

Is Your Secondary School Open to Partnership with Parents?

Although many schools reach out to today's parents, others still cling to attitudes and practices that restrict parents to more limited, traditional roles. Use this self-assessment to see where your school falls on the path from "Fortress" to "Partnership". Under each question, circle the letter beside the statement that seems to describe your school best.

1

What is your school's attitude toward families?

- Parents belong at home, not at school. If students don't do well, it's because their families don't give them enough support.
- Parents are welcome when asked. There's only so much they can do.
- Parents can be involved at school in a number of ways. The school tries to make contact with all parents at least once a year.
- Our school sets high standards for all students and families. It partners with families to make sure every single student succeeds.

2

Does the school give families information about standards and the curriculum?

- Parents don't need to know much about this, and they probably won't understand it anyway.
- Parents get information about what students will be learning at the fall open house.
- Teachers send home folders of student work.
- Families help assess student portfolios using scoring guides. They also attend regular exhibits of student work, where students explain how their work meets standards.

Can parents and family members easily see the principal and visit classrooms?

- Families should not bother the school staff. Visiting the classroom would distract the children. Besides, parents will need a security clearance before they are allowed in.
- The school calls families if their children are having problems. Families can visit on report-card, pick-up day.
- The school has several family events every year. Parents talk to classes about their jobs and hobbies and help out as tutors.
- Parents are involved in all aspects of the school. They can attend staff training ,and the principal has regular hours each week to meet with families. Every school committee has active parent members.

3

4

Does the school have an active parent group such as booster clubs, site council or advisory committee?

- a. The principal has picked a small group of parents to help out.
- b. The active parents are mostly middle class. The others don't come or contribute.
- c. The booster club or other parent groups set their own agenda and raise money for the school. Members also write the school handbook.
- d. Families decide how they want to be involved. They reach out to make sure all families take part in some way. Parents can use the phone, copier, fax and computers. The family center is always full of parents.

5

Does the school openly discuss tough issues such as achievement gaps, racism and bullying?

- a. The problems at our school are dealt with by its professional staff.
- b. The principal sets the agenda for discussions at staff meetings. Sometimes a few parents are invited.
- c. The school gives progress reports to parents, but the test data are hard to understand.
- d. Parents and teachers have study groups and do action research on issues such as standards, reading report cards, student expectations and prejudice. Families are part of all major decisions.

Where Does Your School Fall?

Count the number of times you circled each letter. Multiply the times you circled each letter by the corresponding values below. Then add up your points.

- a = one point
 b = two points
 c = three points
 d = four points

5-7 points: **Fortress School.** Your school is trying to keep parents away rather than work with them. In standards-based terms, it is below basic.

8-11 points: **Come if We Call School.** Your school wants parents to be involved, but only on its terms. In standards-based terms, it is at the basic level.

12-15 points: **Open Door School.** Your school welcomes families and supports them to be involved in a number of ways. In standards-based terms, it is proficient.

16-20 points: **Partnership School.** Your school is willing and able to work with all families. We bet the student achievement level goes up every year. In standards-based terms, it is advanced.