

# Family-School Partnerships in Rural Schools: Engaging Families to Promote School Success

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# Why Family-School Partnerships?

*“The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life... The research continues to grow and build an ever-strengthening case. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.”*

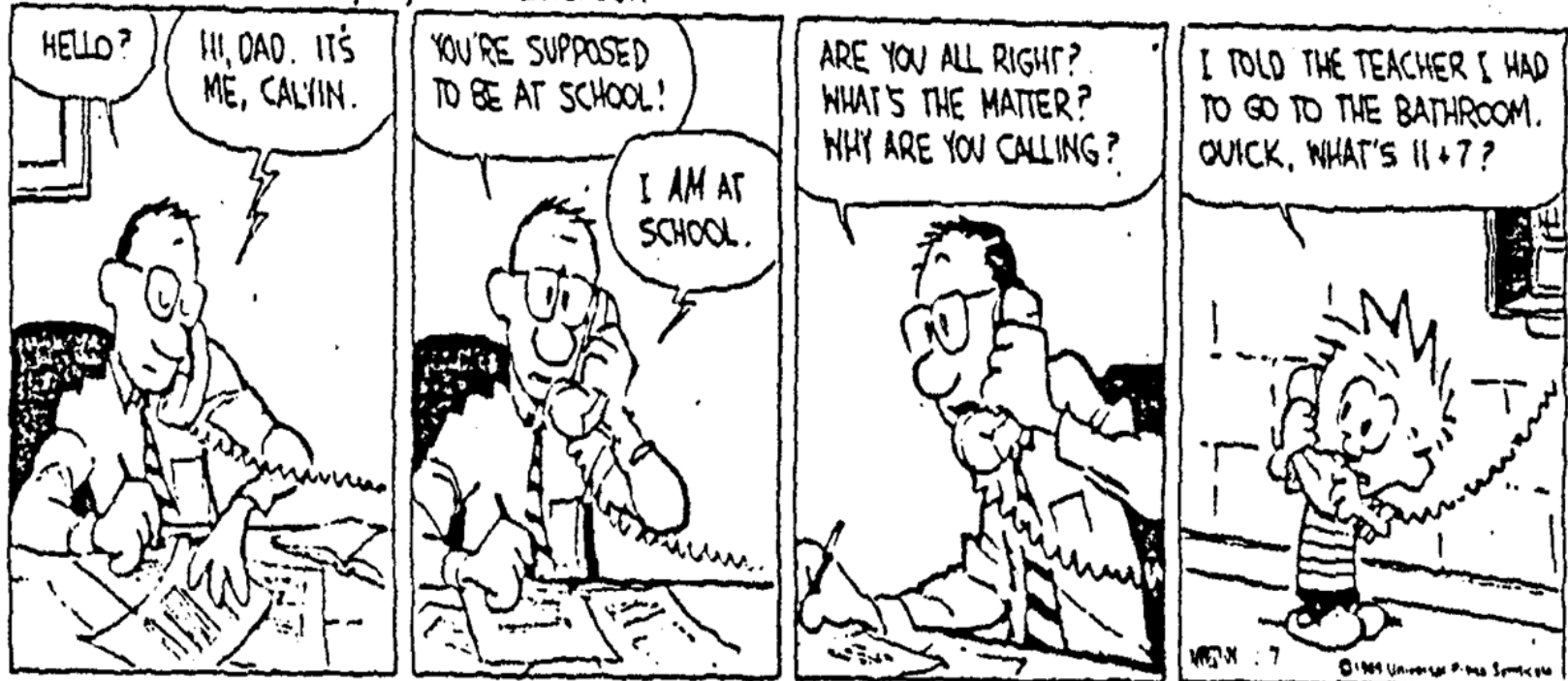
*(Henderson & Mapp, 2002)*

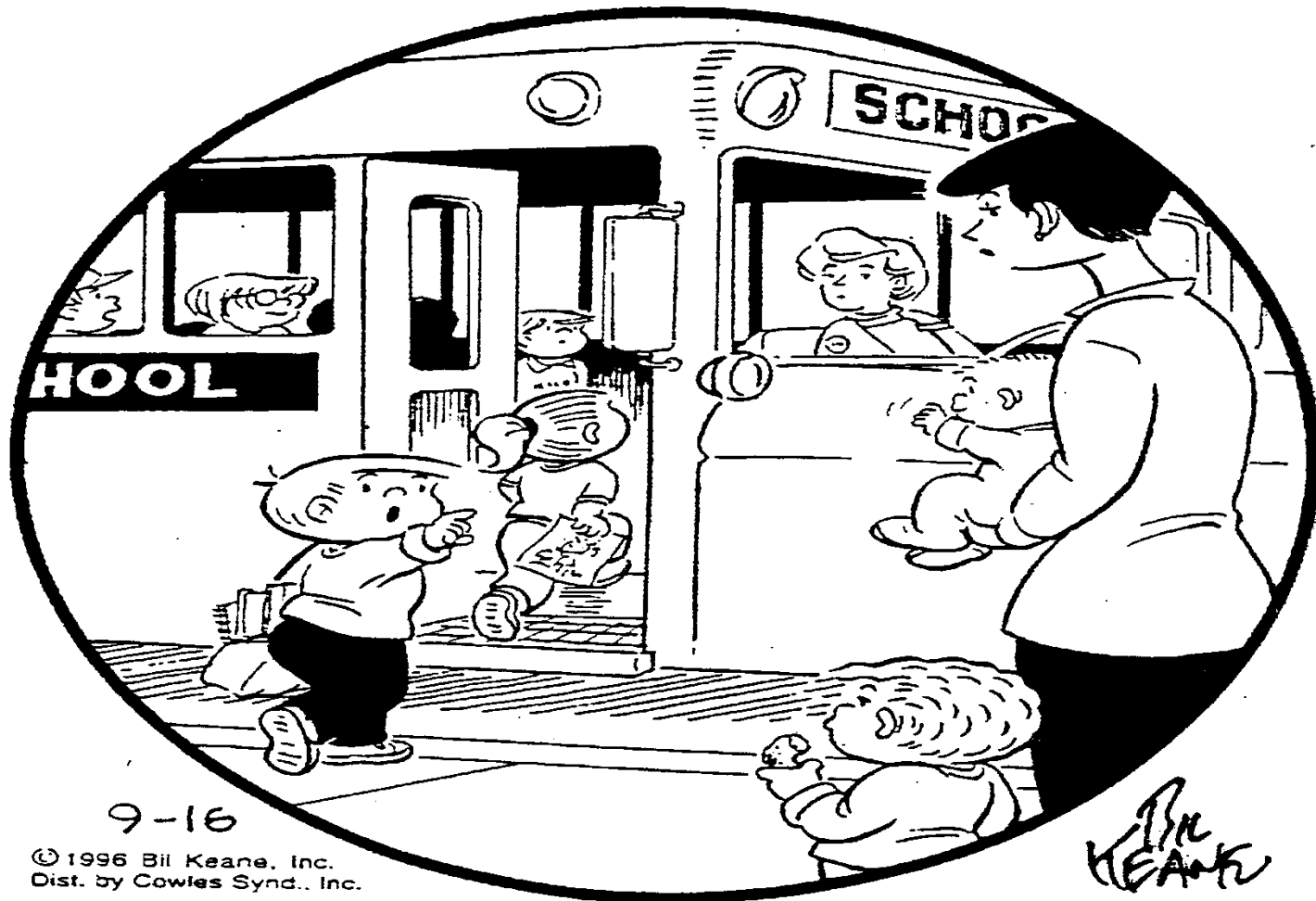
# Why Partner with Families?

