



FAMILY TOOLS

Module 6

**Collaborating with
the Community**

Collaborating with the Community

*“Una mano lava a la otra
y las dos lavan la cara.”*

*“One hand washes the other,
and both wash the face.”
(collaboration is key).*

-Spanish Dicho



Overview

This module will provide families with tools to measure and improve school-family-community collaboration. It will also provide suggestions on how to work more effectively with the school to access community resources which enhance student learning by:

- establishing strong communication with the school and community;
- developing strategies to access resources and strengthen partnerships in the school and community;
- using knowledge and insights from community members to enhance learning;
- creating partnerships for life-long learning; and
- assisting students to explore and become contributors to their community.



Research Link

The benefits of community-home-school collaborations are profound and wide ranging. Effective school, family and community partnerships can provide benefits for students, parents, educators and the community.

Results for Students:

- Increase in skills and talents from enriched curricular and extracurricular activities
- Development of positive relationships with adults
- Development of a sense of value and belonging to the community
- Realization of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle

Results for Families:

- Gain in an awareness of the community’s contributions to the school
- Develop a sense of connection with other families in the community
- Gain in knowledge of and use local resources to obtain services, improve skills or both

Results for Teacher and Administrators:

- Gain in involvement in the social and community service referral process for families
- Development of skills for working with business partners, community, volunteers and mentors
- Gain in knowledge and use of community resources to enrich classroom instruction

Results for Community Agencies, Organizations and Businesses:

- Gain in improved access to school resources
- Formation of connections between businesses and future employees
- Gain in a greater sense of purpose by sharing strengths and wisdom with students



Practices to Improve Community Collaboration

- Find and use information on community resources and organizations.
- Make local agencies and businesses aware of what is happening at your school.
- Ask local businesses to make donations and support school programs.
- Help organize and/or participate in community health fairs.
- Encourage and help facilitate your child's participation in community service.
- Be a role model: provide a healthy environment and be active in community service yourself and together with your child.



New Mexico Teacher Competencies

Getting better at what we do requires extra effort and help. For teachers, this means participating in professional development that helps them reach to a new level of teaching. Improving teacher quality through professional development improves learning for all children.

New Mexico teachers are required to meet nine teacher competencies. The *New Mexico 3-Tiered Licensure System* provides the framework for documenting teacher qualifications. The *No Child Left Behind Federal Act* requires that teachers who teach the core academic subjects and special education must be “highly qualified” as defined by the New Mexico Public Education Department.

The competency areas for Level III (Master Teacher) relevant to collaboration with the community are listed below.

- Teachers use community resources, service agencies, other school personnel, parents and community members to help teach students whenever possible;
- Teachers work with local businesses, industries, libraries, parks, museums and other organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning; and
- Teachers involve families in locating and using community resources.



Parent/Family Reflection on Community Collaboration

Use this checklist to rate the school in the area of school-home-community collaboration. Think about specific questions and actions you can take to improve community collaboration.

	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Specific questions to ask at school	Actions to take to improve community collaboration
I help distribute information regarding cultural, recreational, academic, health, social and other resources that serve families within the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I have helped to create partnerships with local businesses and community organizations to enhance student learning and skill development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I contribute to the development of after-school, summer and community education that utilizes the school facility.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I encourage partnerships that provide integrated services and help to meet the needs of students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
I help facilitate education and service-related activities that support student interactions and contributions to community development and well being.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		



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Resources



Resource 1

Worth a Click

<p>Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Youth Entrepreneurship Awareness http://www.kauffman.org/entrepreneurship.cfm This web site offers information and resources to support youth entrepreneurship.</p>
<p>The Foxfire Fund http://www.foxfire.org Foxfire (The Foxfire Fund, Inc.) is a not-for-profit, educational and literary organization. The organization promotes a sense of place and appreciation of local people, community and culture.</p>
<p>National Council of La Raza http://www.nclr.org/ This organization is a national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization that works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans.</p>
<p>National Hispanic Cultural Center http://www.nhccnm.org/ The National Hispanic Cultural Center (NHCC) is dedicated to the study, advancement and presentation of Hispanic culture, arts and humanities.</p>
<p>National Native American Families Together Center http://www.nativefamilynetwork.com/ This site details an outreach program to increase partnerships between Native American Families and the professionals who serve Native American children.</p>
<p>Navajo Nation Chapters http://www.nndcd.org/chapters.html A listing of Chapters serving the Navajo Nation is included on this site.</p>
<p>Rural School and Community Trust http://www.ruraledu.org The Rural Trust provides a variety of services to increase the capacity of rural schools, teachers, young people and communities to develop and implement high education.</p>
<p>The Smithsonian Folk Life and Oral History Interviewing Guide by Majorie Hunt http://www.folklife.si.edu The Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage promotes the understanding of diverse cultures in the United States and around the world. The Center produces the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, exhibitions, documentary films and videos, publications and educational materials.</p>
<p>Tribal Departments of Education http://www.ped.state.nm.us/indian.ed/tde.htm A listing of all the tribal education agencies serving New Mexico is included in this site.</p>



Resource 2

Out-of-School Learning Opportunities

Local communities offer many learning opportunities that are often free or inexpensive. Use the following ideas to plan activities that support your children as learners and members of the community.

