

## ***Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships***

### **Book Study Guide**

Are you interesting in stimulating some creative discussions among teachers about how to work more effectively with families to improve student achievement? Does your parent organization want to develop more exciting plans to engage families of all backgrounds? Would your book group like to go more deeply into an important issue in education?

If these questions resonate with you, take a look at the following activities, developed by a master educator, Melissa Whipple. Melissa is coordinator of the Parent Academic Liaison Program in San Diego. Every month, she and her staff meet to read and discuss important books, using activities that she has designed to make their conversations fun and inspiring. Melissa and her staff loved *Beyond the Bake Sale* and really enjoyed working through it in this way.

## ***Beyond the Bake Sale Book Study***

### **Chapter 3: READY, SET, GO! How Do You Know If You're Really Open to Partnership?**

1. Read your group's assigned section independently and silently.
2. As you are reading your section, highlight your 2 favorite sentences/phrases/ideas.
3. When your group has finished reading, discuss the main ideas as a group.
4. Read your special assignment and questions below and incorporate answers to the questions into your group's Poster Report.
5. Design a Poster with your Core Belief represented.
6. You may use Words/Pictures/Symbols to represent any or all of the major ideas: Think: What ideas presented in our section would be the most valuable for the others to know and understand? How can we communicate it in an interesting way?
7. Be prepared to share your Core Belief poster. Summarize major concepts and learnings from your part to the entire group using the poster to guide you.
8. We will have a Quaker Reading of your highlighted sentences at the end of the activity.

**Core Belief #1:** Before your Poster Report presentation, quickly take yourselves through the steps 1-7 on page 31: "Supporting Our Dreams" exercise and be able to talk about it. Choose one special child in your life to focus on for this exercise. Use stickies to write down your one dream or expectation for that one child and place it on your group's poster.

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**Core Belief #2:** As part of your group's Poster Report presentation, please have each person in your group choose and read two ideas that are listed for each of the 3 main ideas mentioned in the chapter. If you have a real activity that fits into one of these 3 categories that you have implemented at your site—you can tell us that one also (it would fall into the "other" category).

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**Core Belief # 3:** As part of your group's oral poster report please choose 2 people to act out the chart on the page 37 and 38. One person can be the voice of the "lopsided relationship" and another person can be the "voice of mutual relationships." This will help the rest of us hear the difference between those two voices.

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**Core Belief # 4:** Figure out a fun way of communicating the idea of Looking Out the window vs. Looking in the Mirror. Perhaps the chart on page 42 would be a good one to act out.

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**Conclusion:** As part of your group's Poster report, tell the story and act out the chart on page 44 of "Teachers said/ I said".

## **Presenter's Section: Conclusion**

Who is going to do all this?

The experts suggest you appoint an action team.

Why?

It's too big a job for one person and it can't be delegated to the parent coordinator.

The action team is a working group of a school council or school improvement team. It has the responsibility to plan and continually improve family and community engagement. Developing systematic action to transform a school into a partnership school requires a dedicated team working over the long term.

### **Here are some things that action teams do:**

1. Listen to families, teachers, other staff, and community members to identify ideas, needs, and priorities.
2. Organize into committees based on the priorities you set—usually based on the 6 types + 1 of parent involvement.
3. Develop a one year action plan that covers each area you will work on, create a budget and identify sources of funding.
4. Meet regularly (at least monthly) as a whole team and establish goals and guidelines for teamwork. How will you communicate? What decision-making process will you use? When will you allow time to discuss issues and solve problems?
5. Gather ideas and plan programs and activities.
6. Publicize activities and team meetings. Include all families and the school community.
7. Evaluate your work and report regularly on progress on meeting the goals articulated in the plan. Celebrate successes.

## Family Friendly Schools: Core Beliefs

- 1) All Parents Have Dreams for Their Children and Want the Best for Them  
**Schools can help by:**
  - finding out what those hopes and dreams are and identifying ways to support families in realizing them.
  - connecting their hopes and dreams to what children are learning in school.
  - frequently expressing confidence in their children's ability to be successful and in the parent's ability to contribute to that success.
  