- Learning occurs across many settings and contexts
- Children spend more time *out of* school than they do *in* school
- Maximizing the extent to which these systems work together on behalf of the child can *close the achievement gap* for students who are not succeeding in school

*There are many  
ways that families  
support  
education....*

## Calvin and Hobbes / By Bill Watterson





*"And when you find my homework, Mommy,  
please be sure to fax it right over."*

*Or not....*



*"Dad, can you read?"*





*“Your mother and I are feeling overwhelmed,  
so you’ll have to bring yourselves up”*

# Semantics or Substance?

- Parent Involvement
- Parent Engagement
- Family-School Partnership

# Family-School Partnerships

- Families are considered *partners in*, not *recipients of*, educational services
- Parents and teachers must *together*:
  - Encourage ongoing educational experiences
  - Promote positive learning outcomes in children
  - Ensure consistent support
  - Develop positive relationships across home and school

# Research Support:

## Benefits for School Turnaround Efforts

- ***Schools*** with high quality family engagement programs
  - Demonstrate greater levels of student performance and achievement (Sheldon, 2003)
  - Have fewer disciplinary problems, lessened disciplinary visits to the principals office, and decreased detentions and in-school suspensions (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002)
  - Experience decreases in absenteeism and truancy (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002)
  - Experience higher levels of parent volunteering, and more parents on school decision-making committees (Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004)

# Research Support:

## Benefits for School Turnaround Efforts

- When families and schools work together, ***students demonstrate***
  - Increased achievement and performance (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012)
  - Better study/work habits, homework completion and accuracy (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998)
  - Enhanced engagement and student efficacy (Grolnik & Slowiaczek, 1994)
  - Lower grade retention, drop out rates (Barnard, 2003; Miedel & Reynolds, 2000)
  - Decreases in disruptive behaviors (Sheridan et al., 2012)

# Research Support: Benefits to Rural Schools

- In rural schools, family-school partnerships have been found to be
  - *Important*: an essential factor in high-performing, high needs rural schools (Barley & Beesley, 2007)
  - *Effective*: linked to school success (Bauch, 2001) and operative in promoting academic skills (Brody et al., 1995)

# Challenges to Family-School Partnership in Rural Schools

- Isolation (Beloin & Peterson, 2000)
- Logistical barriers (Weiss & Correa, 1996)
- Parent uncertainty and trust (Owens et al., 2007)
- Lack of resources and training (Lowe, 2006; McBride et al., 2002; Monk, 2007)

# How to Get There:

## *A Framework for Working with Families*



# Family-School Partnerships Video: The Teachers' Perspective

# Developing Pathways to Partnerships

## *The 5 A's:*

- Approach
- Attitude
- Atmosphere
- Actions
- Achievement

(Christenson & Sheridan, 2001)

# The 5 A's

## ***Prerequisite Conditions:***

**Approach**

**Attitude**

**Atmosphere**

### **Actions:**

Family engagement in learning  
Home-school communication  
Establishing continuity  
Joint decision-making & problem-solving

### **Achieve:**

Successful learning  
experiences  
& outcomes  
for students &  
families

# Approach

Framework for establishing families & schools as *partners*

- The *system* adopts partnerships with families as its anchor philosophy
- There is a *shared responsibility* for educating and socializing children
- Emphasis is on *relationships*, rather than separate roles

# Attitude

Underlying beliefs about children's and families' values, practices, and culture

- All families have strengths
- Parents can help their children succeed
- Parents have important information & perspectives to educate children & achieve goals
- Parents and educators are co-equals with shared goals
- There is no room for blame; no one is at “fault”

# Atmosphere

The tone or climate set by the values of the community

- The *physical climate* in schools that make them inviting and family-friendly
- The *affective climate* that makes interactions among families and schools positive

# Actions

## Putting it All Together

- All actions and interactions with families should be:
  - Collaborative
  - Planful
  - Partnership-oriented
  - Focused on relationships between families and programs/schools

# Achievement

A partnership-oriented

Approach

+ Attitude

+ Atmosphere

+ Actions

= ***Student Achievement***



# To Get There...

We need to:

