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Coach's Corner

Partnerships

Written by Meghan Pallante, Delaware Stars Technical Assistant

As humans, we are social beings that strive for connection with others. Forming connections, relationships, and communities is an important piece of finding our place in the world. When it comes to children the old saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Anyone who spends time with children knows this to be true. But what does that village look like when it comes to early childhood education? The village starts in the early childhood education program, but through partnerships, can extend beyond that into the community. Fortunately, there are many ways to form these partnerships and make connections within our communities.

Types of Partnerships

Family Partnerships

Unsure of where to begin? Start with your own families! Social events are a great way to get families involved in the program. This helps families to get to know each other and promotes a community atmosphere within your program. Consider sending out a survey to see how parents would like to get involved. Some of them may have their own ideas for events or activities. Also, consider the uniqueness of the families in your program. Find out if any would be interested in sharing a family tradition or something from their culture. Some ideas could include sharing music, games, or even a meal/snack. This will also promote inclusivity throughout your program!

School Partnerships

Another avenue for partnerships would be with local schools. Think about your surrounding community. Even if your program does not serve school-age children, are there schools that you could contact? Consider looking beyond the school districts and also reaching out to private and charter schools. There are many benefits to school partnerships. Schools can provide useful information on kindergarten readiness, registration deadlines, family events, workshops, etc. Having connections with elementary schools can help ease the transition for pre-kindergarten students moving on to kindergarten. Consider reaching out to a kindergarten teacher to speak to the pre-k children about all of the things to look forward to in kindergarten. This could even be done virtually now that, thanks to the pandemic, we are all tech experts.



Community Partnerships

The possibilities are endless with community connections! Start by making a list of the organizations and businesses in your area and divide them into categories. Choose a few different ones that sound the most interesting or beneficial.

- Safety- Many times police or fire stations will be willing to come out to talk with the children and families. These connections can be both educational and entertaining for the program.
- Libraries- The libraries can provide more than just reading materials. They have events and resources for children and families. The libraries throughout Delaware have been more than happy to partner with early childhood programs. Keep in mind that, in addition to books, the Delaware libraries have early literacy crates available to borrow.
- Community Centers- Community centers are a great way to make multiple connections in your area. Most have a variety of events at their locations that may be of interest to families in your program. In addition, they may have large spaces that could be used for family events or pre-k graduations.
- Assisted Living/Nursing Homes/Senior Centers- Consider forming a relationship with organizations that support older folks. The children could write letters or draw pictures and form pen pal relationships. In addition, this connection would be sure to put a smile on the older generations' faces.
- Other Early Childhood Education Programs- It can be helpful to form relationships with other programs in your area. This is helpful for discounts on field trips, coordinating transportation, and just general support in the field.
- Charitable organizations- Consider organizing a volunteer event for families and staff. This is a great way to give to the community while teaching our kids a valuable lesson.

Obviously these types of partnerships could have a positive impact on the climate of your program, but there are additional benefits to reaching out into the community.

- Many times forming family and community partnerships can lead to marketing opportunities. If there are large businesses or corporations in your area, consider some sort of referral program or mutual advertising. Planning and implementing family events is a way to ensure that families feel like an integral part of your program. When families are happy, they are more likely to recommend your program. And we all know how important word-of-mouth recommendations are in our field! Sometimes the “community feeling” of a program may be what helps a family choose between two quality early childhood education programs.
- For family child care programs, forming community partnerships can help with the feeling of isolation that some family child care educators experience.

These are just a few of the ways to form partnerships for your program. There are so many more ways to connect. As we stated, the benefits of forming partnerships are endless, but the most important is the sense of belonging to your community!

Professional Development

- School Age: Building Community with Partner Schools (Virtual)- DIEEC PD

Resources

- [NAEYC- Building Reciprocal Relationships with Communities](#)
- [Edutopia-The Home-School Team: An Emphasis on Parent Involvement](#)