

Resource Materials on S-F-C Partnerships

Ten Talks series by Dominic Cappello helps parents deal with social issues affecting young people. Each book offers a series of ten easy-to manage talks that can be adapted for all kinds of families.

Ten Talks Parents Must have With Their Children about Sex and Character, offers advice to parents on how to begin and what to say - not just about sex, but about health, development, character and relationships.

Ten Talks Parents Must Have With Their Children About Drugs & Choices, discusses how to talk to children about drugs and when to start. It also offers advice on dealing with peer pressure, mixed messages in the media and helpful tips from other families.

Ten Talks Parents Must Have With Their Children About Violence, presents advice on speaking with children about bullying, harassment and school violence.

Connect For Success: Building a Teacher, Parent, Teen Alliance, a new toolkit from Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., is designed to help new teachers, especially those in high-poverty middle and high school schools, build parent partnerships. The toolkit offers strategies to overcome barriers to parental involvement, establish two-way communication, and use partnerships to improve students' academic achievement.

Strengthening Parental Involvement in Middle and High Schools: Cultivating Communication and Connections is an online guide for educators, counselors and parents by Sue Blaney. The report offers data, advice and solutions for forming partnerships and promotes home-school communication. It is available at www.pleasestoptherollercoaster.com/Strenghtening-Parental-Involvement-HL-r1.pdf.

Resiliency in Schools: Making It Happen for Students and Educators: In this updated edition, Nan Henderson and Mike M. Milstein offer scores of new resources as well as an action plan schools can use right now to build resilience in students and staff.

Available at the SERC Library. The SERC Library, a centralized resource collection for education professionals, families and community members, is open to the public. The SERC Library houses an extensive collection of books, journals, videos and other materials available for loan at no cost on topics related to general education as well as special needs, at-risk and diverse learners. The library, at 25 Industrial Park Rd., Middletown, CT, 06457, is open Monday through Saturday. Further information is available at (860) 632-1485 or on the web at www.ctserc.org.

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SPRING 2005

Resilient Youth: Protective Factors in School, Family and Community

Why is it that some youth succeed in life despite great odds? Why do some teens “bounce back” when others do not? “Resilient” is the term prevention researchers use to describe these young people. Resilient youth are said to have “assets” that act as protective factors to support and encourage healthy development, and help teens avoid negative behaviors like dropping out of school, using alcohol or other drugs, teen pregnancy, and incarceration.

The growing body of research in resiliency indicates that even severely at-risk youngsters can develop into confident, competent and caring adults if families, communities and schools define important assets and partner on strategies to promote resiliency.

Resiliency-Building Partnerships

Promoting youth resilience is best begun in the early grades before students are pressured to

engage in risky behaviors. These efforts should continue through adolescence. Schools, families and communities that support resilient youth tend to have three common characteristics: caring and supportive relationships, positive and high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation.

Protective Factors in Schools: A supportive and respectful environment within the school, opportunities for before and after-school activities, an inviting atmosphere for parents and community as well as participation, and a climate of connectedness.

Protective Factors in Families: Positive role models, parental involvement in school, monitoring of out-of-school time, positive communication within the family, respectful and consistent rules and consequences, and spending time together.

Protective Factors in Communities: Effective prevention policies, positive and clear community norms and values, a view of youth as resources, and opportunities for young people to make positive contributions and gain a sense of connectedness to the community.

True or False Quiz/Connecting with Teens

Most teens turn to their parents for advice.

True: 78% of teens say in times of need they first turn to their parents. There is a drop-off as children get older: 90% of 12 and 13-year olds say they rely on parental advice.

“Not having enough time together” with their parents is a top concern among teenagers today.

True: Family time is tied with education for first place on teens' list of concerns.

Teens have enough after-school activities in their communities.

False: 52% of teens say they wish they had more after-school activities in their community, and 62% of unsupervised teens say they would participate in after-school programs if they were available.

When teens participate in after-school programs they avoid risky behavior and do better in school. Teens that don't participate in after-school activities are five times more likely to be “D” students, three times more likely to use drugs, and twice as likely to get into a fight at school.

Sources: Talking With Teens: The YMCA Parent and Teen Survey Final Report and After School for America's Teens: A National Survey of Teen Attitudes and Behaviors. Both available at www.ymca.net.

Result: Youth develop a sense of purpose and meaningful goals, communication skills, conflict resolution and problem solving skills, personal responsibility, coping and stress reduction strategies, and empathy toward others. These protective factors enable teens to succeed in challenging times and sustain them into adulthood.

For more information on resiliency and developing assets, visit the SEARCH Institute at www.search-institute.org



CT School-Family-Community Partnerships, a project of the State Department of Education, helps educators, parents and community members develop partnerships by providing training and resources that promote effective local policies and practices, and increase public awareness of the positive impact of school-family-community partnerships on student learning.

Project Partners:
Connecticut State Department of Education, CREC, CT Parents Plus at The United Way of Connecticut, & SERC

Teens, Parents and Teachers Listening and Building Respect

The key to a partnership between students, parents, and educators is more than just giving everyone a chance to speak. It's also about everyone listening. "Listening to each other" has been instrumental in the long-running success of the greater **New London area's Community Coalition for Children.**

For a decade now, the Coalition has organized an annual program that encourages interaction among parents, students and teachers. The program includes a high profile speaker in the evening with practical workshops oriented toward students the following day.

