

ATP COMMITTEES

BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS ACADEMY OF MILWAUKEE MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Type 5

When the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at the Business and Economics Academy of Milwaukee attracted 30 parents to its monthly meetings, the team knew it had a good thing going, and that it wanted to keep going. The team knew it needed to involve all interested parents in meaningful ways. After brainstorming ideas about how to do this, the ATP, working with the school staff and AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers decided the answer was: committees. More specifically, committees could work on topics and projects of special interest to the participating parents and the school.

The result was the formation of four committees, each focusing on a different type of family involvement and on needs of the school and its students:

- » *Fatherhood*
- » *Diversity and Special Student Needs*
- » *Tips for Learning at Home*
- » *Community Outreach.*

Each committee of parents, teachers and students elected a chairperson and developed a committee-portion of a One-Year Action Plan within the first two months. At each monthly ATP meeting, the committees had time to meet and also to report to the greater group about its activities. "Though each committee is at a different stage, all committees reviewed and updated their action plans and are making progress toward their goals," said an AmeriCorps volunteer working at the school.

For instance, the Tips for Learning at Home Committee produced two tip sheets that it published in the parent newsletter and distributed at parent-teacher conference. The Outreach Committee planned a major cleanup of the nearby Butterfly Park for June and is applying to the city to use a plot of land for a community garden. The Fatherhood Committee is planning summer activities, such as a bike ride, for students and

their fathers or father figures. The Special Needs Committee planned several projects, including establishing a support group for parents.

A smaller, fifth committee, the Dance Team Committee, created a girls' dance team and is working on a step team for boys. The girls' team performed as part of the school's Black History Month celebrations in February.

ATP parent members contributed hundreds of volunteer hours in classrooms and on field trips this year. The team also held monthly parent workshops and two well-attended family math and science nights.

"The committees help structure parent involvement so that parents are working actively on something . . . to improve student achievement, and it gets them really active and engaged in a positive way," said the school's social worker. The principal had high praise for the ATP. "It's the first parent group I've ever worked with that has talked about academics," he said.

The new committee structure has been so effective that the ATP plans to continue and strengthen it, giving these committees a larger role in planning school events, taking over some of the responsibilities shouldered by school staff and AmeriCorps volunteers.

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