APPENDIX VII - 2

PROMISING PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES

An annual collection from the members of the
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BUILDING SYSTEMIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS IN ALL SCHOOLS

TUCSON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
TUCSON, AZ

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP

The Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) adopted a district-wide policy on school, family, and community partnerships. The district's goals are to ensure a welcoming climate in all schools for all partners in children's education, and to strengthen partnership activities that contribute to student success in school. In addition to having an official policy, TUSD has a helpful department of Family and Community Outreach and staff to guide all schools to enact the policy in their own programs of family and community engagement.

TUSD is the largest school district in Arizona. It is working to conclude a Desegregation Order to create equitable educational programs in all schools and for all students. This directive recognized confirmed results of countless research studies showing that students do better in school when their parents are actively engaged in their education.

The Director of Family and Community Outreach and the department's Coordinators are working to help all schools implement the district policy on partnerships. They attended professional development sessions with NNPS and other leaders to strengthen their knowledge, skills, and strategies on family and community engagement. The district hired additional Coordinators to guide clusters of its 86 schools to implement site-based partnership programs aligned with the district policy.

The office of Family and Community Outreach began by building positive relationships with principals, teachers, staff, parents, and others to introduce the district policy and to share their enthusiasm about helping each school strengthen its program and practices of family and community engagement. This helped educators and parents "buy in" to the plan to strengthen their own school's partnership programs for student success.

The Director and Coordinators provided professional development to help the educators and partnership teams in all schools complete site-based partnership plans. The staff's enthusiasm and services for schools created a domino effect across the district. Just about all principals agreed that family engagement is important for student success. One parent and community liaison in an elementary school expressed others' agreement, "I love my job and it's nice to finally feel validated."

With consistent and enthusiastic assistance, district leaders brought the majority of district colleagues and school teams on board. The Coordinators collected and reviewed monthly reports from their cluster of schools outreach activities and parents' responses. They offered support to schools that needed extra attention.

Teachers reported that when families were partners, students were more likely to follow school behavior goals, more actively participated in class, and more often asked teachers for help. Parents were particularly interested in meetings and activities that focused on how they could help their children at home.

It was important that TUSD not only had a clear district policy on partnerships, but also had a way to guide schools to customize their plans to engage parents in appropriate ways at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The school-based plans and activities are helping more parents see that their child's school recognizes and values them as important partners in their children's education.

It is challenging to implement an official policy for partnerships in all schools in a large district. TUSD is confident that its step-by-step approach to facilitate the implementation of the district policy will result in effective, equitable, and on-going programs of family and community engagement in all schools.

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