Last fall, the theme was "Yes, Your Teen is Crazy! Loving Your Kid Without Losing Your Mind." Nearly 800 people attended the opening night talk by author and expert on adolescent behavior, Dr. Michael Bradley at the Garde Arts Center. Bradley, citing surveys, said that just 20% of parents feel their teens respect them, but 80% of teenagers say they respect their parents. Said Bradley, if families were connecting and communicating, "maybe they would feel differently."

Follow-up workshops the next day gave 150 students, parents and teachers a chance to talk with Dr. Bradley and listen to each other's perspectives. More communication at home is what the teens said is necessary. Listening translates into respect, and for many of those on hand, adults and youth alike, respect is the key. "It's important that it's a two-way street," one mother said, echoing the teens' sentiments.

Larry Roberts, principal of East Lyme High School, and a part of the original group which began the Coalition, said the goal has been to "help families and teens connect." He attributes this success to a community-wide focus on building partnerships between families and schools. Roberts said the Coalition, which includes about 25 schools and organizations from throughout southeastern Connecticut, now has a spin-off group focused on middle school.

For more information: Larry Roberts, East Lyme High School 860.739.6946

High School Outreach Makes a Difference in Family Involvement

Researchers and practitioners tell us that parent involvement declines from elementary to middle school, and again at high school. The reasons for the decline include children's growing need for independence, parents' uncertainty about how to help with increasingly difficult subject matter, and the complex organization of high schools.

But what this fails to take into account is that parent involvement looks different at the high school level. For example, parents contribute to teenagers' success when they monitor out-of-school activities, discuss post-high school plans, and watch teenagers' progress in school. Parents say, though, that they receive little information about how to perform this role.

With this broader view, there are many opportunities for schools to partner with families in the high school years. Research has found that, regardless of family background, when high schools reach out to families in planned and specific ways, family involvement increases.

When high schools...	Parents are more likely to...
Contact parents about teens' plans after high school	Attend college and career-planning workshops and talk with teens about college and careers
Give parents information about how to help teens study	Work with their teens on homework
Contact parents about their teen's academic program and course selection	Talk with their teens about school-related issues
Formally recruit and train parent volunteers	Volunteer for the school

Source: Predictors and Effects of Family Involvement in High School in School, Family, and Community Partnerships by J.L. Epstein et al., Corwin Press, 2002.

Student Leaders Advance School-Family Partnerships

The Cromwell Awareness Youth Action Council (CAYAC) is a model of a partnership that brings students and parents together with the high school.

Now in its fourth year, CAYAC continues to grow and recently hosted a forum for students, parents and educators that attracted 350 people. That forum examined the hard truths about the decisions young people make and the consequences of those decisions. The success of the event was due to the student members of CAYAC, who organized and promoted it and got parents involved. Parents said that the CAYAC forums offer an important opportunity for candid communication with both the young people and the school.

CAYAC began with a grant from the Middlesex County Substance Abuse Action Council. From the original eight students, the anti-drug, anti-drinking, anti-tobacco coalition now counts 28 student leaders as members. Jim Horton is a teacher at Cromwell High School and the CAYAC advisor. Horton has organized and cultivated numerous school-student-family partnerships in his 33 years as an educator. "I'm a big believer in youth leadership," Horton said. "If you put leadership in the hands of kids, you can let them run with it. I try to cultivate it."

While the students represent every class at the high school, Horton is very pleased that the group has now begun to branch out to the middle school level, holding two sessions on tobacco use prevention for fifth through eighth graders.

For more information: Jim Horton at Cromwell High School (860) 632-4841 x1822.

Planning for Life Beyond High School: Partnerships Pay Off

Over 80% of eighth graders expect to attend college. In order to get there though, a team approach, with families, schools and students, is crucial to making good decisions about college and life after high school. This approach should begin in middle school.

Without a collaborative approach, the decision about which college to attend, or even whether to go to college, is often flawed, based on misinformation, limited personal experiences and in many cases, a rush to meet application deadlines. Far more effective is school districts taking a purposeful, systematic approach to involving parents in the process of post-secondary education planning.

The process begins by involving middle school parents in post-high school planning. The school's role is critical because parents often lack timely, accurate information needed to guide the child's decision.

There are four key areas in which the partnerships can begin in the middle school years.

- *Academic preparation.* Schools should educate parents on the relationship between middle school course selection and post-secondary opportunities and career options.
- *Assessing information.* Schools can share results of tests and classroom assessments with students and parents, explaining how the results can be used to help with educational planning.
- *College planning and post-secondary training.* Schools can assist parents in understanding and evaluating the options available to students such as four-year or two-year degree programs, public or private colleges and universities, or trade schools. Schools can also help with application procedures and deadlines.
- *Financial aid.* As costs for college and other training programs increase, parents are overwhelmed by options and procedures. A closer partnership between the school, the parent and the student can help families access information about financial aid, application procedures and deadlines.

Results: In schools that take the "active" team approach – where teachers and counselors work closely with parents and students on goals outlined above – more students actually attend college, including students in urban high schools serving low income minority families and students. This active involvement yields another larger benefit. It helps to reverse declining parental involvement in middle school.

For more information: Schools Involving Parents in Early Postsecondary Planning, ACT Policy Report. Available at: www.act.org/research/policy/pdf/involve_parents.pdf

As kids reach adolescence, they need more than ever for us to watch over them.... Adolescence is not about letting go. It's about hanging on during a very bumpy ride.

Ron Taffel, author, child and family therapist