- Help parents recognize that they are essential in their child's learning and schooling
- Promote a role for parents as partners in learning
- Help parents share in the responsibility for setting and attaining educational goals

# Communication

*Communication is the foundation for:*

- Sharing information
- Establishing shared goals for education
- Setting expectations for learning and behavior
- Keeping up on classroom activities and home events
- Helping parents support school instruction
- Helping teachers understand out of school time
- Avoiding misunderstandings

# Communication Video: The Teachers' Perspective

# Guidelines for Effective Communication

- Maintain a positive orientation
- Consider tone, as well as content
- Develop two-way communication systems
- Use effective conflict management strategies
- Always keep the child at the center
- Stay focused on child's performance
- Make sure parents have necessary information
- Use both formal and informal methods
- Underscore all communications with *shared responsibility* for student success

(Christenson & Sheridan, 2001)

*Conjoint Behavioral Consultation provides an effective process for improving student's classroom success by connecting parents and teachers, and supporting the delivery of consistent, effective plans across home and school.*

# Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC)

- A structured indirect form of support in which teachers and parents work together to promote positive skills and decrease interfering behaviors
- Teachers and parents collaborate to:
  - Develop goals to promote academic, behavioral, and social skills in students
  - Design and implement plans for use at home and school
  - Monitor students' progress
  - Evaluate achievement of student goals

# Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

- Promotes and supports *home-school partnerships* in the context of cooperative and collegial problem-solving
- Emphasizes meaningful family engagement in education
- A vehicle by which to foster constructive, goal directed, solution-oriented services for children

# Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

- Consistency and congruence across home & school systems are emphasized
- Structured process facilitates
  - Joint problem solving
  - Identification and implementation of evidence-based behavioral strategies
  - Clear communication
  - Shared goals



# How Does CBC Help Students Achieve?

- Helps teachers problem solve with parents and develop and deliver highly effective plans
- Helps parents develop skills to problem solve with teachers and support their children's learning at home
- Provides a method for developing positive and effective home-school partnerships
- Builds consistency between home and school
- Strengthens relationships between families and schools

# CBC Video: The Teachers' Perspective

# Key Ingredients of CBC

- 1. Parents & teachers come together**
- 2. A series of 3-4 constructive, action-oriented meetings** to discuss, brainstorm, and *problem solve*
- 3. Mutually supportive and consistent strategies** are put into place at home and in the classroom

# Research Finding: Achievement

Compared to controls or other interventions, students receiving CBC have been shown significantly greater gains in

- teacher-rated academic productivity and academic skills (Murray, Rabiner, Schulte, & Newitt, 2008)
- parent-rated homework performance (Power et al., 2012)
- math performance and accuracy (Galloway & Sheridan, 1994; Weiner, Sheridan, & Jenson, 1998)

# Research Findings: Behavioral & Social/Emotional

CBC has been shown to be effective for:

- increasing teacher ratings of on-task and compliant behavior for students with emotional and behavioral difficulties (Wilkinson, 2005a; Wilkinson 2005b)
- significantly improving preschool children's behavior compared to controls (Kratochwill et al., 2003)
- improving school-related behavior more than other consultation models (Guli, 2005)
- improving students' social skills (Colton & Sheridan, 1998; Sheridan et al., 1990)

# Research Findings: Diverse Populations

CBC has been shown to be effective for

- Head Start students (Kratochwill et al., 2003; Sheridan, Clarke, Knoche, & Edwards, 2006)
- children with pediatric/medical needs (Lasecki et al., 2008; Sheridan et al., 2009)
- culturally diverse students (Sheridan, Eagle, & Doll, 2006)
- children with developmental disabilities (Ray, Skinner & Watson, 1999; Wilkinson 2005)

# Current Research Findings for Students

Sheridan et al. (2012) Randomized Controlled Trial:

