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## **Team Building**

### **DoDDS--Okinawa District Okinawa, Japan**

The development of a district leadership team resulted from our effort to implement the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) Community Strategic Plan Goal 8—Parent Partnerships. Working as a team provided benefits to the team members and to the organization. We believed that in order to build capacities within our organization and achieve Goal 8 by the year 2000, we needed to build a team that represented and reflected our community members. Our team cross-section was comprised of a district liaison, parent, educator, administrator and military representative. Although our team was small, we were able to effectively accomplish our goals. We believed this was a result of two elements: effective team building and shared decision-making.

The DODEA Community Strategic Plan for Parent Partnerships became the team's road map and provided our mission, goal and benchmark statements. We also used the comprehensive conceptual framework which reflected a multifaceted, five-tiered model through which we would develop parent partnerships. Our task was to come up with a viable Action Plan, which would help us accomplish our goals.

As members of the Okinawa District Parent Partnership Leadership Team, we saw ourselves as individuals as well as part of a group working toward mutually agreed upon subgoals based on the Community Strategic Plan, the conceptual framework, and our Action Plan. Our collective knowledge of our school community, combined with local needs assessments and documented research, provided us with the base from which we charted our course, evaluated our effectiveness, experimented with fresh roles, and took new sightings as we followed our map toward our destination. Our journey provided us with several realizations.

Because of the permanency of our work, we realized two very important factors about our team: it would not die, and the members would not remain the same. Due to the mobile nature of a military community and the subsequent departure of some of our original members and arrival of others, new dynamics emerged. As we adjusted to these changes, individuals took on new roles. The legacies given by those who departed were nurtured and shared as a result of the knowledge and experience gained through the teamwork that we had put in place. While there were periodic adjustments, the group remained strong, steadfast, and focused because of the underlying confidence in one another and the team.

We feel that our success can be attributed to effective team building. Effective team building incorporates the following attributes: knowing there is value in the work we do; recognizing that each person is an equal and esteemed member of the team; appreciating and acknowledging each member and the team for achievements. We also believe that our team's success has resulted from having clear goals and subgoals, developing a realistic and manageable Action Plan, assessing and evaluating our steps frequently, and adjusting our course when necessary. Together we were able to define our tasks and the kinds of roles each member would play. As Joe Paterno, Head Football Coach, Penn State University said, "When a team outgrows individual performance and learns team confidence, excellence becomes a reality." Teamwork is the first step in building capacities within

schools, districts and organizations, any school can replicate the conditions for positive outcomes and improvement. Teamwork, combined with goals and a plan of action, can produce very powerful results.

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