

## Practice Journals

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The South Carolina School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) assisted school Action Teams for Partnerships in Florence County School District #1 to build evaluation of their partnership practices into their continuous improvement process through the use of Practice Journals. After the ATPs completed each partnership practice from their One-Year Action Plans, they recorded in a Practice Journal the various components needed for successful implementation. They noted what worked well, what needed improvement, and what unanticipated surprises occurred that would direct future implementation. In addition to serving as a formative evaluation tool, the Practice Journal led to a compilation of 20 partnership practices that was bound and distributed to schools in the district.

Four Title I elementary schools participated in the two-year professional development pilot that focused on improving the quality and quantity of family involvement in their schools. To start, SC-SIC guided each school team to complete an inventory of their partnership practices based on the Framework of Six Types of Involvement. The Council also helped the schools create a profile of the challenges to involvement experienced by families in their schools. The inventory and profile informed the ATPs' plans for partnerships.

While the teams implemented their action plans throughout the school year, they participated in regular learning sessions with the SC-SIC facilitator. The Practice Journal served as a continuous improvement tool during the learning sessions. At each session, the facilitator

asked participants to share a verbal review of at least one entry with the other ATPs. Sometimes one team simply described the practice to the other teams as a means of a quick update. In other instances, the ATP members were mixed up and shared practices based on partnership type. Each team contributed at least one practice per type of involvement at the end of the year. The facilitator reviewed, collected, and edited the individual journal entries for the published booklet of partnership practices distributed to schools and the district.

The Action Teams for Partnerships initially expressed uncertainty about the required journal writing and the time needed to develop the entries. Over time, the value of this reflective process became evident. ATPs became more adept at creating journal entries that recorded important information to aid their program's development and influence others who would read about the practices in the published collection.

As one principal reflected, "It was hard to do, but worth it after completing a few journal entries with the team."

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