



# Building Bridges for Children's Mental Health

## Tips for Building School Teams: Uniting Educators, Families, and Students

# Building School Teams

## Three Colorado School Team Approaches

### *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)*

A school-wide, multi-tiered framework designed to develop a positive learning environment for all students.

### *Response to Intervention (RTI)*

A framework that promotes a well-integrated system that is matched to the student's academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs.

### *System of Care (SOC)*

A comprehensive spectrum of behavioral health and other necessary services which are organized in a coordinated network to meet the multiple and changing needs of children and their families at school, at home and in their communities.



## Benefits of Strong Family and School Teams

- **Parents and students are more supportive:** When parents and students are involved in leadership and decision-making roles, they become more supportive of the school's efforts and they have a better understanding of school issues and priorities.
- **Schools are more aware:** By involving parents and students in leadership and decision-making roles, schools are more aware of parents' and students' perspectives and can make more informed decisions.
- **Funding issues:** Involved parents and students are more supportive of school funding issues.

Adapted from *Supporting Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Your School*, June 2000, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

## Strategies for Engagement

- Continually reach out to family members, youth, and staff.
- Personally invite those who are reluctant or unable to get involved in school activities or join committees; don't wait for volunteers.
- Use family and student-friendly terms.
- Throughout the school year, schedule school events at different times during the day, evening, and weekend.
- Reduce barriers for participation--Provide healthy food, childcare, stipends for time, or gas. Be creative!
- Address time constraints of families, students, and school staff.
- Develop questionnaires to find out what families, students, and school staff want.
- Offer school space for group meetings, classes, etc. so that the school can become a place to gather and connect.
- Teach team-building skills so that teachers, families, and students can work together for solutions.
- Use technology to inform and link parents to the school but also remember that not all parents have access to computers and internet.
- Build leadership and empower parents, students, and staff:
  - Offer them key roles in school-decision making.
  - School teams should be representative of the school population (ethnic, special needs) and school staff (teachers, social workers, administrators).
  - Support active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations.
  - Support active youth leadership groups within and outside of the school (e.g., Youth advisory boards, 4-H, FFA, FBLA).
  - Family members and students serve on RTI and PBIS teams.
  - Make data understandable and available so that informed decisions can be made.
- Recognize school team members for all of their efforts. This not only gives credit where credit is due, but it will also help others know who is representing them.



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## Resources

National Network Partnership Schools at John Hopkins University, [www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000)

Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, [www.nwrel.org](http://www.nwrel.org)

Best Practices: Building Blocks for Enhancing Schools Environment, Military Child Initiative, [www.jhsph.edu/mci](http://www.jhsph.edu/mci)

The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, [www.ed.gov/Family](http://www.ed.gov/Family)

Behavior Doctor, [www.behaviordractor.org](http://www.behaviordractor.org)

Association for Positive Behavioral Support, [www.apbs.org](http://www.apbs.org)

Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, [www.cecp.air.org](http://www.cecp.air.org)

Neighborhood Resource Center of Colorado, [www.nrc-neighbor.org](http://www.nrc-neighbor.org)

Colorado Department of Education: Fast Facts, [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/FF-EBP\\_MH\\_ADHD.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/download/pdf/FF-EBP_MH_ADHD.pdf)

Systems of Care, [www.systemsofcare.samhsa.gov](http://www.systemsofcare.samhsa.gov)

Family Guide to Systems of Care for Children with Mental Needs, [www.mentalhealth.samhas.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhas.gov)

Colorado LINKS: Repository for Systems Transformation, [www.cdphe.state.co.us/ps/ipsp/ReST/aboutLinks.htm](http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ps/ipsp/ReST/aboutLinks.htm)

CDE Resources for Parents and Students, [www.cde.state.co.us/index\\_parentstudent.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_parentstudent.htm)

CO Division of Behavioral Health, [www.cdhs.state.co.us/dmh](http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/dmh)

Empower Colorado, <http://www.empowercolorado.com/>

Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health ~ Colorado Chapter, <http://www.coloradofederation.org>

Mental Health America of Colorado, [www.mhacolorado.org](http://www.mhacolorado.org)

Parent Education and Assistance for Kids (PEAK), [www.peakparent.org](http://www.peakparent.org)

National Institute on Drug Abuse, <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/facts/index.php>

National Mental Health Awareness Campaign: Battling Stigma surrounding Mental Health, [www.nostigma.org](http://www.nostigma.org)

Colorado's Adolescent Health Clearinghouse, [www.healthyyouthcolorado.org](http://www.healthyyouthcolorado.org)

## Building Relationships & Developing Authentic Partnerships: Families and Students on the Team and at the Table

1. Professionals, parents, and students each have expertise. Determine what research or data collection efforts can capitalize on each stakeholder's strengths. Set each up for successful demonstration of their skills and assets.
2. Professionals need to demonstrate honesty to parents and students by admitting "I don't know" and then finding more information about the topic and sharing community resources; or being straightforward about where the group's power lies and if a constraint or boundary arises, it is addressed openly and honestly.
3. Trust implies dependability. Professionals, parents, and students can demonstrate dependability by consistently and promptly returning calls, by avoiding promises that may not be kept and by always following through on a request.
4. Ask parents, family members, and the student about their priorities and needs for the student's educational program, Individual Education Plan (IEP) placement, related services, and so on.
5. Seek to understand and honor the family's cultural values and priorities. Treat each other with respect.
6. Partnerships grow and become stronger in an atmosphere that fosters honesty, trust, and respect for core values and cultural diversity.
7. A critical aspect of trustworthiness is every one's belief that they're safe. This includes not only safety from physical danger, but from humiliation, teasing, or other emotional harm.
8. Remember the importance of privacy and confidentiality concerning issues related to the family and children.
9. Frequently communicate so that you can reinforce each other's work and help the child to progress. Have realistic expectations yet set high standards.
10. Good partnerships are flexible and respect the time and competing interests of each partner. Be organized and prepared.
11. Remember to thank each other for time and commitment to the partnership and the student's success!

