

# Parent Partnerships: New Forms and Forums

The following is a list of lessons learned in the towns of Bloomfield and Windsor about engaging parents as partners in the work of Discovery. Included in the list are some innovative approaches to partnering with parent leaders and allowing them to become decision makers in the process.

## **LESSONS LEARNED about engaging parents as partners**

- To best utilize volunteers, especially parents, find out why they became involved and why they stay involved
- Build relationships with parents – relationships are the foundation
- Find parents who want to contribute and make a difference – they are out there!
- Parents who see improvements that are needed in a community are likely candidates to do something about the faults they see
- Make connections with the Board of Education and other organizations – parents want to be a part of a group with connections to make change
- Empower parents by following their lead and supporting their interests
- In terms of a group's structure, you can make parents feel important and know they are part of the group
  - Bylaws and structure institutionalize the importance of parents
  - Meetings at convenient times for parents with food and childcare
  - Parents in leadership roles
- Find unique ways to utilize parents
- Touch base periodically with parents and ask them how it's going
- Find specific events or projects that parents can work on for a limited time; some people are just not up for a long term commitment
- Don't overload parents
- Use projects like the Listening Campaign to involve parents
- Recruit parents from parent leadership training, FRC, and other centers

Each community has their own lessons to learn and share, there are many different ways to engage parents. Sometimes what works with one group of parents will not work with another. The best advice is to just keep trying!

