

Standard 11: Parent and Community Involvement

*Reflective Essay*

For many families schools are more than the places where their children learn. They can be the center of the community. Family functions take place, parents learn how to support their children's learning, and other community forums are held in the building. Intentionally inviting parents into the building and the larger process of education takes proactive planning and communication.

Parents and community members can be powerful resources in schools. They can also present principals and teachers with great challenges. Parents may have a different point of view of the school process than educators. They may want to influence it for their own interests, or at times, they may not know what to do.

Reinforcing the learning process depends upon parents and other community supports. Educators cannot afford to discount parent involvement in the schooling process just because it is difficult to gain their commitment. Schools must make the effort to understand community resources, values, and styles of communication (Payne, 2004). When this bridge is built between the school and their surrounding neighbors, the children get the direct benefit.

*Related Artifacts*

Partnering with parents and community members equips educators with powerful tools to support student learning. The Rosa Parks Case Study artifact highlights this very issue as one that is important to student success. Proactive administrators work on making the school building accessible both physically and emotionally to families. The ways in which this is accomplished is particularly important with parents who are wary of

schools due to their level of education or their own school experiences. I have found that personal positive invitations that show respect and value for parents are worthwhile investments of time.

Parent and community inclusion in ongoing school improvement is an excellent way to solicit involvement. Two artifacts reflect this important step in parent and community involvement. The George Washington High School Improvement Plan is a product of the work of the Collaborative School Committee. The membership of this committee was designed to include representation from a variety of school staff as well as parents. Their point of view helps this group make good decisions that supports the school at large.

I have also been involved with a district level group focused on business education. This group recently developed an executive summary to present to Denver Public Schools administrators. The formation of the Business Advisory Board Executive Summary was largely a product of the community participant's efforts. Although my time commitment to this group has been considerable at times, it has helped establish positive ongoing relationships with interested business and community members.

### *References*

Payne, R. (2004). *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (4<sup>th</sup> edition). Highlands, TX: aha Process, Inc.