

Fortress-Partnership School Checklist: Where Does Your School Fall?

Partnership School: All families and communities have something great to offer -- we do *whatever it takes* to work closely together to make sure every single student succeeds.

□ Building Relationships:

- Family center is always open, full of interesting learning materials to borrow
- Home visits made to every new family
- Activities honor families' contributions
- Building is open to community use and social services are available to families

□ Linking to learning:

- All family activities connect to what students are learning
- Parents and teachers look at student work and test results together
- Community groups offer tutoring and homework programs at the school
- Students' work goes home every week, with a scoring guide

□ Addressing differences

- Translators are readily available
- Teachers use books and materials about families' cultures
- PTA includes all families
- Local groups help staff reach parents

□ Supporting advocacy

- There is a clear, open process for resolving problems
- Teachers contact families each month to discuss student progress
- Student-led parent-teacher conferences are held 3 times a year, for 30 minutes

□ Sharing power

- Parents and teachers research issues like prejudice and tracking
- Parent group is focused on improving student achievement
- Families are involved in all major decisions
- Parents can use the school's phone, copier, fax, and computers
- Staff work with local organizers to improve the school and neighborhood

Open Door School: Parents can be involved at our school in many ways -- we're working hard to get an even bigger turnout for our activities. When we ask the community to help, they often respond.

□ Building Relationships:

- Teachers contact families once a year
- Parent coordinator is available if families have questions or need help
- Office staff are friendly
- Staff contact community agencies and organizations when help is needed

□ Linking to learning

- Teachers explain test scores if asked
- Folders of student work go home occasionally
- School holds curriculum nights 3-4 times a year
- Staff let families know about out-of-school classes in the community

□ Addressing differences

- Office staff will find a translator if parents ask in advance
- Multi-cultural night are held once a year
- "Minority" parents have own group

□ Supporting advocacy

- Principal will meet with parents to discuss a problem
- Regular progress reports go to parents, but test data can be hard to understand
- Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year

□ Sharing power

- Parents can raise issues at PTA meetings or see the principal
- Parent group sets its own agenda and raises money for the school
- Resource center for low-income families in portable classroom next to the school
- PTA officers can use school office
- A community representative sits on school council

Come-if-we-call School: Parents are welcome when we ask them, but there's only so much they can offer. The most important thing they can do is help their kids at home. We know where to get help in the community if we need it.

□ **Building Relationships:**

- Better-educated parents are more involved
- "Many immigrant parents don't have time to come or contribute"
- Staff are very selective about who comes into the school

□ **Linking to Learning**

- Parents are told what students will be learning at the fall open house
- "Parents can call the office to get teacher-recorded messages about homework"
- Workshops are offered on parenting

□ **Addressing Differences**

- "We can't deal with 20 different languages"
- "Parents can bring a translator with them"
- "This school just isn't the same as it used to be..."

□ **Supporting Advocacy**

- School calls families when children have problems
- Families visit school on report card pick-up day and can see a teacher if they call first

□ **Sharing power**

- Principal sets agenda for parent meetings
- PTA gets the school's message out
- "Parents are not experts in education."
- Community groups can address the school board if they have concerns

Fortress School: Parents belong at home, not at school. If students don't do well, it's because their families don't give them enough support. We're already doing all we can. Our school is an oasis in a troubled community. We want to keep it that way.

□ **Building Relationships:**

- Families do not "bother" school staff
- "Minority families don't value education"
- Parents need security clearances to come
- It is important to keep community influences out of the school

□ **Linking to Learning**

- Curriculum and standards are considered too complex for parents to understand
- "If parents want more information, they can ask for it"
- "We're teachers, not social workers"

□ **Addressing Differences**

- "Those parents need to learn English"
- We teach about our country – that's what those parents need to know about"
- "This neighborhood is going downhill..."

□ **Supporting Advocacy**

- Parents don't come to conferences
- Problems are dealt with by the professional staff
- Teachers don't feel safe with parents

□ **Sharing power**

- Principal picks a small group of "cooperative parents" to help out
- Families are afraid to complain. "They might take it out on my kid"
- "Community groups should mind their own business; they don't know about education"

Where Does Your School Fall? Check the boxes that have the most statements under them marked or circled. Check only one box in a row.

- If three or more of your checked boxes fall in the *Fortress School* column and none under *Open Door* or *Partnership*, your school is trying to keep parents away rather than work with them. In standards-based terms, it is ***below basic***.
- If three or more of your checked boxes fall under *Come-if-we-call* and none under *Partnership*, your school may want parents to be involved only on its terms. In standards-based terms, it is at the ***basic*** level.
- If at least four of your checked boxes fall under *Open Door* or *Partnership*, and none are under *Fortress School*, your school welcomes families and supports them to be involved in a number of ways. In standards-based terms, it is ***proficient***.
- If at least three of your checked boxes are under *Partnership*, and the rest are under *Open Door*, your school is willing and able to work with all families. We bet the student achievement level goes up every year. In standards-based terms, it is ***advanced***.