the responsibility of families. But it is also the shared responsibility of schools and communities. Inviting parents to work with schools and be informed about school-based efforts is essential to helping students build upon a foundation of citizenship.

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Sample "No Taunting" Pledge

No Taunting Pledge

I will pledge to be a part of the solution.

I will eliminate taunting from my own behavior.

I will encourage others to do the same.

I will do my part to make my community a safe place by being more sensitive to others.

I will set the example of a caring individual.

I will eliminate profanity towards others from my language.

I will not let my words or actions hurt others.

And

If others won't become part of the solution...

I will!

Contributed by Tomahahwk Elementary School, Tomahawk, Wisconsin

A Resolution that "We Care"

Whereas, the school is an important partner to families and the community in the development of good citizens;

Whereas, learning is enhanced for all when each student and staff person contributes to making the school a place where all feel cared for, respected, and included;

Whereas, the character and conduct of students reflects the values of the school;

Whereas, _____ School is committed to providing a safe environment conducive to learning; and

Whereas, we have high expectations for all students and staff, both academically and personally;

Therefore, be it resolved that _____ School embraces as part of its mission and goals the development of students as caring, contributing, productive, and responsible citizens.

Signed _____

_____

_____

_____

Date _____

37

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Using Children's Literature to Teach Character

Students become caring, productive, and responsible citizens as a result of their cumulative life experiences at home, at school, and in the community. Reading and language arts are natural avenues for teachers and parents to introduce, reinforce, and reflect on character development. Whether on their parents' laps or assembled in schools, children have always learned values and life's lessons through stories – the myths, fables, and songs—that each culture passes on through the generations.

In a school that has clearly identified the character traits it hopes to foster in students, and which has involved families in deciding and planning its efforts, integrating literature into the curriculum and learning at home can be a great way to help children:

- Improve reading and critical thinking skills.
- Learn about different types of literature, from short stories and plays to poems and epics.
- Learn about universal themes of literature such as love and duty, heroism, initiation, death and rebirth, and explain how these themes are developed in a particular story.
- Explore diversity in American culture and the cultures of the world.

Following, are excerpts of children's literature selections from the publication, *Teaching Character Education Using Children's Literature*, published by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Selections illustrating two of the Standards of the Heart–Developing Positive Relationships and Family and Community Involvement –are reproduced here.

The complete publication is available for purchase from DPI Publication Sales: 1-800-243-8782, or www.dpi.state.wi.us/pubsales.

Develop Positive Relationships

The books in this section deal with challenges and benefits of forming friendships of all kinds. Examples of cross cultural, intergenerational, and family relationships abound.

Pre-K to Grade 3

Bauer, Marion Dane. *When I Go Camping with Grandma.* Bridgewater, 1995. 32 pages (ages 3-6)

A young girl and her grandmother share special time together on a camping trip for just the two of them.

Grimes, Nikki. *Meet Danitra Brown.* Illustrated by Floyd Cooper. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1994. 32 pages (ages 5-8)

A celebration of friendship, this picture book volume of poetry describes the relationship between two young African American girls.

Mora, Pat. *Tomás and the Library Lady.* Illustrated by Raul Colón. Knopf, 1997. 32 pages (ages 5-8)

A young Latino boy, the child of migrant farmworkers, strikes up a special friendship with the librarian in the town where he and his family are spending the summer.

Pak, Soyung. *Dear Juno.* Illustrated by Susan Kathleen Hartung. Viking, 2000. 32 pages (ages 4-7)

A Korean American boy and his grandmother in Korea maintain a warm relationship through correspondence.

Perkins, Lynne Rae. *Home Lovely.* Greenwillow, 1995. 32 pages (ages 5-8)

Tiffany's efforts to beautify the trailer where she and her mother just moved are helped along by the mail carrier, who takes a special interest in Tiffany's work and helps her plant a garden.

Pirotta, Saviour. *Turtle Bay.* Illustrated by Nilesh Mistry. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1997. 24 pages (ages 5-8)

Two young Japanese children develop a friendship with an old man who helps them learn about the environment by assisting him when baby turtles hatch.

Reiser, Lynn. *Margaret and Margarita/Margarita y Margaret.* Greenwillow, 1993. 32 pages (ages 4-7)

Margaret speaks only English. Margarita speaks only Spanish. But when the two girls meet for the first time in a park they find ways to communicate and play and soon are sharing each other's language.

Waboose, Jan Bourdeau. *Morning on the Lake.* Illustrated by Karen Reczuch. Kids Can Press, 1998. 32 pages (ages 5-8)

An Ojibway boy spends a day in the company of Mishomis (grandfather) and learns about aspects of his culture and heritage as he observes the natural world.

