

# SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

“Through commitment and creativity school partnerships will generate strong community spirit. Community spirit makes a school more than just a building—it creates a learning environment where students feel the commitment of their fellow students, their principal, their teachers, and their parents. This shared commitment will make the common goal a reality—better education.” (*School Council Resource Manual*, Alberta Learning, 1995)

## Advantages of School and Parent/Community Partnerships

Educating children and youth is an important and shared responsibility.

When parents, families, and the community are involved in the education of children and youth

- student achievement tends to increase
- students feel more supported
- students’ attitudes change in a positive way

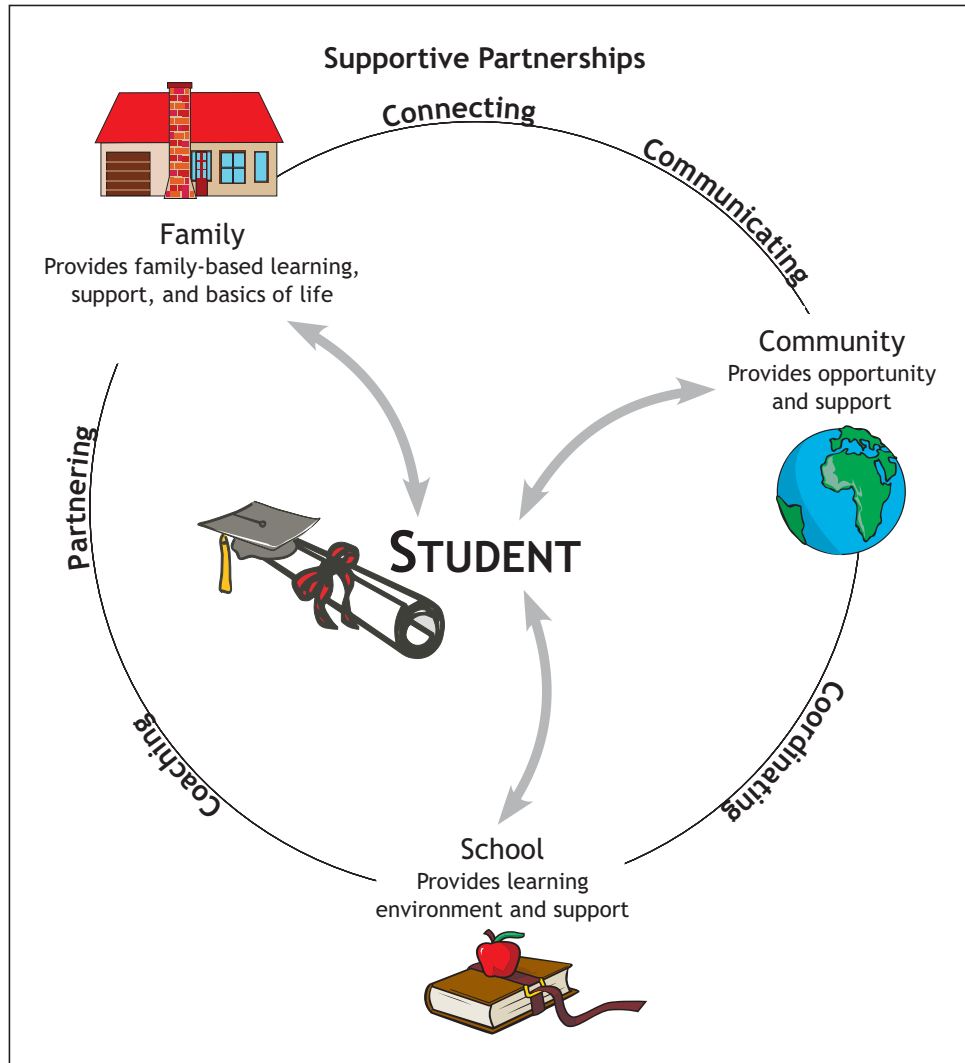
When parents are involved in the decision-making process they are more likely to support the decisions that are made. Parents, families, and community members provide valuable perspectives that enhance the decision-making process.

