



Universal Design for Family-School Partnerships

(Patterned after Universal Design for Learning)



The Big Idea

Families and educators may differ from each other in the ways they think and communicate. They also have different interests and demands on their time, energy and attention. Applying the principles of Universal Design to family-school partnerships provides flexibility and multiple opportunities for families and educators to engage with each other to create positive outcomes for students.

Present information and content to families in a variety of ways.

- Have information available in multiple languages and formats (print, audio, video, online and offline).
- Present content in multiple levels of complexity (from a simple flyer to advanced training).
- Present information through multiple messengers (parent or family group, parent-to-parent, teacher to family, school team to family, community partners, etc.)
- Define terminology.
- Avoid jargon.
- Highlight big ideas.

Provide multiple ways for families to express choice and participate.

- Offer family choice for communication method: notes between school and home, email, parent checklists for monitoring progress at home, phone calls, text messages, etc.
- Offer family choice of participation: school-sponsored events, workshops or other training, volunteer activities, phone conversations, surveys, input through family advocates, etc.
- Include family as a team member in decision making and planning meetings (in person, by phone or teleconference).
- Utilize family members as trainers.

Stimulate interest and motivation for partnering with school.

- Ensure information and activities are relevant and have value to the family. Personalize information to the family's experience and culture.
- Make the purpose of the communication or activity clear.
- Invite the family's response and evaluation.
- Create an accepting and supportive climate.
- Offer links to parent-to-parent support.
- Offer other supports such as childcare and transportation.
- Incorporate family ideas in planning.