Grades 4-6

Almond, David. *Skellig.* Delacorte, 1999. 182 pages (ages 9-13)

Michael finds a mysterious man taking refuge in his garage—a man with wings. Befriending Skellig, as the man calls himself, and the freespirited young girl next door, Michael learns to view the world as a place full of possibilities. These two friends help him deal with the tension and fear in his family surrounding the illness of his baby sister. This is a powerful, life-affirming story.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Bud, Not Buddy.* Delacorte, 1999. 245 pages (ages 8-13)

Orphaned Bud runs away from his latest foster family and sets off in search of his own family ties in a story set in Michigan during the Depression. The young African American boy is befriended by an older Black man who understands the dangers the boy faces and helps him find what he's looking for in a funny novel that deftly weaves social history into its plotline.

Cushman, Karen. *Matilda Bone.* Clarion, 2000. 167 pages (ages 9-13)

Self-righteous Matilda, who has lived the first 14 years of her life in a manor, is having a hard time adapting to her new life with Red Peg the Bonesetter, whose beliefs seem to be in conflict with everything Matilda was ever taught by the priest who helped raise her. But the tough, kind-hearted woman and her friends have much to teach Matilda about caring and compassion in the real world, as opposed to saintly ideals, in this novel set in a medieval English village. Cushman pairs another girl in medieval times with a woman whose influence on her life is lifechanging in *The Midwife's Apprentice* (Clarion, 1995).

Perkins, Lynne Rae. *All Alone in the Universe.* Greenwillow, 1999. 133 pages (ages 9-12)

When Debbie's best friend starts spending more time with another girl, Debbie is devastated. There is no one to blame in this book about growing apart, but as Debbie works through her feelings she eventually realizes that new friendships are waiting to be formed.

Sachar, Lous. *Holes.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998. 233 pages (ages 10-14)

A funny, satirical novel set in an over-the-top juvenile detention camp where teenager Stanley Yelnats has been sentenced, falsely accused and convicted of stealing a pair of sneakers. Stanley and the other boys are subject to the whims of the corrupt adults who run the camp, but the friendship Stanley forms with one of the other boys proves to have a deep and enduring power strong enough to make a difference in all of the teens' lives.

Family and Community Involvement

The books in this section feature stories in which individuals and families intersect with the larger community in meaningful ways or that exemplify different aspects of community services.

"Community" in this section embraces a wide range of definitions, including geographic proximity (for example, apartment building, neighborhood), social institutions (schools, social service agencies) as well as individuals and groups who are considered part of one's community of friends.

Pre-K to Grade 3

Best, Cari. *Three Cheers for Catherine the Great.* Illustrated by Giselle Potter. Melanie Kroupa Book/DK Ink, 1999. 32 pages (ages 4-8)

The community of family and neighbors is underscored in a story set in an earlier part of this century in an urban apartment building, where a young girl lives with her mother and Russian-born grandmother. For her grandmother's birthday, each person in the building has prepared a wonderful "no present"—a gesture or activity that can't be wrapped but comes from the heart.

Greenfield, Eloise. *Night on Neighborhood Street.* Illustrated by Jan Spivey Gilchrist. Dial, 1991. 26 pages (ages 3-9)

Seventeen marvelous, child-centered poems offer a glimpse into the lives of African-American children on a single night in their urban neighborhood in a celebratory tribute to African-American neighborhood and community.

Hughes, Shirley. *Tales of Trotter Street.* U.S. edition: Candlewick, 1997. 60 pages (ages 4-8)

A compilation of four of Hughes's appealing stories set in a diverse British neighborhood and centering on the children of several families who live there provide child-centered portraits of community.

Ormerod, Jan. *Who's Whose?* Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1998. 24 pages (ages 4-8)

In the lives of several busy families, children, adults, and even pets are part of an extended community of mutual support as babysitting, dog-walking, and other responsibilities are shared.

Rael, Elsa Okon. *What Zeesie Saw on Delancey Street.* Illustrated by Marjorie Priceman. Simon & Schuster, 1996. Unpaged (ages 5-8)

A young girl in an urban Jewish neighborhood in the first half of the 20th Century discovers that the weekly social gatherings in her neighborhood are also a way for members of her community to help one another when someone is in need.

Rathmann, Peggy. *Officer Buckle and Gloria.* Putnam, 1995. 32 pages (ages 3-8)

A police officer who specializes in safety education in the schools is upstaged by his canine companion in a hilarious picture book.

Williams, Vera B. *Scooter.* Greenwillow, 1993. 147 pages (ages 4-7 as a read-aloud; ages 8-10 as read alone)

Elana Rose Rosen and her mother have just moved, and the urban apartment building and neighborhood in which they live hold much promise for new friendships with people both young and old in a dynamic chapter book about family and community.

Woodtor, Dee Parmer. *Big Meeting.* Illustrated by Dolores Johnson. Atheneum, 1996. 34 pages (ages 3-8)

The community of extended family is the focus of this story about the family reunion of an African American family in the South.

