

Partnerships – the Key to Excellent Education

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Collaboration, cooperation, working together – all are important if each child is going to achieve.

Learning is a very private effort. Each person learns in a different way, has different strengths, weaknesses, and interest in learning different things. Most of us learn best if we have a teacher, coach or mentor. That is the most intimate collaboration, teacher and learner. An excellent teacher is one of the most powerful tools in education. An excellent teacher knows students' needs, interests, and strengths. An excellent teacher motivates students to work hard to learn even those subjects that are difficult or uninteresting for them.

It sounds quite simple, but in truth, education is a very complex effort. We want our students to know many facts. We know they need to be problem solvers and critical thinkers. We need to inform them about careers and to have all those skills employers need in this 21st century. Yet, each child comes with different skills, needs, and support systems and, immediately, it is much more complicated. An important partnership needed to help our children learn is the partnership between the parent and the excellent teacher, because learning takes place all the time, not just in the classroom.

Excellent teachers need the support and collaboration of their principals, fellow teachers and district leadership if they are going to have all the resources needed to teach each student. Excellent teachers need the time and encouragement to work together on classroom practices that affect learning.

Communities that support and partner with their schools are valuable to the learning process. Not just money, but the knowledge and experience of parents, citizens, and business owners shared with educators and students enrich every child's learning.

Leadership of the State Board of Education and Ohio Department of Education helps educators use what is being discovered about how people learn and what is needed for successful learning. We partner with all educators by providing the policies and the training, professional development, guidelines, standards and benchmarks necessary to educate Ohio's students for this new century. Parents can access information and guidance on education for their child on the ODE website. We advise Legislators on laws that will give our students and educators the tools they need for success. Early research and policy initiatives are formulated by the State Board and ODE. We serve as the catalyst for education policy in our state.

Higher education is another important partner, teaching our teachers and researching learning. The early college, AP program, Tech Prep, dual enrollment, PSEO and Senior to Sophomore efforts to give high school students college credit before leaving high school have increased the need for cooperation and close partnerships between high schools and colleges in our state.

The latest collaboration in the state of Ohio has brought together all the partners. After much research by the State Board and ODE, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) learning has been seen as a necessary area for concentration in education with importance to the economy, work force, and

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achievement. We provided the leadership to pull together The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, National Governors' Association, the State Legislature, and Governors' office to provide millions of dollars in extra resources to create regional STEM schools and develop STEM programs for training teachers. The Board of Regents developed the requirements and expectations for the partnerships. Throughout the state, school districts, colleges, foundations, and businesses have cooperated in making application for the money available. For all these efforts to work, many people from many different segments of our communities and many different levels and departments of government will need to be true, active, complete partners.

At this time, the Dayton and Cleveland regions have been awarded start up grants to create STEM academies that will serve students. In Dayton, 19 educational and 10 business and government partners will create a STEM School on the Wright State University campus scheduled to open in 2009 with ninth graders. School enrollment will expand to grades 6-12 in coming years. There is more money available for other regions to apply. Smaller programs to train teachers of all grade levels for deeper knowledge in the STEM disciplines are being awarded to school district partnerships throughout the state. These efforts exemplify powerful partnerships at work.

At the heart of it all, each student, each excellent teacher and each family will need to be partners as well.

Use your resources to learn more by visiting www.ode.state.oh.us. There are parent pages, a search engine to explore your area of interest and lots of information about education in Ohio.