
KNOWLEDGE BANK

Naperville Community Unit School District 203

Naperville, Illinois

When knowledge is shared, everyone wins, especially the students. The Naperville District School-Family-Community Partnership Core Team initiated the Knowledge Bank to leverage the experience and expertise that existed within each school for the benefit of all schools. The Knowledge Bank is a database of all the family and community involvement programs that are sponsored throughout the district. The Core Team wanted to prevent each school from reinventing the wheel as they developed their own partnership programs. They also wanted to ensure that everyone knew of the many diverse and valuable programs that existed and how to find out more about them if they were interested in sponsoring a similar activity at their school.

To develop the Knowledge Bank, the Core Team created a database format that would capture all of the key information about each activity or program. The database recorded:

- Activity name;
- Activity description;
- Name of sponsoring school;
- Name of sponsoring group (mostly Action Teams for Partnerships, but also included Home & School and Booster Club activities when relevant); and
- Contact name, phone number, and e-mail address.

The database organized entries around the framework of six types of involvement. Then, within each of the six categories the database separated the activities by elementary, junior high, and high school. For easier reference, the database also indicated activities that occurred at all schools and activities with similar themes.

With the format developed, the Core Team presented the idea to the twenty-one school principals in the district. The team followed-up this presentation with a formal request to principals and their Action Team for Partnerships chairpersons to complete the database forms for their school's activities. Schools received an example of one school's programs in order to understand how to complete the forms accurately and to gain an understanding of the kind of information they could expect to obtain from the Knowledge Bank. A group of four Core Team members worked with individual schools to answer any questions and ensure the information was returned by the deadline.

When the Core Team received all of the data, the information was typed, and the result was an eighteen-page document that included over one hundred programs. The Knowledge Bank was then presented at the annual Fall Orientation meeting to all new Action Team for Partnerships chairpersons and principals from across the district. Each school received a copy of the Knowledge Bank and the district's website posted a copy.

There was no money required to implement this practice. The Knowledge Bank did utilize people's time to collect, organize, type, and distribute program information.

In its first year of existence, the Knowledge Bank has been useful in a variety of ways across the district. Some schools used the database as an idea generator. Some called other Action Teams for more information about a specific program and how it was implemented. Still others have called schools that are sponsoring the same program to see if they can get ideas on ways to enhance their current activities.

Improvements to the Knowledge Bank are already under construction. Next year's Knowledge Bank will have two versions: the original version organized by the six types of involvement and a second version organized by school. This second version will allow individual school's information to be printed more easily and will give the Core Team a better idea of what each school is doing and where it can offer support.

Beyond knowledge sharing, the database has encouraged more networking among the twenty-one schools within the district.

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