

Partnering for School Success



Partnering for School Success (PSS) is a research-based educational program for school staff and parents. Its goal is to assist schools and parents in maximizing children's learning potential. PSS offers practical ideas and tools for schools and parents to support children's school success, and increase effective parent involvement with their children's learning, both in school and at home. Four different cultural groups have been partners in the development and testing of PSS to create programs that are appropriate for their specific cultures. Parents can help their children perform their best in school when they experience the following 6 factors in their daily lives: expectations, structure, learning, support, relationships, and modeling.

Partnering for School Success components

- Research and literature reviews relating to the 6 factors
- Focus groups provided insight from parents and service providers representing various cultures with large populations in Minnesota
- Resources for parents to help children succeed in school, including targeted cultures
- Train parent-school teams for better partnerships

What We Know

Minnesota ranks 37th in graduation rates for students of color. Parent involvement and communication with schools are important for children to succeed in their educational process. As a result, the project team is working to develop culturally inclusive and competent versions of materials for parents and school staff.

Resources for Schools and Families

- Research & literature review of parent involvement and student success in school
- Publication, "Parenting for School Success;" bookmarks in English and Spanish featuring six factors important for school success
- Culturally specific program materials, developed out of findings of focus groups,
- Training for parent/school teams, customized for schools
- Program materials developed for parents and schools to reduce educational disparities
- Sharing results and implications with family professionals and schools

Cultural Focus Group Process and Results

Following focus groups early in the project to gain insight for a generic English parent guide, "*Parenting for School Success*," focus groups were conducted with Latino, African American, Hmong, Somali and American Indian parents. We received feedback on the generic guide citing the 6 factors in regard to cultural inclusiveness and competency from the target cultures to build more effective parent-school partnerships. Feedback also provided insight for additional issues that are important to include for each specific culture. Ten cultural guides (two from each group) worked with the PSS team to navigate their communities, gather data and put context to understanding and interpreting the results. The cultural guide process is a unique approach that can provide valuable insight and connection when preparing culturally appropriate resources.

Focus group results indicated how difficult it is for students of color to attend school and not see their own cultural identity reflected in: school leadership, teaching staff, curricula, text books, behavior policies including values and expectations, and school-parent interaction. Parents have different ways of helping their children “survive” in the sometimes “hostile” school environment. Latino and Somali parents typically expect that it is the role of schools to educate children and parents do not interfere with this role, and that “teachers know best.” In the U. S., parents are expected to be involved, and often, Latino and Somali parents need an explanation to understand that schools expect parent involvement beyond “problem situations” at school. Being new to the U.S. education system, these parents expressed the need to be taught how to navigate the system. African American parents expressed considerable frustration with the ways in which institutional racism affects their children’s experiences in school and their ability to be successful.

Future work includes:

- Evaluate training from school trainings; establish “best practices”
- Develop materials as a result of cultural focus groups, i.e. classes for Spanish speakers, videos for Hmong and Somali parents on school success, etc. using the target audience language
- Evaluate pilot position: African American Educational Systems Navigator
- Develop training for cultural specific classes, curriculum, or materials
- Develop website with resources for parents and schools
- Continue to share results with professionals working with families of other cultures

Partnering for School Success project team:

Program team:

Kathleen Olson, Team Leader, Extension Educator, Family Relations

Colleen Gengler, Extension Educator, Family Relations

Jo Musich, Extension Educator, Family Relations (retired)

Patricia Stoppa, Extension Educator, Family Relations

Madge Alberts, Program Coordinator, CYF Consortium (retired)

Cathy Jordan, Director, U of M Children, Youth & Family Consortium

Research and Evaluation team:

Mary Marczak, Evaluation and Research Specialist, Family Development

Arthur Brown, Research Associate, Family Development

Cultural guides:

African American – (Jessica Black and Jolene Mason - through 2009)

Latino – (Silvia Piccardo and Victoria Campoverde - through 2009)

Hmong - Pangjua Xiong, (Pa Kou Yangx - through 2009), Bounthavy Kiatoukaysy “Vee”

Somali - Abdullahi Sheikh, (Farhiya Farah - through 2010), Nadifa Osman

American Indian – Luann Frazer, Jeanine Downwind-Jubera

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