Grades 4-6

Ancona, George. *Barrio: José's Neighborhood.* Harcourt Brace, 1998. 48 pages (ages 7-10)

This profile of a young Latino boy who lives in San Francisco's Mission District describes his life with his family, at school, and in the larger community and ways in which all three interconnect. The text is accompanied by Ancona's color photographs. Also available in Spanish as *Barrio: El barrio de José.*

Dolphin, Laurie. *Neve Shalom / Wahat Al-Salam: Oasis of Peace.* Photographs by Ben Dolphin. Scholastic, 1993. 48 pages (ages 7-10)

Two boys, one Arab Palestinian and the other Jewish, attend a remarkable school in a remarkable Israeli community where Jewish and Arab families are committed to living together in peace.

Taylor, Mildred D. *The Well: David's Story.* Dial, 1995. 92 pages (ages 9-14)

The author of the powerful Logan Family saga of stories about Cassie Logan and her family set in the South during and after the Depression (*Let the Circle Be Unbroken; Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry; The Road to Memphis)* goes back a generation to tell a story set in the early 1900s, when Cassie Logan's father David was a child. During a drought, the Logan family's well is the only one in their community that hasn't run dry. The African-American family shares willingly with both Blacks and Whites, a fact that just intensifies the hatred that some members of the white community have for the Logans—senseless hatred that David and his brother Hammer have a hard time understanding or swallowing.

Wolf, Bernard. *HIV Positive.* Dutton, 1997. 48 pages (ages 7-12)

Writer/photographer Bernard Wolf profiles an HIV-positive woman and her two young children, showing the impact of HIV on their lives and the support system of extended family and community services that helps sustain them.

Wolff, Virginia Euwer. *Bat 6.* Scholastic Press, 1998. 230 pages (ages 10-14)

Set on the West Coast in 1946, a story that builds to its climax during an annual softball game between the sixth grade girls from two communities considers collective truth and responsibility. On one team is a girl whose father was killed at Pearl Harbor; on the other is a Japanese American girl whose family was interned during the war. In the story, told in flashback from multiple points of view, the girls from both teams piece together events that led to an attack by the orphaned girl on the Japanese American child.

Grades 7-12

Cofer, Judith Ortiz. *An Island Like You: Stories of the Barrio.* Melanie Kroupa/Orchard, 1995. 165 pages (ages 12-16)

A series of interconnected short stories focuses on the lives of individual teenagers in a contemporary Puerto Rican American neighborhood, and on the neighborhood itself, where the lives, like the stories, are singular yet connected in deep and meaningful ways.

Fleischman, Paul. *Seedfolks.* Joanna Cotler Books/ HarperCollins, 1997. 69 pages (ages 9-13)

The transformation of a garbage-strewn lot into a garden also marks the start of the transformation of a rundown urban neighborhood into a true community. The racially and culturally diverse residents, who once viewed one another with suspicion and fear, begin to see themselves as allies and even friends in a story told from multiple points of view.

Myers, Walter Dean. *145th Street.* Delacorte, 2000. 151 pages (age 14 and older)

Interconnected short stories depict a wide range of individual characters and collectively paint a portrait of one Harlem neighborhood.

Nelson, Theresa. *Earthshine.* Orchard, 1994. 182 pages (ages 11-14)

A young girl and her father, who is dying of AIDS, get support from a wonderful circle of friends who comprise their extended family.

Taylor, Mildred D. *The Road to Memphis.* Dial, 1990. 290 pages (age 12 and older)

Cassie Logan and her brothers are teenagers who grew up in the segregated South during the Depression and are now leaving the community of family and friends that embraced them and the larger community of their town, in which many resented and even hated them because they were Black, to travel to Memphis. The teenagers must rely on all they have learned about survival—the lessons steeped in love and the lessons steeped in cruelty—to travel safely on the road that leads to their futures.

Tunnell, Michael O., and George W. Chilcoat. *Children of Topaz: The Story of a Japanese-American Internment Camp, Based on a Classroom Diary.* Holiday House, 1996. 74 pages (ages 8-14)

At Topaz, one of the internment camps set up by the U.S. government to imprison American citizens of Japanese descent during World War II, children maintain a sense of identify and community with the help of their families and their classroom community.

Walter, Mildred Pitts. *Suitcase.* Illustrated by Teresa Flavin. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1999. 107 pages (ages 7-10)

Xander is so tall that everyone expects him to play basketball, but he isn't very good at the game. In addition to his family, two supportive adults in Xander's life, an art teacher who encourages his love of drawing and an activity leader at the neighborhood center who encourages him to try another sport, help this African American boy begin to feel more comfortable with who he is.

