Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP)

An Essential Component

The Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework, a systems alignment and preventative, organizational approach to educational reform, consists of five Essential Components. Of these, the Component of Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) is explained in this document to illustrate its contribution to MTSS.

Partnering Rationale

The rationale for family, school, and community partnering comes from over fifty years of research that shows that partnering works to improve student outcomes (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). Research suggests that students may spend more than seventy percent of their waking hours outside school (Clark, 1990; Callender & Hansen, 2004); that statistic implies that the school is not the sole setting for student learning. And when partnering for student success takes shape, it is visible in ongoing, sustainable, and intentional relationships that enable learning to live in the schoolhouse, in the home, and in the community. Every stakeholder group benefits from partnering. These positive impacts include: (a) higher achievement for students; (b) more engaged families; (c) stronger community support for schools; and (d) improved teacher morale and teacher performance (Esler, Godber, & Christenson, 2008).

> *CO-MTSS is a prevention-based framework of team-driven, data-based problem solving for improving the outcomes of every student through family, school, and community partnering and a layered continuum of evidence-based practices applied at the classroom, school, district, region, and state level. (CDE definition, 2016)*

Definition

What is FSCP?

In CO-MTSS, Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) is defined as:
> *the collaboration of families, schools, and communities as active partners in improving learner, classroom, school, district, and state outcomes (CDE, 2013).*

This definition is an evolution of thinking that reflects a shift in the field from "involvement" to "partnering". With an emphasis on shared responsibility, the term "partnering" exemplifies the types of relationships that should be initiated and maintained. It is important that each member of the learning community (e.g., staff, family, student, or community liaison) has a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities within the team (Hoover-Dempsey, Whitaker, & Ice, 2010),

and *respect and reciprocity* are common amongst the team experiences. Additionally, saying "families" instead of "parents" is an effort to be more accurate and inclusive of all stakeholders who will be collaborating. As the significant adults within a student's life establish opportunities for coordination between different settings, a commitment to FSCP implementation will emerge. Language can influence, and within federal (ESSA; ESEA; IDEA) and state (SB 13-193; HB 12-1238; SB 09-90) legislation, heightened attention has focused on embedding the language of partnering.

Partnering Standards

The *National Standards for Family-School Partnerships* (PTA, 2008) provide guidance for effective partnering. Based on research, they can be applied at multiple levels and throughout the tiers (Epstein, 1995). According to legislation (SB 09-90), Colorado's State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE) aligns its efforts with the Standards.

These Standards for Partnerships can serve as expectations and outlines for FSCP:
- Welcoming All Families
- Communicating Effectively
- Supporting Student Success
- Speaking Up for Every Child
- Sharing Power
- Collaborating with Community

(On CDE SACPIE site)

How to Implement

Partnering Practices

According to research, children do best academically when the "overlapping spheres" of family, school, and community have collaboratively-developed shared goals (Simon & Epstein, 2001). Many of the practices that benefit partnerships (a) allow for access to resources, training, and materials; (b) demonstrate respect for cultural, linguistic, and learning differences; and (c) focus on results.

Effective partnering includes consistent implementation of these evidence-based practices:

- Ongoing two-way communication: *Frequent, systematic, and encouraging*
- Supporting learning at home and school
- Jointly developed educational plans
- Flexible hours and meeting times

- Use of partnering vocabulary (i.e., "we" and "our")
- Representative family participation on teams
- Team-based decision-making, action planning, progress monitoring, and evaluation

- Education of all stakeholders in sharing responsibility
- Policies, documents, artifacts, and materials represent partnering principles
- Effective homework design focused on successful completion

Just as MTSS has an expectation that supports are tiered and fluid –not finite nor permanent; similarly, multi-tiered family, school, and community partnering ensures that supports exist at the universal, targeted, and intensive levels for every stakeholder group. We label the supports, not the individuals, and the supports are provided according to identified needs. In multi-tiered partnering, as in the MTSS framework as a whole, the problem solving process is transparent, and everyone is "on the team and at the table" (CDE, 2009) sharing information and decision-making.

For More Information

- Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports: www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/fscp
- State Advisory Council on Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE): www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie

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