Working with partners: Relationships, shared goals and communication

Summary

Are there multiple people and professionals in your school trying to work together to support diverse learners? Incorporating and respecting the views and perspectives of families, students and professionals is critical in building successful relationships and successful outcomes for diverse learners.

In this practice four key elements in building supportive and positive relationships are introduced. School leaders, teachers and parents will also share their approaches to creating supportive relationships.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers related to this practice

- 4.1 - support student participation
- 7.3 - engage with the parents/carers
- 7.4 - engage with professional teaching networks and broader communities

For further information, see Australian Professional Standards for Teachers AITSL page

Preparing to Teach

The importance of supportive and positive relationships

Building supportive and positive relationships with all relevant partners is critical to the success of work in schools. Positive relationships need to be fostered and developed through communication, shared goals and identifying and involving key partners. Through these relationships constructive, goal-centred, solution-based services and support can be established and delivered through a structured, joint problem-solving approach.

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Communication

Communication plays a significant role in supporting positive and sustainable partnerships and relationships in schools. Research results highlighted that it's essential to consider how you will use communication to support sustainable connections between all partners.

- Essential elements of communication include making sure initial communication occurs face-to-face when possible:
  - face-to-face communication is more effective in helping to develop an understanding of the context, establish rapport and build positive relationships with all partners.
- Establishing and maintaining ongoing communication should be individualised to best suit the needs of all partners.

What different types communication have you used to share the same information with a wide number of people?

Shared goals

Relationships should aim to facilitate clear communication and shared goals with all partners. Partners might include students, parents, class teachers, school leaders, specialist support staff, teacher aides and external agencies.

- Establishing shared and mutually agreed upon goals is important to the sustainability and capacity building of the partnership. That way, everyone understands what the goal is and what role they play in reaching this goal.
- These goals need to be responsive to the needs of all partners and prioritise family and student needs. They should also set the scene for expectations of the collaborative partnership moving forward.

How do you go about collating the perspectives of everyone and coming up with shared goals?

Identifying and involving key partners

Getting the right people involved at the right times is important to a successful partnership.

The following activities are important in supporting positive relationships:

1. identifying a case manager to coordinate communication
2. involving all key partners including parents and students
3. ensuring ongoing lines of open communication between all partners
4. supporting equitable partnerships and mutually agreed upon shared goals
5. decide upon a timeline and check-in dates with key people

Think about some of the things that have successfully helped you when there have been many different people involved with a student/your child?

Working with partners

Successfully working together relies on all partners taking a consistent, and structured, problem-solving approach in the relationship. To achieve the best outcomes for diverse learners all partners* need to work together to:

- foster the collaborative partnership and
- tailor the school-based professional learning to the individual contexts and school community.

* 'All partners' refers to students and their families, and any professionals who are

1. Internal to the school community and
    a. work with students and their families and their support networks
    b. directly or indirectly support teachers and ancillary staff e.g., teacher aides, student support officers.
2. External to the school community and
    a. work with students and their families and their support networks
    b. directly or indirectly support teachers and ancillary staff e.g., teacher aides, student support officers

What are some of the challenges you have experienced when trying to balance working with a wide number of professionals for the one student?

The findings from two of the Autism CRC Early Years and Middle Years Behaviour Support research projects identified some guiding principles which will assist all partners to successfully:

- collaborate
- consult
- support and
- nurture positive relationships.

This practice highlights some important elements from this research that build supportive and positive relationships between all partners and are critical to the success of work with schools.

In the classroom

Building supportive and positive relationships

Building supportive and positive relationships with all relevant partners is critical to the success of work with schools. Promoting positive relationships involves establishing constructive, goal-centred, solution-based services and support delivered through a structured, joint problem-solving approach.

1. Identify a case manager

- Has a case manager been identified or someone who can coordinate and manage clear communication and liaise with all partners?

- o The case manager plays a key role in communicating with the partners. Identifying a case manager who can help coordinate, instigate and sustain communication with partners is important.

Use the Stage one: Evaluation section of the Collaborative partnerships in action workbook to

- Evaluate the students learning needs and strengths
- Set the overall goals and desired outcomes for collaboration
- Determine the best people to aid these goals and outcomes

2. Involve and communicate with partners

- Has a plan of how to involve all key partners (including parents and students) in equitable and respectful ways been developed?
    - o Communication plays a significant role in supporting positive, sustainable, equitable and respectful partnerships and relationships in schools.
- Have you identified who your partners are?
    - o Partners might include students, parents, class teachers, school leaders, specialist support staff, teacher aides and external agencies.

Use Stage two: Planning section of the Collaborative partnerships in action workbook to

- Plan the collaboration and communication .
- Create the meeting agenda for the initial meeting

3. Ensure ongoing communication between partners

- Have you identified how you will communicate and liaise with your partners in the first instance?
    - o Communication plays a significant role in supporting positive and sustainable equitable respectful partnerships and relationships in schools.
    - o Where possible, the initial communication should be face to face. This helps you to to help understand the context, establish rapport and build positive relationships with all partners. Once the initial communication has been established, ongoing communication can occur in more individualised ways that suit the needs of all partners.

Use Stage three: Meeting section of the Collaborative partnerships in action workbook to

- Develop a pre-meeting checklist
- Document the meeting

4. Support equitable partnerships and mutually agreed upon shared goals

- Have you worked with partners to develop mutually agreed upon shared goals? What actions have you taken to ensure you can maintain ongoing lines of open communication between partners
    - o Establishing goals that are shared by and mutually agreed upon by all partners is important to the sustainability and capacity building of the partnership.

Use Stage four: Reflection section of the Collaborative partnerships in action workbook to

- Reflect on the collaboration and evaluate outcomes
- Sit down with the student to evaluate their thoughts on the collaboration and the outcomes
- Revise what needs to stop, start and continue moving forward.

Materials informing this practice

Sheridan, S. M., & Kratochwill, T. R. (2007). Conjoint behavioral consultation: Promoting familyschool connections and interventions (2nd Edn). New York, NY: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-71248-2

Saggers, B., Tones, M., Dunne, J., & Aberdein, R. (2019). Tele-classroom consultation: Promoting an inclusive approach to supporting the needs of educators, families and early years learners on the autism spectrum in rural and remote areas in contextually responsive ways. International Journal of Inclusive Education. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1609103