



## Building Trusting Family-Teacher Partnerships

**Always consider families as a resource and help them to recognize themselves as resources. Provide the context for them to feel “empowered.”**

- Help families see that they have power, dignity, and authority in rearing their children.
- “Empowering” families is intentional and ongoing; it involves mutual respect, critical reflection, and caring so that families can gain access to and control over resources.

**Negotiate roles and responsibilities.**

- Include families in decision making for their child.
- Explain to families the importance of families in learning, right away and often.
- Invite and expect families to be partners in classroom management and homework.
- Clarify how they can help provide options.
- Encourage families to be assertive.
- Develop a “family-school agreement.”

**Reduce barriers.**

- Have contact with every family early in the school year.
- Establish ongoing communication systems; include “good news” phone calls.
- Use two communication formats that are both school → home and home → school.
- Bridge the language gap – strive to have the best communication between school and home with every family, including those who speak a language other than English, by accessing school and community resources; always try; ask students to help identify ways to communicate with their families.

**Create a spirit of cooperation and coordination.**

- Explore what they want school to accomplish.
- Devise opportunities for involvement that they see as practical and meaningful – this can be supporting learning at home.
- Work to coordinate learning at home and school.
- Reach out to families with warmth and sensitivity.
- Acknowledge that sharing power with families is not abdicating your role; rather, it provides an opportunity to understand interests and goals of families and learn how to achieve them.

**Engage in perspective taking.**

- Identify why families might not be involved:
  - Diverse school experiences of families.
  - Economic and time constraints.
  - Diverse linguistic and cultural practices.
  - Different values.
- “Resistance” is always a form of communication. Families may be seen as “resistant,” or they may simply hold different perspectives. Lack of communication about what is important to each party leads to notions of some parents being “resistant” or “hard to reach.” Genuinely attempt to develop a relationship with every family.



**Make your classroom welcoming and family friendly.**

- Consider physical appearance that is inviting, open to all.
- Consider affective climate that fosters warmth, sensitivity, and trust.
- Hold class “open houses” with students and families at variable times so that there can be shared learning experiences.

**Other Strategies**

- Use multiple efforts – no one way will work for all families.
- Make events fun!
- Plan for logistical barriers and build on flexibility.
- Invite families to help determine the best way for them to be involved.
- Meet families on their turf.
- Identify a family who can help spread good messages.
- Make sure roles are meaningful.
- Identify why families might not be involved and try to take their perspective; reach out.

Adapted from Future of School Psychology Task Force on Family-School Partnerships. (2007). *Family-school partnership training modules*. Retrieved from [http://fsp.unl.edu/future\\_index.html](http://fsp.unl.edu/future_index.html)



## School-Home-School Note\*

**Definition:** A School-Home-School Note serves as a two-way communication and intervention system that can identify, monitor, and support a student's new academic or behavioral learning at school and at home.

### Steps to Establishing A School-Home-School Note

- Have a conversation with teachers and family members.
- Include the student in explaining and planning at an appropriate time.
- Identify strengths and prioritize any concerns.
- Determine how goal(s) will be defined.
- Determine the criteria for success.
- Design the School-Home-School Note with two-way communication capacity, including the student.
- Establish responsibilities.
- Identify possible rewards for home and school – with student.
- Establish a reward system.
- Monitor and modify the system.
- Provide feedback for everyone.
- Troubleshoot or maintain or fade as needed.

\* Or Home-School-Home Note

Adapted from Future of School Psychology Task Force on Family-School Partnerships. (2007). *Family-school partnership training modules*. Retrieved from [http://fsp.unl.edu/future\\_index.html](http://fsp.unl.edu/future_index.html)





# Respectful Language

People First & Person-Centered

Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee

Do not try to fix me  
because I am not  
broken. Support me.  
I can make my  
contribution to the  
community in my  
way.

Respect the  
person



Never use  
the R-word



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# Respectful Language

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## Speak & Write with Respect!

Use my name  
not my label

### See the person, use their name

People first language is about respect, about seeing the person. It is about valuing the person as an equal. It is about seeing the child/teen/adult as a person and realizing that labels really don't matter when you get to know a child or a person with a disability.

*"Do not admire me. A desire to live a full life does not warrant adoration. Respect me for respect presumes equity." - Norm Kunc*

My name is  
Emma,  
what is  
yours?

Who, not what

### Language influences what we think

The minute we put a label on a person, their future is changed. If the language is respectful, caring and empowering, it has a positive effect. If the language has a negative connotation, it can damage confidence and self-esteem. Labels can help us understand an individual's needs but we have to be sure we see the person before the label and use the label to help, not hurt.

Do you want to be called by your label (physical features, disease, condition, skills, age, gender) ????????

Respect

### Some people value their differences

And prefer to be called an 'autistic' person. They feel that their brain differences are not separate from who they are and want to be seen as whole and not a person with a part of them that is 'broken'.



NeuroDiversity values all kinds of brain and body diversity

No R-word

### Spread the Word to End the Word

When people use the r-word and other derogatory terms towards themselves or others they are displaying not only a lack of respect but intolerance. Take the pledge to end the use of the r-word (from [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org))

***I pledge and support the elimination of the derogatory use of the r-word from everyday speech and promote the acceptance and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.***

It's not funny to say that is so re\*&rded, it is offensive to people with intellectual disabilities and the people who love them.

Media



### Journalists and reporters

Anytime you write, speak or refer to a person with a disability, please use person-first language:

- ⇒ He is a boy with Down syndrome.
- ⇒ She wears glasses and has a learning disability.
- ⇒ Her son is a four-year old with autism.
- ⇒ My child receives special education services.