- 2) All Parents Have the Capacity to Support Their Children's Learning  
Parents' choices about being involved in their children's education are influenced by three key factors:
  - A) How they develop their "job description" as a parent (**role construction**)
    - **Schools can help by** developing the "job description" of an involved parent (i.e., what do parents think they're "supposed" to do vs. "important and acceptable" to do).
  - B) How confident they feel about their ability to help their children (**efficacy**).
    - **Schools can help by** building families confidence in their ability to help their children
  - C) Whether they feel invited—both by their children and by the school (**sense of invitation**).
    - **Schools can help by** making sure all families feel welcomed and invited by school staff and their children
  
- 3) Parents and School Staff Should Be Equal Partners  
Everyone has something to offer and everyone should get something positive out of the relationship (**reciprocity**).  
**Schools can help by:**
  - Establishing a sense of shared responsibility for student achievement and development.
  - Demystifying the classroom.
  - Offering specific ways parents can support their children as learners.
  - Developing parents as leaders.
  
- 4) The Responsibility for Building Partnerships Between School and Home Rests Primarily with School Staff, Especially School Leaders  
**Schools can help by:**
  - Recognizing that strong leadership is essential to create a school culture that supports family engagement.
  - Support teachers in their work with families: provide staff development and discuss the work.
  - Building trusting relationships with families that remain focused on student success and development.

## **Chapter 4: Developing Relationships**

### ***How Can You Build Trust Instead of Blaming Each Other?***

1. Read your group's assigned section independently and silently.
2. As you are reading your section, highlight your 2 favorite sentences/phrases/ideas.
3. When your group has finished, discuss the main ideas as a group.
4. Read your special assignment below and incorporate answers to the questions posed into your Poster report.
5. Design a poster/or posters to represent the major points/ideas of your assigned section.
6. You may use Words/Pictures/Symbols to represent any or all of the major ideas: Think: What ideas presented in our section would be the most valuable for the others to know and understand? How can we communicate it in an interesting way?
7. Be prepared to summarize the major learnings from your part to the entire group using the poster to guide you.
8. We will have a Quaker Reading of your highlighted sentences at the end of the activity.

#### **1) Welcome All Families to Your School Community (pages 50-55):**

Welcoming students and their families needs to be deliberate and routine. In your poster report and presentation include the various ideas presented on ways schools can create a sense of belonging. How can we clearly demonstrate that we care about students and their families? Be sure to share some of the information from the stories or points of view highlighted in the boxes as well.

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**2) Honor Families By Recognizing Their Strengths and Contributions (pages 55-60 top):** We need to meet parents where they are, not where we think they should be. In your poster report, include the various ways schools can routinely and deliberately recognize and validate family strengths and contributions. Don't skip reading the boxes—they offer wonderful little stories or points of view. Please act out the two parts from the *Honoring Families* chart on page 59 along with your poster report .

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#### **3) Honor Families By Recognizing Their Strengths and Contributions (continued)**

**A Teacher's Story (Page 60-65 top):** As part of your group's oral poster report please include why it is important to listen to parents and the various ways we can accentuate the positive and add value to traditional school-home, parent-teacher-student communications.

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#### **4) Connect with Families Through a Focus on the Children and Their Learning**

**(pages 65-69):** Discuss and share ways of keeping the focus on educational achievement by looking at student work and establishing a sense of shared responsibility for success through home visits. Please take turns reading aloud to the group the 5 statements made by parents at the Holiday School that demonstrated a caring attitude by school staff.

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#### **5) Connect with Families Through a Focus on the Children and Their Learning (continued)**

**Establish a Family Center (pages 70-74):** As part of your group's Poster report Include the purpose and benefits of having a family center. What kinds of various activities build trust and knowledge? How does having a Family Center connect parents to their children's education? Share one observable benefit for students and families you have seen as a direct result from having a Family Center at each of your sites.