See also: Core Values: *Be a Friend: Bloomability; Crash; Diving for the Moon; The Friends; Surviving Brick Johnson.* Safe School Environment: *Eagle Song.* Family and Community: *Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam.* Societal/Global Issues: *Oh, Freedom!*

Grades 7-12

Bauer, Joan. *Rules of the Road.* Putnam, 1998. 201 pages (ages 13-16)

Sixteen-year-old Jenna Boller is bright and witty but her self-esteem is rocky. When she is singled out by the aging owner of the shoe store chain for which she works as a sales clerk to act as chauffeur on a cross-country journey, Jenna must use everything she has ever learned about human nature to forge a relationship with the difficult and impressive older woman. In the process, Jenna forges a new understanding of her own strengths and character.

Mori, Kyoko. *One Bird.* Henry Holt, 1995. 242 pages (age 13 and older)

Fifteen-year-old Megumi feels unknown and unloved at home with her father and stepmother, but her friendship with an independent woman helps her see that her life is never without choices, and that she has the power to define the future in her own terms in this novel set in contemporary Japan.

Williams-Garcia, Rita. *Like Sisters on the Homefront.* Lodestar, 1995. 165 pages (ages 13-16)

Teenage mother Gayle has a lot of anger and resentment because her mother separated her from her boyfriend by sending her down south with her 7-month-old son to live with her aunt and uncle. But then she meets Great, her great-grandmother, who recognizes in this immature young African America woman so full of bravado and the need for belonging the next keeper of the family history. In that recognition Gayle begins to see herself with new eyes in this novel that also gives a stunningly realistic account of teenage sexuality.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This.* Delacorte, 1994. 115 pages (ages 11-14)

Marie, who is middle class and Black, is at first irritated and eventually intrigued by Lena, a poor white girl who wants to be friends with her. Despite the unlikelihood of their friendship in a town where distinctions of race, and especially class, mean everything, the two girls form a deep friendship in which each finds respite from the troubles in her life and the space to hold on to her childhood a little while longer.

See also: Core Values: *Habibi; Make Lemonade; Parallel Journeys; True Believer.* Safe School Environment: *Skin I'm In.* Family and Community: *Earthshine; Seedfolks.* Societal/Global Issues: *Pedro and Me.*

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Putting the "Family" into Family Volunteering

Ways to Tweak What You Do

Many schools encourage students to volunteer to cultivate citizenship, character, and compassion. Why not extend the boundaries of volunteering beyond school walls and encourage families to volunteer? Following, are some simple ideas schools can use to step into family volunteer efforts:

1. Ask volunteers if they will be bringing their family with them to projects.
2. Make a list of family-friendly volunteer opportunities.
3. Include photos of families in school newsletters, brochures, and handbooks.
4. Add family volunteer opportunities to existing programs or efforts.
5. Create a family volunteer workgroup or advisory committee.
6. Survey families about what volunteer opportunities they would like to participate in.
7. Create family volunteer projects that can be done offsite, like making cards for children in the hospital.
8. Involve families in reflecting on or evaluating volunteer experiences.
9. Ask families for ideas on how to reach other families.
10. Ask local companies and corporations to sponsor family volunteer opportunities.
11. Give a five-minute speech on family volunteering at your next Parents' Night.

Great Ways to Recognize Family Volunteers

1. Give away "volunteer gear," such as T-shirts, hats, or other simple incentives.
2. Provide certificates of appreciation to families.
3. Supply your volunteers with refreshments.
4. Give families gift certificates for items donated by local merchants.
5. Send thank you cards to families after volunteer events.
6. Hold a Family Celebration Day or a Family Picnic.
7. Add a Family Volunteer Award to your ongoing awards program or create family awards in different categories such as Most Enthusiastic Family, Hardest Working Family, or Friendliest Family.
8. Submit a newspaper article about your project with observations and comments from participating families.
9. Greet families by name at volunteer events.
10. Give family volunteers special nametags designating them as a Volunteer Family.
11. Publicly thank families in letters to the editor and newsletters.
12. Introduce families to community leaders.

Part 3

Youth Service-Learning

Youth Service-Learning and Parents: A Great Combination!

Youth Service-Learning in Wisconsin

Wisconsin Service-Learning 4-Point Test

Ways to Inform and Educate Parents about Youth Service-Learning

How Can Parents Be Involved in Service-Learning?

A Parent's Perspective on Service-Learning: An Open Letter to Teachers

Designated Dates for Service-Learning in 2002-03

Add Meaning to Learning: Move from "Community Service" to Service-Learning

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Youth Service-Learning and Parents A Great Combination!

Recognizing the value of parents and schools working together, more schools are involving parents in youth service-learning programs and projects from inception on. Studies show that children earn "better grades, have a better attitude toward school and higher aspirations if their parents are aware of what's happening in school and encourage their children." (Lynn 1994)

What is Youth Service-Learning?

