

Fundamentals of Family Involvement Trainings

*Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Madison, Wisconsin*

Officials from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) brought systemized training to a new level last year when they partnered with another state-wide initiative to conduct seminars in 12 regional and district locations across the state. The Fundamentals of Family Involvement Trainings were offered to more than 300 school administrators and parents who were interested in expanding their NNPS training beyond the state's annual Parent Leadership Conference.

DPI staff partnered with Wisconsin's Responsive Education for All Children (REACH) initiative to make the trainings a reality. They wanted sessions to be more accessible to educators in all regions in the state, many of whom found it difficult to travel many miles to a central location.

The REACH program helps school administrators foster positive communication and collaborative problem solving. Like the NNPS model, REACH focuses on community partnerships and family involvement. DPI leaders for partnerships saw an opportunity to combine training forces with REACH. Staff decided that the NNPS framework would serve as a good base for the training sessions.

Planning and implementing the Family Involvement Trainings were truly collaborative efforts! REACH lent DPI funding to cover food, advertising, and facility costs for the training sessions. DPI staff provided the staff and materials. REACH helped promote the events by listing them on its web site. DPI also promoted the event and encouraged many sites to attend. A total of about \$12,000 covered costs.

During the 07-08 school year, more than 300 school administrators and community members traveled to 12 locations around the state to receive training. Working in small groups, participants inventoried their school's current family involvement practices, identified institutional challenges they faced, and tried to

link the challenges and practices together. Staff from DPI gave talks on the six types of parental involvement and how to organize Action Teams for Partnerships (ATP). At the end of the session, participants had the opportunity to begin working on their schools' One-Year Action Plans for Partnerships.

The sessions proved very popular with school leaders across the state. At one session, DPI staff trained 80 eager ATP members. Evaluations at the end of each session reflected the real enthusiasm for the training. "I want to pass this info on and convince our local district to participate," one person said.

"Sharing ideas with other schools, brainstorming positive and negative about our own school—great to learn that I'm doing things to build bonds with parents," another participant added.

The state plans to continue the training sessions next year. They are considering methods to offer more post-seminar support to participants, including the development of a web conference for recently trained members.

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