

How schools, parents can work together for successful kids

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It is widely understood that, ideally, schools and parents should work together to ensure that children can succeed as students and citizens. But what is the right balance? And how much do teachers want parents involved in the classroom? A new study from North Carolina State University identifies ways that schools and communities can work with parents to give children the greatest chance of success.

Researchers at NC State say that the formation of "child and family teams" (CFTs) may be extremely useful in helping young people who are having difficulty with grades or behavior become more engaged and do well in [school](#) and life. Dr. Jocelyn Taliaferro, an associate professor of [social work](#) at NC State and co-author of the study, explains that a CFT "takes a 'village' approach. A child and his or her family decide who would be on the team - such as teachers, social workers, pastors or other community members - and then work with the team to develop a plan for helping the child succeed both in school and in the broader community. One advantage of this approach is that it removes the 'us versus them' mentality, by bringing in a broad support group and giving the child and family some control over the situation."

However, the researchers found in their study that some school personnel and community members are ambivalent about the prospect of involving family members in the decision-making process at their schools. For example, Taliaferro says, teachers think parental involvement is important, but they also are often concerned that the parents may be contributing to a child's problem rather than being part

of the solution.

Addressing this ambivalence is essential, Taliaferro says, "because if school and community members, such as teachers and mentors, do not buy in to the CFT concept it is not going to work."

One way that school administrators and other leaders can address this concern is to "encourage parents to be involved and provide parents with opportunities to interact with the school," Taliaferro says. "You cannot change the feelings of people who may be skeptical, but you can change behaviors. And if there is more interaction, and you begin to see some success with the CFT approach, you will get more buy-in from those who may have been doubtful of the process."

Taliaferro says that another factor that can make the CFT approach more productive is for school leaders to accept broad participation in the program by extended family and friends of the children involved. "The involvement of extended family and friends can supplement parental involvement in supporting the kids and moving them in the right direction. It can also help school personnel better understand a child's background," she says.

Taliaferro notes that it is important for schools to take steps to give parents and children an active role in making decisions that affect them. "We say it is a parental right and responsibility to be involved in their child's education, but we have historically limited opportunities for their involvement."

More information: The study, "I can see [parents](#) being reluctant': perceptions of parental involvement using child and family teams in schools," and is being published online in the August issue of the journal *Child and [Family](#) Social Work*.

Source: North Carolina State University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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