## Positive Results

Positive school climate is often linked to strong partnerships between schools and their communities, families and parents. When all partners take responsibility for student learning, we share school improvement planning. People begin to work together and communicate more openly about needs, issues, and concerns that will make a difference in the lives of students.

## Joint Responsibilities

Manitoba schools are involved in a variety of partnerships. Some are more formal than others. Some are temporary and others are ongoing. All partnerships are equally important and valuable to the educational process and build upon each other. The diagram on the next page shows how families, schools, and communities join together to support student success.



“Collaboration is the process of developing interdependent relationships where all are focused on a common purpose and set of goals, and where people must rely on each other to achieve these goals. It is the synergy created when a group’s effectiveness exceeds what individuals can accomplish on their own.” (*Building Shared Responsibility for Student Learning*, Conzemius and O’Neill, 2001)

Working together strengthens our ability to support positive educational change for our children and schools. The wide range of school-related activities that Manitobans share is unique to each community, each school, and each parent (see Appendix A).

### School Partnership Councils

Formalized partnerships include: Advisory Councils for School Leadership, Parent Advisory Councils, Home and School Associations, and School Committees.

Formalized partnerships involve nominations, elections, regular meetings, and specific roles and responsibilities. In this document, these partnerships are referred to as ‘school partnership councils’. Descriptions of these particular groups and a sample of their typical activities are found in the chart on the following page.

Group	Advisory Council for School Leadership (ACSL)	Parent Advisory Council (PAC)	Home and School Association (HSA)	School Committees (SC)
Governed By	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guided by legislation</li> </ul>	Guided by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school policies</li> <li>local school board/local education authority policies</li> </ul>		
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected at annual meeting according to constitution and by-laws</li> <li>Hold regular open, public meetings</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volunteer, nomination, or election based on local decision</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a forum and voice for parents and communities to discuss and present views</li> <li>Encourage parent participation</li> <li>Liaise with school administration</li> </ul>			
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents, community members (other than parents), students, teacher representatives, and school administrators</li> </ul>			
Sample Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in school improvement activities</li> <li>Discuss school plans with administration</li> <li>Inform parents and community members of school activities</li> <li>Promote community interest, understanding, and involvement</li> <li>Advocate for quality education and well-being of children and youth</li> <li>Inform parents and community members of school activities and volunteer opportunities</li> <li>Coordinate specific events such as Safe Grad, fundraising, fairs, and lunch programs</li> </ul>			

“Successful partnerships are a two-way street where all parties realize they have something to learn. Finding partners and building alliances is a good way to share resources... Partnerships also strengthen people’s capacity to learn and get better over time by opening them up to divergent viewpoints and honest feedback.”  
*(What’s Worth Fighting for Out There?, Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998)*

Building positive working relationships promotes and supports educational successes both within and beyond the school setting.

Each school community has a unique identity (see Appendix B for specific roles and responsibilities) that is defined by their context, established mandates, and decision making:

- Parents and Families**—family members, biological parents, extended families, foster parents, and legal guardians
- Teachers and Student Support Teams**—school division staff (classroom, resource, special education, and subject specialist teachers, counsellors, consultants), clinicians, and educational assistants
- School Leaders**—principals, vice-principals and/or school leadership teams
- Partnership Councils**—ACSLs, PACs, HSAs, and SCs
- Student Councils**—elected student officials from different grade groups, or student organizations

6. **School Division Administrators**—superintendents, assistant superintendents, secretary treasurers, coordinators, and other senior staff in the local school division
7. **Trustees**—elected officials of the school division board
8. **Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY)**—consultants, coordinators, directors, and Minister of Education

### **Characteristics of Effective School Partnerships**

School partnerships invite parents, families, and communities to participate in the educational process at the grassroots level. Effective school partnerships

- are student-centred
- make decisions together
- have educational goals as a top priority
- value and respect school, family, and community support
- communicate respectfully, using established school division protocols
- develop and use strategies to resolve conflict
- develop and follow a code of ethics that is created with school staff, parents, and students.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”  
(Margaret Mead)