Service-Learning

- is a teaching method that connects what students learn with valued service that benefits the community
- enables children to use and acquire skills and knowledge
- helps children to understand their world
- differs from community service by connecting the curriculum and classroom learning to service
- strengthens civic awareness and participation.

The Five Phases of Service-Learning

Teachers using service-learning will ask students to participate in five separate learning phases:

1. Students prepare as they read, interview, research resources, ask questions, develop new skills and civic awareness, and apply what they know to content areas of study. Students plan the service-learning activity.
2. Students act as they provide service or take civic action. Service could be making something for someone, improving a situation, or teaching.
3. Students reflect as they anticipate what will happen, as they participate in service, and as they consider what took place.
4. Students demonstrate their mastery of skills, insights, and results by, for example, reporting to community members, writing letters to local newspapers about issues of public concern, or developing future projects to benefit the community.
5. Students celebrate and are recognized for their accomplishments by the school community, usually as a final activity.

What Role Does Service-Learning Play in Improving Education?

Service-learning addresses not only "what" students learn, but "how" they learn it. It connects academic knowledge, skills, and concepts with accomplishing a purpose or meeting a need in the school or community.

Service-learning contributes to school improvement because it:

Is grounded in how learning occurs. Service-learning embodies the belief that knowledge is not merely transmitted from teacher to learner, but rather is gained by the learner through guided interaction with the environment.

Develops critical thinking skills. Service-learning asks students to reflect on their experiences and think critically by bringing disparate elements of experience together in meaningful ways, analyzing information for patterns and deeper meaning, and evaluating and judging that information.

Benefits all students. Service-learning supports and deepens the existing curriculum and aligns with state and national education standards already in place. No group gets singled out because every student can benefit.

Uses multiple intelligences. Service-learning and reflection address the multiple ways that students learn. For example, students working with residents of a senior center can read aloud to the seniors, engage them in physical exercise, or discuss historical events. Students can reflect on their experiences by creating a portfolio or journal, writing a song, or delivering a speech.

Makes real-world issues part of education. Service-learning students are presented with issues that cannot be neatly defined or solved and fosters development of problem-solving skills.

Service-learning also reinforces school improvement by

- developing workplace skills
- promoting equity
- fostering appreciation for cultural diversity, and
- promoting change in school culture.

Youth Service-Learning and Parents—A Great Combination! (Continued)

Identifying Parent Resources

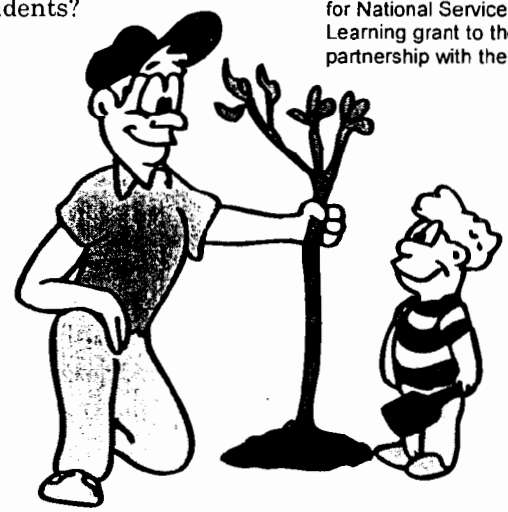
Service-learning offers a role for parents. Many teachers begin service-learning projects by identifying parent resources and asking students to develop parent surveys. Students can interview their own parents or the surveys can be conducted by parent volunteers.

Survey Questions

Parent survey questions may include:

- What are your hobbies or interests?
- What are several skills you use at home or work that you would enjoy sharing with students?
- Describe one of your talents.
- Have you been involved with youth programs and education?
- What are your concerns about our community?
- What are organizations that help in our community?
- Describe a service to the community that you were involved in, for example, helping a neighbor or working with an organization.
- In what ways do you help in our community?

Excerpts from *"Parent Involvement in Service-Learning,"* South Carolina Department of Education, 1998, prepared with funding from Corporation for National Service through a Fund for the Advancement of Service-Learning grant to the South Carolina Department of Education in partnership with the National Dropout Prevention Center.



Youth Service-Learning in Wisconsin

Learn and Serve America is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, which supports school and community-based efforts to involve K-12 students in the performance of worthwhile service activities within their communities. Learn and Serve America provides funds to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for statewide allocation. These dollars are distributed to the 12 cooperative educational service agencies (CESAs) to foster and grow service-learning programs within Wisconsin schools.

Each CESA awards mini-grants to schools that submit a qualified proposal for a community service project connected to the curriculum. The grants help defray the initial costs associated with starting a service-learning project or improve ongoing service-learning efforts.

Annually, more than 20,000 Wisconsin students contribute over 250,000 hours of community service through the Learn and Serve program. Contact your local CESA office for further information regarding Service-Learning opportunities and funding. For a comprehensive overview of the Service-Learning program in Wisconsin, refer to the DPI website: www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/slhmpage.html.