## **Chapter 5: Linking to Learning**

### ***How Will Involving Parents Improve Your Test Scores?***

1. Read your group's assigned section independently and silently.
2. In addition to your assigned section, **please read about the PALs on pages 90-91.**
3. As you are reading your section, highlight your 2 favorite sentences/phrases/ideas.
4. When your group has finished, discuss the main ideas as a group.
5. Read your special assignment below and incorporate answers to the questions posed into your Poster report.
6. Design a poster or posters to represent the major points/ideas of your assigned section. You may use Words/Pictures/Symbols to represent any or all of the major ideas: Think: What ideas presented in our section would be the most valuable for the others to know and understand? How can we communicate it in an interesting way?
7. Be prepared to summarize the major learnings from your part to the entire group using the poster to guide you. Your job is to help the others really understand your section.
8. We will have a Quaker Reading of your highlighted sentences at the end of the activity.

#### **1) Helping Families Understand What's Happening in the Classroom (pages 85-90):**

The ways teachers teach and students learn has changed a lot in the past 20 years. How can we take advantage of parent and community members' curiosity and help them understand our work? In your poster report and presentation include the main ideas included in this section on demystifying instruction and learning through classroom visits, class meetings (including the back-to school-night class meeting), opening the classroom to Latino families and preparing parents for working in the classroom.

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#### **2) Putting Student Work Front and Center (pages 92-95):**

How transparent is your school? How can parents see what students are learning? In your poster report, include ways to highlight student work including ideas for exhibiting work at school events, using portfolios, and communicating regularly with families about learning. Distribute the attached handout created from the questions listed on page 94. Please explain and distribute attached handout created from page 95 on Full-Circle conversations.

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#### **3) School Newsletters • Family Learning Activities • Parent-Teacher & Student-Led Conferences • Prepare Parents to Ask about Academics (96-101):**

As part of your group's oral poster report please include ways to add value to traditional activities at schools by deliberately and strategically linking them to learning.

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#### **4) Using Student Achievement Data to Design Programs for Families/ Create a Family-School Compact for Achievement/ Collaborating with Community Organizations:**

Discuss and share ways for schools to keep the focus on student learning and development. Please highlight some of the differences in language between a traditional compact and a compact that is truly linked to student learning. Distribute the attached handouts as part of your presentation.

These book study activities were developed by Melissa Whipple, Parent Academic Liaison program coordinator, San Diego Unified School District, and valued contributor to *Beyond the Bake Sale*.

## **Chapter 6: Addressing Differences**

### *How Can You Deal with Issues of Race, Class and Culture?*

1. Read your group's assigned section independently and silently.
2. In addition to your assigned section, **please look at the survey at the end of the chapter.**
3. As you are reading your section, highlight your 2 favorite sentences/phrases/ideas.
4. When your group has finished, discuss the main ideas as a group.
5. Read your special assignment below and incorporate answers to the questions posed into your Poster report.
6. Design poster/or posters to represent the major points/ideas of your assigned section. You may use Words/Pictures/Symbols to represent any or all of the major ideas: Think: What ideas presented in our section would be the most valuable for the others to know and understand? How can we communicate it in an interesting way?
7. Be prepared to summarize the major ideas from your part to the entire group using the poster to guide you. Your job is to help the others really understand your section.
8. We will have a Quaker Reading of your highlighted sentences at the end of the activity.

#### **1. Improving Student Performance in Culturally Diverse Schools; Connecting Families' Cultures to What Students are Learning (pages 116-122)**

- **What does this part of the chapter recommend schools do to recognize, learn about, and affirm all cultures in the school?**
- **What ideas are offered for connecting families' cultures to what students are learning?**
- **Please be prepared to explain and share the following tools and story with the entire group as part of your presentation:**
- Research Brief: How High-Performing Schools Engage Latino Families (p.116-covered in introduction.
- Tool #6: Family Welcome Questionnaire (referred to on page 117) (explain this)
- Tool #9: Parent Review (referred to on page 117) (explain what this is)
- Box: Cultural Competence: Relating to People of a Different Background (p. 121) (explain)
- Box: Kitchen Math Exchanges p. 122 (share this real-life example)

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#### **2. Working with Community Members and Groups to Connect Families and the School; Recognizing & Supporting Different Forms of Parent Involvement; Supporting Learning at Home; Addressing the Language Barrier (pp. 123-127)**