What does it take to grow? Teach cause-and-effect relationships. Use two similar, healthy plants. Ask your child to water one plant and ignore the other for a week or two. Keep both plants in the same place. What happens? Inspect animals and insects found near your home. Ask your child to watch them and record their behavior. Check out library books and movies to learn more about plants and insects.

Let your voice be heard. Promote good citizenship by helping your child write letters to the editors of local newspapers about issues affecting children. For example, suggest a bike path be built near the school or that a city event be planned for children. Children are citizens and their ideas are worth sharing.

History time line. Record history at home. Stretch a roll of paper along the floor. Use a ruler to make a line about three feet long. Ask your child to fill in the important dates in his or her own life, starting with the child's birth. Family members familiar with family history could fill in other major dates. Display the finished time line in a special place for all to see and to add to as major events occur.

The foreign touch. Travel overseas at home. Visit ethnic shops, food stores and restaurants in your community. Using a map, have your child find the different countries you might "visit". Encourage your child to talk and write about what he or she might see. Check out library books and films about the countries, including cookbooks and books on how to make arts and crafts from the different places.

On the move. Sharpen math skills on trips. Use even short trips around town. For example, at the gas station, ask your child how much gas you needed and the cost per gallon. On the highway, ask your child to read the signs and check the different speed limits. Then ask the child to watch the speedometer readings and notice how fast or slow the car is going. Have your child estimate distances between cities and check the estimates on a road map.

A trip to the supermarket. Ask your child to choose a dish to prepare for a meal, such as a pudding, a salad or a sandwich. Have your child check to see what supplies are on hand, and make a shopping list. First, let your child decide which items are the best buys and make selections. Next, have your child write the price of each item on the list, and if possible, figure the total. Afterward, the child can check the prices against the sales receipt.

Community smarts. Gather maps and schedules to a special place in your area—a zoo, a museum or a baseball stadium. Let your child plan a trip for friends or family. Determine the travel time required, the cost and the best time to make the trip. This puts the child's reading and math skills to practical use.

Camps. Whether choosing an overnight or day camp, keep in mind your children's interests. 4-H, YMCA, schools, churches and civic organizations often have camping opportunities that focus on building skills and talents or are geared toward specific subjects, such as environmental camps.

Classes. Swimming, art, karate, cooking and foreign languages are just a few of many programs you may find. Often, libraries have special programs at low or no cost for children of all ages.

Recreational activities. Local parks departments may sponsor organized sports activities. Soccer, baseball and basketball are just a few sports sometimes offered. Ask for a schedule of events.

Arts and entertainment. Local arts councils often sponsor plays, concerts and “arts in the park” activities to promote cultural awareness.

Tourism promotions. Contact your local tourism commission. Find out what points of interest are promoted in your area, and obtain a schedule of season highlights. Many state parks offer free entertainment and activities during tourist seasons. Visit local historical attractions and check out the history of your area. Often there are tours, festivals and programs celebrating historical events.

Visit the library and get online. In addition to printed materials, libraries often lend audiotapes and videocassettes of books and movies, and most libraries have computers available for public use. Many libraries also offer special programs after school and during school vacations.

Local parks and museums. Local parks, museums and businesses can offer a wide range of activities and special events that are of interest to children, youth and families. Check to see what is offered in or near your community.

Tour local businesses. Many businesses such as bakeries, factories, bookstores, veterinarians and printing companies offer tours for small groups of children or families. When you call around and express interest about what is offered near your community, you may be surprised at the many learning opportunities you may find.

Local colleges and universities. Taking young children and youth to tour campuses of colleges and universities gives them a sense of what college is like, as well as incentive to attend one day. Many colleges and universities also offer classes for children and youth on Saturdays and evenings.



Resource 3

Fifteen Ways that Families Can Help Increase School-Community Collaboration

Use these tips to help increase school-community collaboration.