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Wisconsin Service-Learning 4-Point Test

Use the following questions to assess the quality of your service-learning project:

1. **Youth Leadership:** Do students identify community needs and the issue to be addressed? Is the service project student-planned and student-led?
2. **Community Need:** Does the service meet a real community need? How is the need identified? Who benefits from the service project? Will the community be a better place because of the project? Are local agencies, organizations or community groups partners in the project?
3. **Curricular Connection:** Is the service activity connected to classroom learning? How are learning outcomes determined and measured?
4. **Reflection and Evaluation:** Is there an opportunity for students to talk or write about the project before, during and after it happens? Are students involved in evaluating the project's success? How will the knowledge gained from this project be used in future planning?

Test created by Stan Potts
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Ways to Inform and Educate Parents About Youth Service-Learning

Include service-learning in your school's parent information plan. Review this checklist of ideas when developing your plan:

School Governance—Be sure the Partnership Action Team or other school governance group understands service-learning and the importance of gaining support from and participation of the school community. Your team should include administrators, staff, and parents to plan and develop service-learning.

Back to School Night—Schools see some of the largest parent turnout all year long at this event, which makes it an ideal time to introduce service-learning. The introduction can include students, teachers, and parents and a description of past accomplishments and future plans. If service-learning is not part of the back-to-school night overview, explain the specifics in individual classrooms.

Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences—Include children's reflective writings or preparation work in portfolios that parents view.

Newsletters—Ask parents, students, staff, and community members to contribute short articles about service-learning in action. Consider asking students to start a service-learning newsletter as part of a project involving parents.

Classroom Updates—Include service-learning news and plans in weekly classroom folders or letters home. Invite parents to participate and avoid education jargon!

Displays—Ask students and parents to help set up service-learning displays for other parents and community members to view at school and community events. Set up display tables and posters at entrances to sports events with information about community needs, organizations, or upcoming events.

A Service-Learning Demonstration or Event—Schedule a parent education program on the value of service-learning, highlighting skills and knowledge students have gained. School speakers can also include the principal and staff describing service rationale, and plans and need for support.

Family Service—Design ways for families to perform service together or for parents to experience service alongside their children or other children. First-hand knowledge of the value of service and learning opportunities builds excitement and enthusiasm for the program.

How Can Parents Be Involved in Service-Learning?

Tailor ideas in the following list to your needs or use them to generate more ideas. Some of the ideas can be done by older students with parent-partners as your service-learning project develops.

Serve as parent liaisons. Teachers can ask for service-learning "room parents" to help plan and coordinate parent activities and assistance. This can be done by a team of parents, ideally with some available during the day and others in the evening. Parents can identify and help coordinate tasks.

Brainstorm with teachers. A group of parents and teachers can meet to generate ideas about community needs, resource people, and ways to obtain supplies.

Work with students in groups. Parents can moderate student discussion groups during or after school to review project plans or practice skills such as interview techniques.

Contact community organizations. Parents and students can make calls or visits to identify organizations as resources and to learn how students can assist the organizations. Parents who have experience with local agencies may be especially helpful.

Document activities. Parents can help record in words, photos, and video the service-learning experience.

Assist in the classroom. Parent volunteers can help in class when various tasks need to be accomplished simultaneously, whether they include writing letters and preparing a performance, or making flyers and preparing displays.

Assist in service. Parents can be part of the actual service to help others. Although students should always be the primary service providers, adults can help with back-up, support, and tasks inappropriate for children to perform.

Coordinate family service opportunities. Form a committee of parents to identify and publicize family service opportunities. Use the school newsletter, website, voice mail system, and other notices to inform families about service opportunities.

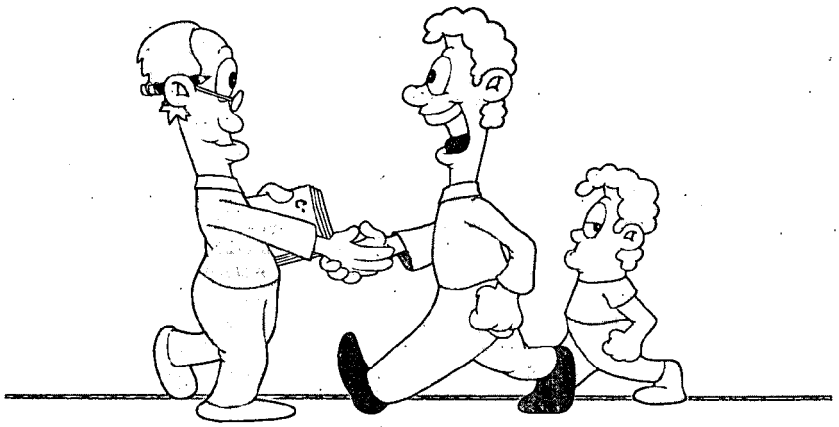
Reflection. Give parents a chance to share their experiences and insights, whether they have assisted with a project or have watched their child grow as a result of the project.

