
Foreword

As my son worked his way through the public school system, I approached each new school year with some trepidation, always wondering whether I would be a welcome participant in his classroom. So I was intrigued when I saw the title of Neal Glasgow and Paula Jameson Whitney's new book, *What Successful Schools Do to Involve Families: 55 Partnership Strategies*. While family involvement has always been a topic of intense interest to most parents, I was curious to learn more about it from the teacher's perspective. I was rewarded with a treatment of the issue that I think both teachers and parents will find informed, instructive, and worthwhile.

In this book the authors present a new approach to collaborative partnerships that invites and encourages parents, siblings, grandparents, and other caregivers to be involved in the life of the student. Citing the increased involvement of parents and families as an important predictor of school and student performance, the authors open the discussion on how to develop a more inclusive environment. With specific advice on how to get every type of family group to feel connected and valued, they seek to create the home-school-community connection that truly brings the public back into public schools.

Based on the principle that everyone who touches a student's life is a potential teacher, the book looks at the role of teacher as facilitator in the learning process. Whether addressing homework issues, math and reading difficulties, or the challenges of teaching students from nontraditional families, the authors approach their subject matter with compassion and respect, encouraging teachers to form meaningful partnerships with parents and other caregivers.

Recognizing that schools have a responsibility to help *every* student—not just the privileged ones—succeed, the authors also address the complexities of the socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, and cultural differences that can act as barriers to the communication between school and families. Focusing on ways to break through those barriers with a combination of intellectual effort and heartfelt passion, Glasgow and Whitney provide

concrete and practical strategies to give teachers the knowledge and confidence to craft their own personal approach.

While their work underscores the intense challenges facing public school teachers in this increasingly diverse and fragmented student universe, the authors are far from being deterred by this. Instead they have delved into educational research to explore applications that have worked both within and outside the United States, offering practical and proven techniques, providing encouragement, warning of potential pitfalls, and giving both new and veteran teachers effective management tools.

The concise and straightforward format synthesizes a wealth of information covering both traditional topics, like open house and homework help, to more hot-button issues, like bullying and discipline. The research references provide the foundation for the practical and proven applications that link the research to real-world examples. This makes the book an especially useful resource by providing both teachers and parents with the opportunity to see how a collaborative approach, even in the most difficult and highly charged environments, can lead to new and innovative solutions.

As a parent, former PTA president, and current director of a nonprofit educational foundation, I have been involved with public schools for almost 20 years. Too often I have heard parents complain about not being a part of the process, about schools not listening to their feedback, and about nontraditional families who have little or no access to the classroom. It is inspiring to hear from experienced educators with such a positive, practical, and proactive approach to embracing parents and families as partners in learning.

As the poet William Butler Yeats once remarked: "Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire." Glasgow and Whitney aim to light many fires by encouraging schools, families, and communities to work together to bring every student into the warm glow of learning.

Sheila E. Durkin
Executive Director
San Dieguito Academy Foundation