- 207 students (K-3) with disruptive behaviors
- Individualized target concerns and intervention plans involving home-school note, reinforcement, and plan tactics
- Relative to controls, children in the CBC group demonstrated significantly greater improvements in
  - ***adaptive behaviors*** ( $p < .05$ ; ES = .47) and ***social skills*** ( $p < .05$ ; ES = .44)
  - ***problem behaviors*** (noncompliance, defiance, tantrums, arguing) ( $p$ 's  $< .01 - .05$ )

# Current Research Findings for Teachers and Parents

## Sheridan et al. (2012; in prep) Randomized Controlled Trial

- Relative to controls
  - CBC teachers reported significantly greater increases in their ***positive beliefs about parental involvement*** ( $p < .01$ ) and overall ***relationship with parents*** ( $p < .01$ )
  - CBC parents reported significantly greater increases in ***home-school communication*** ( $p < .05$ ) and ***participation in problem solving*** ( $p < .001$ )
- Relationships between parents and teachers **deteriorated** for those not involved in CBC



# Current Research Findings in Rural Schools

- Preliminary findings suggest:
  - Decreases in externalizing behaviors in the CBC group that are 2.5 times greater than the control group
  - Greater improvements in adaptability, social skills and adaptive behaviors in the CBC relative to control group

*“CBC helped me bond with the parents, and it really created some good friendships. We were able to be real with each other and say we’re going to help each other and just be a team.”*

*– Kindergarten Teacher*

# CBC Goals

- Promote positive academic, socioemotional, and behavioral outcomes for children
- Increase parent engagement in learning
- Build capacities of all participants (families and educators)
- Establish and strengthen home-school relationships and partnerships

# Video Example



# Stages of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

- Needs Identification
- Needs Analysis/Plan Development
- Plan Implementation
- Plan Evaluation

# Needs Identification

## Goals:

- Identify strengths of the child, family, teacher, systems
- Behaviorally define the concern across home & school settings
- Explore environmental conditions that may be contributing to problem behaviors (antecedent, consequent, & sequential conditions)
- Determine a shared goal for consultation
- Establish a procedure for collecting baseline data across settings

# Needs Analysis

## Goals:

- Evaluate & obtain agreement on the sufficiency & adequacy of baseline data across settings
- Identify setting events, ecological conditions, & cross-setting variables that may be impacting the target concerns
- Collaboratively design an effective intervention plan across settings that is sensitive to setting-specific variables

# Video Example





# Plan Development

- Parent and teacher together discuss general strategies and specific plans to be included in a treatment package across home and school settings
- The closer the congruity and coordination of plans across settings, the better!
  - Home programs may involve home-school notes, procedures for enhancing learning environments and opportunities outside of school, etc.
- Brainstorming techniques generate ideas openly from parents and teachers

# Video Example



# Plan Implementation

## Goals:

- Monitor implementation of the intervention across settings
- Provide training to parents and teacher, if necessary
- Assess behavioral side effects & contrast effects (unforeseen problems due to treatment plan)
- Determine the need for immediate revisions in the plan
- Continue data collection procedures across settings

# Plan Evaluation

## Goals:

- Determine if the shared goals of consultation have been attained
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the plan across settings
- Discuss strategies & tactics regarding the continuation, modification, or termination of the treatment plan across settings
- Schedule additional interviews if necessary
- Discuss ways to continue conjoint problem solving or shared decision making

# Video Example



# CBC in Rural Communities

- Rural schools are uniquely positioned to implement and benefit from the CBC model
  - Dedicated to partnering with parents
  - Flexible attitude about the role of schools
  - Creatively meet the needs of students
    - “Do what it takes” attitude
  - Rich history of school and community pride
  - Schools are the center of the community

# CBC In Rural Communities Video: The Teachers' Perspective

# CBC in Rural Communities

CBC helps rural schools overcome unique challenges:

- Instills camaraderie and increases communication reducing *isolation*
- Flexibility of the model and family input allows for creative ways to overcome *logistical barriers*
- Focus on building positive relationships and frequent communication overcomes *lack of trust*
- Evidence-based intervention and practical strategies provides *teachers* and parents *tools* they can use





National Center for **Research** on  
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# Thank You!

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