- **What do the authors recommend in this section that is new and worth trying?**
- **Are any of your sites already doing any of the ideas mentioned in this section?**
- **Be sure to explain and share the following tools and story with the entire group:**
- Tool #7: Homework Survey (distribute and explain this)
- Box: Some Ways to Use the Information from a Homework Survey (p. 126 explain this list)
- Box: One Hundred Easy Phrases (p.127 share this bright idea)

### 3. Addressing Tensions and Bias; Using the Power of School to Promote Positive Relations and Open Dialogue; Take Discussions of Race into the Classroom (pages 128-134)

- **What ideas does this chapter offer about ways to address racial tensions and bias?**
- **How can we initiate more open conversations about this “taboo” subject?**
- **Why should we bother? How can we involve the students?**
- ☑ The Color Line Experiment – Because of my race or color . . . (p. 130 conduct this activity—use the handout rather than book description)
- ☑ Take Discussions of Race into the Classroom (p. 132 - 4 suggestions —discuss)
- ☑ Chart: Who Are “Minorities” and “Immigrants”— and How Do They Feel About This Label? (p. 133-134 discuss)

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### 4. Raising Expectations; Get to Know the Community and Identify Its Assets; Check it Out: Walking the Community (pages 134-139)

- **Positive and negative teacher talk can become part of (and reflect) a schools’ stream of beliefs.**
- **Discuss ways the chapter offers to move it in a more positive direction and keep it there.**
- **Share one or two ideas from your own sites that have helped accomplish this.**
- ☑ Tool #1: Attitude Check (referred to on page 135--discuss)
- ☑ Tool #6: Family Welcome Questionnaire (p. 136--refer to it /covered by previous group)
- ☑ Box: Switching Places (p. 137 share this enlightening information)
- ☑ Box: Map Your Community Assets (p. 138 share this information)

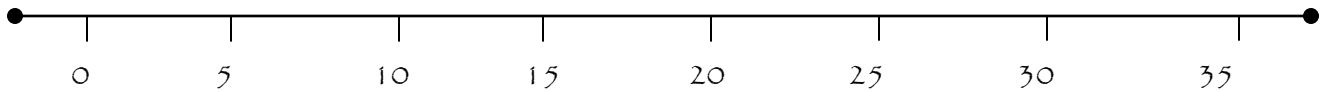
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### 5. Dealing with Class Differences; Responding to Unequal Resources; Make the Rules Together; Address Parent Group “Ins” and “Outs.” (pages 139-145)

**How do the authors suggest we deal with class inequities? What about resource inequities?**

- ☑ Story: “The sting of remarks in the faculty rooms.” (p. 141- share this story and one or two connections from your group that it triggers)
- ☑ Tool #6: Family Welcome Questionnaire (p. 142 refer to it/previously covered)
- ☑ Tool #9: Parent Review (referred to on p. 142 refer to it/previously covered)
- ☑ Box: What Help Would Families Like from the School? (p. 142 discuss—sound familiar?)
- ☑ Tool #3: Code of Conduct (referred to on p. 143 – explain to group)
- ☑ Tool #11: School Climate Survey (p. 143- explain to group)
- ☑ Box: What Are the Hidden Rules of Your School? (p. 143 discuss)
- ☑ Box: Strategies PTA and Other Parent Groups Use to Bridge Diversity (p.144 discuss)

## HANDOUT: Color Line Experiment



Singleton's "color line" exercise helps educators appreciate the impact of race on everyday experience. Participants respond to a series of questions, each starting with:

"Because of my race or color..."

- If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting/purchasing housing in an area I can afford and in which I would want to live.
- I can be pretty sure my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
- I can turn on the television or open the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely and positively represented.
- I am never asked to speak for all people of my racial group.
- When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my race contributed to it in multiple and significant ways.
- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not be considered a disadvantage.
- I can comfortably avoid, ignore, or minimize the impact or racism on my life.

Ask participants to award themselves points for each statement based on their experience:

- 5 if the statement is "always true,"
- 3 if it is "sometimes true," and
- 0 if the statement is "seldom true."