Help write grants.

Attend student exhibitions.

Attend conferences as school representatives. Many educators find that parents involved in service-learning become enthusiastic about its value for students and committed to furthering more opportunities. These parents often become "lead collaborators," communicating the benefits of service-learning to other parents and continuing the flow of parent participation.

On the curriculum side of service-learning, these parents may be very helpful in listening to students' concerns and in generating service ideas with strong curricular connections.



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A Parent's Perspective on Service-Learning

An Open Letter to Teachers

By Jane Grinde, Director, DPI Bright Beginnings/Family-School-Community Partnership Team

As a parent I would like to participate in a service-learning project with my children. Why? I like win-win situations, and I can see a service-learning project involving families as being a great opportunity for families to learn together.

Right now my life is full! My family is top priority. If I can do something with them that incorporates my "need-to's" with my "want-to's," then it's a win-win situation!

For instance, I need and want to spend time with my family. I need and want to know what my children are learning in school. I need to help them develop into good citizens and family members, and I want to socialize, learn, and make a difference in my community.

A service-learning project connected to the curriculum that also gives me a chance to serve my community will almost certainly guarantee my participation. As a result, I will be better-informed about my children's school and more supportive of my children's teachers.

Starting a Project

A family service-learning project gets started when someone with an understanding of service-learning takes the lead. It can be a parent or student, but more likely it will be the teacher.

As a parent, I can certainly make first contact with the teacher, or even the principal, but if neither has a clue as to what service-learning is, I will have to sell someone on the idea. How do I do that? I can give them information from the DPI web-site, which links to other Service-Learning sites (www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/slhmpage.html).

I might also check to see if anyone in the school is familiar with service-learning. If I find someone, my job will be easier because that person can help me promote the idea.

What else can I do to get things started?

- Provide the teacher(s) with lots of good information. Again, the DPI web site is good place because it includes links to other sites, including research information on the value of service-learning.
- Offer to work with a teacher on a project and help obtain funds. A request for proposal (RFP) for the Learn and Serve America grant can be obtained from DPI. This contains an application blank for a federal grant to help fund a service-learning project.
- Make a connection with the Do Something Foundation through its Wisconsin representative, Teri Dary (tdary@dosomething.org), to learn how to join a pilot project.

Expanding the 4-Point Test

One of the main reasons I am interested in promoting service-learning is that it offers relevancy. Children learn in different ways, but we know that the more engaged they are in the learning process, the more they learn. Service-learning provides meaningful, hands-on learning. Not only will students benefit through knowledge gained, but also in ways that will help them become good citizens. The "4-Point Test" guides the development of quality service-learning.

Developed by DPI Community Education Consultant Stan Potts, the test provides a framework. I added a family perspective to it to serve as a guide to a team of parents, students, and teachers in developing a high-quality service-learning experience:

1. Are students involved in the planning of the project? Are family members and community representatives (organizations, agencies, and groups) partners in the project? In what ways?
2. Does the service meet a real community need? How was the need determined? Who benefits from the service? Are students and their families part of the benefit equation?
3. Is the activity connected to classroom learning and the curriculum? What about after-school projects? Are families invited to participate? What provisions are available for families who aren't able to participate to learn about the project?
4. Is there an opportunity for students to reflect on the experience? Do students talk or write about what happened? Do they share their experiences with their families? How are students involved in the evaluation of the project and in planning for the next project?

I hope that this personal essay is soon outdated—that family participation in service-learning becomes the norm rather than the unusual. To get the ball rolling, DPI is collecting stories of family service-learning projects in schools. Please send your ideas to me at jane.grinde@dpi.state.wi.us or to Jane Grinde, DPI, P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707. I look forward to hearing from you!

Designated Dates for Service-Learning in 2003-2004

April 11-13, 2003: National Youth Service Days

National Youth Service Day is the largest service event in the world, engaging millions of young Americans and focusing national attention on the amazing leadership of young people. The day is also an opportunity to recruit the next generation of volunteers while promoting the benefits of youth service to the American public.

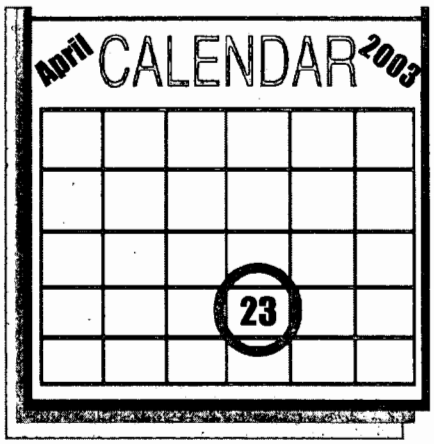
www.ysa.org/nysd

April 23-26, 2003: 14th Annual National Service-Learning Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota

"Weaving the Fabric of Community: A Celebration of Service-Learning." The Conference will be held at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

The National Service-Learning Conference highlights and promotes service-learning as a way of teaching and learning that builds academic and citizenship skills while renewing communities. It is the only major national education conference that provides service-learning professional development to a diverse audience of K-16 educators, administrators, pre-service teacher education staff and faculty, researchers, policy makers, youth leaders, parents, program coordinators, national service members, community-based organization staffs, and corporate and foundation officers.