The only exception is if the person you are writing about tells you something different. And always ask the person!

School

### There are no 'sped kids'

When we think and use respectful language, we see that saying things such as 'the sped kids eat lunch together' or 'that's the sped class' or 'those are my special ed students' or 'that's the autism room' we are not using person-first language. Teachers, staff, parents and students can support each other to use respectful language at all times, in all places.



Schools have classrooms, not sped rooms

Talk with,  
not about



### Talk to and with a person with a disability

Don't talk about them without them! In whatever way is appropriate for the person with a disability, include them in any discussion about them.

*"Do not try to control me. I have a right to my power as a person. What you call non-compliance or manipulation may actually be the only way I can exert control over my life." -Norm Kunc*

Nothing about us, without Us!



## Multi-Tiered Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) Supports Checklist

This *Checklist* was developed to assist family members, school staff, and community collaborators in assessing how their site or situation currently operationalizes partnering throughout the tiers or layers of support. Another term, “differentiated partnering” (Edwards, 2011), has been used to describe this idea – that there needs to be a continuum of partnering actions so as every student and family is successfully included in a school community. The goal is to ensure seamless partnering for every student’s success, matching supports to needs. This tool was created using the fifty plus years of research findings that specify the importance of family participation in students’ positive educational outcomes. Originally, this *Checklist* was developed to guide use of actions and tools as provided in the *Response to Intervention (RtI) Family & Community Partnering: “On the Team and At the Table” Toolkit* (Colorado Department of Education, 2009). It has since been adapted and revised according to stakeholder feedback, Colorado legislation, the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2008), and the Dual Capacity-Building Framework (U. S. Department of Education, 2013). Items represent the evidence-based actions identified in these various initiatives and documents within a tiered framework.

This *Checklist* can also be used in action planning. As individuals answer the questions, they have the opportunity to assess what they observe, experience, and know from their unique perspective. Individuals and/or different stakeholder groups can collect and analyze results as a whole and/or disaggregate to identify specific patterns or needs. Data can be used in strategically planning, implementing, and evaluating partnering activities. Using a team-based approach may allow for different individuals (educators, families, or community members) to share expertise they might have about supports that are aligned to certain areas of need. The *Checklist* can be used as an evaluation tool to help assess growth and effectiveness. In addition, the items in this assessment can be used to formulate specific partnering “job descriptions” for a specific role or set of responsibilities. The *Checklist* could be considered during performance evaluations or when developing professional growth goals, as well.



# Multi-Tiered Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) Supports Checklist

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_ Role (Educator, Family, Community): \_\_\_\_\_

INSTRUCTIONS: Please check those that you observe in your site or situation; note NA if not aware.

Universal Supports - All Families/Staff	
<b>SCHOOL: Our school administrators and all school staff members are...</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Creating a welcoming, culturally and linguistically responsive environment with multiple visiting and volunteering opportunities (home and school).
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Providing a shared understanding of the evidence and legal base for partnering.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Communicating partnering beliefs: (a) <i>Education is a shared responsibility between home and school;</i> (b) <i>Families are active partners;</i> (c) <i>Student success is always the focus.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Integrating partnering practices and language into all documents, procedures, and team processes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Ensuring every family uses the school technology - parent portal, email, website, texting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Ensuring every family member knows the importance of his/her actions in supporting learning at home:(a) <i>Frequent and systematic discussions about school;</i> (2) <i>Encouraging their children regarding schoolwork;</i> and (3) <i>Providing or working with resources to provide supervision, support for homework and after-school time.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Sharing the school's tiered MTSS or RtI framework with all staff and families.
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Providing family education on learning-related topics, based on identified needs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Including families in school decision-making and on leadership teams (SACs, DACs).
<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Using data systematically to improve and expand family partnering practices.
<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Allocating time for a staff person to support personnel and families in partnering.
<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Collaborating with community resources.
<input type="checkbox"/>	13. Implementing federal and state legislated partnership responsibilities, such as cited in ESEA, IDEA, SB 09-163, SB 09-256, SB 10-191, SB 13-193, ECEA, and READ Act.
<b>CLASSROOM: Our teachers and specialists are...</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Contacting every family personally to create ongoing, two-way communication.
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Ensuring each family, including students, understands class and homework success expectations, and how everyone will partner if a student struggles in learning.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Providing information on current class content so families can reinforce learning at home.
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Asking families what they need to support learning at home and following up.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Sending progress data regularly to families, with opportunities for discussion.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Telling students that school and home are working together for their success.
Targeted and Intensive Supports - Some or Few Families/Staff (Includes All Universal)	
<b>Our specialists/intervention teams, with teachers and administrators, are...</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Designating people and processes to reach out and individually encourage families and staff who may be hesitant or uncomfortable.
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Including families as active partners throughout the individualized MTSS problem solving process, providing information and participation in decision-making.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Supporting teachers and families in mutually developing and implementing individual student plans such as IEP, Behavior, READ, Truancy, and Advanced Learning.
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Ensuring families understand and participate in the implementation of small group (standard protocol) instructional academic and behavioral interventions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Individualizing family-school partnering plans and support when needed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Providing school, family and community wraparound when needed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Accessing conflict resolution support and processes when needed.
<b>Total Universal School: ___/13; Total Universal Classroom: ___/6; Total Upper Tiers: ___/7;</b>	
<b>SUPPORTS SUMMARY: Strengths: _____ Concerns: _____</b>	

\* Aligned with the *National Standards for Family-School Partnerships* (PTA, 2008), the research which relates specific, intentional family-school partnering to increased student success (Christenson and Reschly, 2010), and the *Dual Capacity-Building Framework* (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).