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| 1. Find out about and use information on community resources and organizations. |
| 2. Help your school develop a directory of social and community services. |
| 3. Make local agencies and businesses aware of what's happening at your school. |
| 4. Help coordinate and participate in events that support community groups. |
| 5. Talk with employers about holding parent meetings or parenting workshops on-site. |
| 6. Encourage employers to adopt flexible work schedules and time off so that employees might attend school functions. |
| 7. Ask employers and local businesses to make donations and support school programs. |
| 8. Help organize and/or participate in community health fairs. |
| 9. Recruit community members (seniors, business people) to volunteer at school. |
| 10. Become active in community groups such as YMCA and Boy and Girl Scouts. |
| 11. Serve on local community advisory councils and committees. |
| 12. Work with local authorities and public officials to sponsor community events. |
| 13. Help organize and/or participate in a community "clean up" or "beautification" project. |
| 14. Encourage and help facilitate your child's participation in community service. |
| 15. Be a role model; be active in community service yourself or together with your child. |

Source: NEA 100 ways (2006)



Resource 4

Community Service Ideas for Families

One of the many benefits of service learning is that students can select a project that is meaningful to them while helping them to meet curricular objectives. Service projects can be as diverse as the students, and as unique as your community. Before students select their project, they should ask themselves if it is important to them, if it is an authentic need in the community, and if it is possible. Fifty project ideas are listed to help with this process.

Animals

- Work at or raise money for a shelter
- Match animals in shelters with families
- Care for a neighbor's pet
- Write to companies protesting animal testing
- Make and sell identification tags for dogs and cats
- Organize a lost animal search group

Children

- Read to or tutor younger children
- Organize a clothing drive for needy children
- Visit sick children
- Organize a book drive to give books to children
- Organize after-school activities for latchkey kids

Citizenship

- Organize a voter registration drive
- Support an important piece of legislation
- Organize a community poison control campaign
- Organize an event that recognizes volunteer efforts

Community Development

- Beautify a playground
- Clean up a stream bed or arroyo
- Paint and repair the homes of senior citizens or low-income residents
- Start a petition for necessary traffic signals
- Make your neighborhood safer
- Paint over graffiti

**Elderly**

- Read to the elderly
- Shop for the elderly
- Do odd jobs for the elderly
- Organize an “adoption” program for lonely elders
- Teach computer skills to the elderly
- Lead an exercise program for the elderly
- Rake leaves or shovel snow for the elderly
- Volunteer at a nursing home or hospital

Environment

- Clean up litter at school or in the neighborhood
- Organize a recycling drive
- Plant trees
- Raise money to improve a playground or park, or to repair a sidewalk
- Grow a school garden
- Help a community that has been impacted by a natural disaster

Health/Safety

- Create a presentation for how to handle health or crime emergencies
- Set up prevention groups to patrol neighborhoods
- Coordinate an after school hot line
- Organize a bike, roller blade, scooter or car seat safety demonstration
- Develop and teach a baby sitting course
- Organize a community health fair

Homeless

- Collect food, toiletries or clothing for the homeless
- Work at a soup kitchen
- Collect and distribute blankets
- Collect toys for shelters

Diversity

- Organize ethnic awareness days
- Tutor people whose second language is English
- Encourage sites around town to become wheelchair accessible
- Help people with special needs
- Develop a peer conflict mediation program



Resource 5

Let's Use the Library!

Most public libraries offer a wide variety of children's books and magazines in English as well as other languages. In addition to printed materials, libraries often lend audiotapes and videocassettes of books and movies, and more libraries are making computers available to the public. Many libraries also sponsor special programs, including children's story hours, summer reading programs and homework help. If your child has special needs, be sure to ask about services the library offers for the blind, the deaf and those who are gifted or need remedial help. Many libraries have specially trained librarians for children. Feel free to ask them for help.

Here are some things you can do to introduce your child to the library.

- Include children, even toddlers, in trips to the library, and go often.
- As soon as you can, help your child get a library card.
- Borrow recordings of children's stories and songs, cassette tapes, compact discs, videotapes, even puppets and educational toys.
- Find out if your library has computers and how your children can use them to learn or upgrade skills.
- Encourage your children to use the library to find information for their homework.
- Encourage your children to ask for help from you and the librarian in finding books and materials.
- Work with the librarian to teach older children how to find things in the library on their own.
- Teach your children how to take care of themselves in public places, especially if they use the library alone.
- Stress common sense guidelines for behavior in the library.

Become Members of Your Local Library

- Sign up for a library card yourself, and check out books to learn stories, songs, rhymes and fingerplays to use at home to stimulate and encourage your child's development.
- Get a library card for your child as soon as possible. (Some libraries will issue a card as soon as a child can write his or her name.)
- Encourage your child to check out books. This can encourage responsibility.
- Take your child to the library for special programs.

Reference Desk

- Encourage your children to use the library for schoolwork. Help them determine if the library has the resources they need or if they need to check other information sources.
- Give your children encouragement, advice and a ride if they need it, but resist the temptation to take over an assignment. Let your children be responsible for researching and writing reports.
- Check out the special services your library offers for helping students with school assignments, such as homework hotlines and term paper clinics.

Source: US Dept. of Education
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/LearnPtnrs/library.html>



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