After totaling scores, ask respondents to stand up and form a "color line," using their scores to place themselves along the "color line." Individuals with the least points may begin the line on the left, with those with the higher total scores positioning themselves in order along the line moving to the right.

Ask for observations. Usually the people on the left (0-17 points) tend to be people of color and people on the right (17-35 points) tend to be white. This reveals stark differences between people's daily experiences of race. Ask for those in the line to comment on how they scored themselves and why.

Through staff development that follows, continue discussions about differences in experiences based on race, and how those differences relate to the achievement gap.

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## **Chapter 7: Supporting Advocacy**

### ***How Can “Problem Parents” Become Partners You Can Work With?***

1. We will read (or review) the introduction together.
2. Read your group’s assigned section independently and silently.
3. Read your special assignment below to see what questions to focus on and incorporate answers to into your Poster report.
4. As you are reading your section, highlight your 2 favorite sentences/phrases/ideas.
5. When your group has finished, discuss the main ideas as a group.
6. Design poster/or posters to represent the major points/ideas of your assigned section. You may use Words/Pictures/Symbols to represent any or all of the major ideas: Think: What ideas presented in our section would be the most valuable for the others to know and understand? How can we communicate it in an interesting way?
7. Be prepared to summarize the major ideas from your part to the entire group using the poster to guide you. Your job is to help the others really understand your section.
8. We will have a Quaker Reading of your highlighted sentences at the end of the activity.
9. In addition to your assigned section, **please look at the survey at the end of the chapter.**

#### **1. Helping Families Understand and Use Advocacy to Resolve Problems (pages 155-158)**

- What does this part of the chapter recommend schools do to introduce families to the school?
- What ideas are offered for helping parents understand curriculum and state standards?

##### **Read and share important points presented in the following sidebar:**

Page 158: What is one group of African American parents in Harlem doing to help all parents become more effective advocates for their children?

#### **2. Parents Need to Know How to Resolve Problems That their Children Are Having in School & Families Need Opportunities to Identify and Help Solve Problems That Affect Many or All Students (pages 159-165)**

- What three questions should your school’s problem-solving process answer?
- What strategies does the book suggest would help parents to see their child more clearly and help them at home?
- What did Melissa Whipple say are the 5 most dangerous words in the English language and why?
- What ideas does this chapter offer us about ways to help parents acquire the skills they need to effective advocates and problem solvers?
- What is the RQP project?
- Discuss what the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL) in Kentucky has done to prepare parent advocates. Describe the three parts to their framework on how to advocate for children and work effectively with educators and other parents.

**Read and share important points presented in the following sidebars:**

- Page 160: Read: Give Parents Strategies to Help Their Children
- Page 161: Read “A Principal’s Story” and discuss how it takes more than a process to settle a problem
- Page 164: Advice From a Pro: “Dealing with Angry Parents.”
- Page 165: Wait a Minute—What Can We Do About Pushy Parents?

**3. Collaborate Closely with Parents & Programs That Promote Family Advocacy (165-172)**

- What does advocacy require?
- In addition to parent teacher conferences, what does the book suggest schools do to promote routine collaborations between staff members and students’ families?
- What did Kansas City do?
- What three practices can action teams take to help families monitor their children’s progress and keep them on track?

**Read and share important points presented in the following sidebars:**

- Page 166: How Can Schools Defend Themselves Against Unreasonable Demands?
- Page 168: Preparing Parent Advocates to Focus on the Main Thing: *Achievement*
- Page 170: Example: Barren County Middle School, A School to Watch
- Page 171: Creating Opportunities for Parents to Learn and Practice Advocacy Skills

**4. Give Families and Students Information and Support to Make Smooth Transitions and (173-176)**

- What causes a student’s comfort level to drop?
- When are people most receptive to receiving information?
- What 4 goals should a well-designed transition program include?
- Describe some real examples of transition programs and practices?

**Read and share important points presented in the following sidebars:**

- Page 173: Parent Advocates Help Students Make the Transition to Middle School
- Page 175: Support from Parents and Teachers Is Related to Higher Grades