For more information see http://www.nylc.org



April 27-May 3, 2003: National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week is a time to recognize and celebrate the efforts of volunteers at the local, state and national levels. It began in 1974 when President Richard Nixon signed an executive order establishing the week as an annual celebration of volunteering. Every President since has signed a proclamation promoting National Volunteer Week. Additionally, governors, mayors and other elected officials make public statements and sign proclamations in support of National Volunteer Week.

www.pointsoflight.org/programs/

November 23-29, 2003: National Family Week

National Family Week, organized by the Alliance for Children and Families, is an annual event recognized each Thanksgiving week that celebrates the family and its value to society.

www.nationalfamilyweek.org

January 19, 2004: Martin Luther King Day of Service

The purpose of the Martin Luther King, Jr. – A Day On, Not a Day Off—Celebration is to educate, motivate, and empower youth to successfully implement a community service project in their prospective communities. Youth participants spend Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service-Learning about such issues as hunger, peace and non-violence, diversity appreciation, and literacy.

www.mlkday.org

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Add Meaning to Learning

Move from "Community Service" to Service-Learning

Time-starved teachers and administrators may be tempted to launch a few community service activities in a desperate search for ways to involve middle and high school students in community life. This article is intended to encourage schools to upscale "community service" into a service-learning experience, generally regarded as more meaningful and of more lasting benefit to students.

What's the Difference?

Community service is a form of volunteerism that does not have any intentional tie to learning; the emphasis is strictly on the service and meeting the identified community need.

In contrast, service-learning is a teaching strategy that enriches learning by engaging students in meaningful service to their schools or communities by carefully integrating established curricula. Service-learning is distinct from community service in that it focuses on the benefits for both the learner and the recipients of the service.

Community service usually is meaningful service but does not contain, in a thoughtful and recognized manner, the connections to learning or reflection. If planned by adults, it usually does not invoke youth voice, assessment, or evaluation.

Common to all definitions of service-learning are four defining characteristics. In other words, if these four defining characteristics are not present, then technically, it's not service-learning. These four defining characteristics are:

1. Clear learning objectives
2. Genuine community need
3. Systematic reflection
4. Youth voice.

There are other essential elements that contribute to high-quality service-learning practice, such as strong partnerships and celebration, but at its core, service-learning is defined by these four characteristics.

Comparing a Community Service Activity to a Service-Learning Activity

An example of a community service activity versus a service-learning activity follows:

Community service: In order to instill a sense of community for a local youth group, students decide to adopt a park. They take a trip every other Saturday to a local park where they pick up trash, plant trees around the creek, and remove invasive ivy and blackberry bushes.

Service-learning: In an environmental club, the teacher asks students to think about issues that affect the future of their community. Students phone the local university and the city Parks and Recreation Department to set up a discussion about environmental issues facing their community. Together, they decide that cleaning and restoring the watershed at a nearby creek is crucial to frog and bird habitats. Club members research previous restoration efforts, and bring in environmentalists to discuss what makes a healthy watershed. Students develop a work plan and set out to clean and restore five miles on either side of the creek. They learn which plants are invasive, and plant native plants. They develop flyers and hold a town meeting to discuss with creek-side residents the effects of oil changes and using pesticides on their lawn to the watershed and animal species.

Crossing the Bridge from Community Service to Service-Learning

An example of enhancing a community service activity to become a service-learning activity follows:

Meaningful service to the community: Assisting older adults to get to the voting booth.

Clear connection between course objectives and service activities: The services provided in a service-learning program must enhance course content, so students should not be asked to provide community service without making a clear connection to the course. Examples of curricular areas that may be enhanced through the above community service project include social studies, through studying the background of voting in this country, and math, by graphing the percentages of folk voting in local elections versus the general population for past years. Other curricular areas could be enhanced through reflection activities below.

Structured opportunities for reflection: Students need opportunities to reflect on how to relate their community service experience to course content.

Pre-reflection discussion: Is voting important? Write ads and/or flyers for distribution to elderly or local residents urging them to vote. Make a presentation to the Commission on Aging on your project. Also consider journal entries, drawings, essays, and small and large-group discussions. These methods and more can be used to synthesize and relate learning to the community service.

Student assessment: Grade the reflection activities and discussions.

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