



# A Guide for Partnerships with Districts, Schools, and Families

## A Toolkit for Community Partners

Tennessee Department of Education | December 2024



## Contents

Introduction.....2

Partnerships with Districts.....3

Partnerships with Schools.....4

Partnerships with Families .....6

## Introduction

Welcome to **A Guide for Partnerships with Districts, Schools, and Families: A Toolkit for Community Partners**. We are thrilled to provide a resource for our Tennessee community partners as they strive to successfully work with all stakeholders to support education. In this toolkit, we have gathered information to help you better understand the significant role community partners play in working with school districts, schools, and families as well as ideas that will support you in helping students achieve success in and outside of the classroom.

In this toolkit, you will discover helpful information including how community partners can:



**Collaborate with Districts, Schools, and Families to Support Student Success**



**Strengthen Relationships within Their Communities**








**Support Each Stakeholder Group**



## Partnerships with Districts

Creating a strong partnership with a school district requires planning, clear communication, and a focus on building relationships within the district. Community partners should begin by researching the district's goals regarding the areas of need. Scheduling meetings with school district leaders and board members to discuss strengths and challenges will also aid in determining what support could best be provided by the partner. **Partners can establish and build upon existing district relationships by:**

-  Clearly communicating supports that are being offered
-  Establishing key contacts within the district (*know who your "go to" people are*)
-  Establishing clear roles and responsibilities
-  Sharing success stories and data from previous partnerships
-  Developing a partnership plan including a timeline (*how, why, and when*)




### ***How Community Partners Can Support School Districts***

- Provide funding to support existing initiatives
- Offer volunteers to assist with classroom activities and school events
- Connect schools with experts in different industries
- Share community facilities for school events and extracurricular activities
- Design and manage mentoring programs to support district initiatives
- Organize before, during, or after-school tutoring programs
- Develop after-school programs that provide safe and engaging environments for students
- Organize family literacy nights (*See Family Literacy Nights TurnKey Package for information on getting started*)
- Provide resources and organize events that allow families to connect with schools



## Partnerships with Schools

Community partners can partner with schools in their communities to allow for more direct and immediate impact by meeting the specific needs of individual schools. **Partners can establish and build upon existing school relationships by:**

-  Setting up regular communication, such as monthly meetings or newsletters, to keep schools informed about collaboration opportunities
-  Creating councils or focus groups for input from community members
-  Organizing events to recognize the accomplishments of students, teachers, and school leaders

### ***How Community Partners Can Support Individual Schools***

- Pair mentors with students to offer mentorship and encouragement to develop academic skills
- Organize speakers to speak at schools about their careers, providing students with insights and inspiration for future paths
- Assist schools with classroom activities, tutoring, and supporting student projects
- Provide interactive experiences, such as workshops, to enhance classroom learning with real-world applications and skills
- Sponsor school events such as field trips, stem labs, art programs, science fairs, literacy nights, or cultural enrichment activities
- Provide materials, resources, or food and beverages for special events
- Organize monthly meetings where families read the same book and discuss it, incorporating activities and themed snacks related to the book
- Invite celebrities or local leaders to read books at school events, fostering excitement about reading and connecting with the community
- Offer workshops where students can create and share their own stories, with guidance from local authors or writing experts
- Set up a community book exchange where students and families can bring in books they have read and take home new ones
- Celebrate Literacy Events (*see next page*)



## Literacy Events

### Family Literacy Day (January 27)

Plan a day of family-oriented reading activities and book giveaways.

### National Reading Month and Tennessee Literacy Month (March)

Feature daily reading challenges and author visits throughout the month.

### Read Across America Week (March 2-6) and Day (March 2)

Celebrate literacy with read-alouds and dress-up days.

### International Children's Book Day (April 2)

Host a special reading event featuring diverse children's books from around the world.

### World Book Day (April 23)

Encourage book-themed costumes and offer book exchanges and reading sessions.

### National Family Literacy Month (September)

Encourage families to have fun reading together.

### International Literacy Day (September 8)

Highlight literacy initiatives and engage in community reading projects.

### National Family Literacy Day (November 1)

Host an event for local authors and illustrators to discuss the importance of literacy and share their latest works.



## Partnerships with Families

Community partners can help bridge the gap between school and home learning environments by providing resources and organizing events that enhance family engagement in education, promoting consistent reading habits, and creating a supportive learning atmosphere that reinforces the importance of academics.

**Partners can establish and build upon existing relationships with families by:**

- Hosting workshops or informational nights to provide resources to families,
- Reaching out to families individually to gather feedback and ensure they feel valued and informed about opportunities and resources available to them,
- Partnering with schools and other local organizations to provide resources related to academics and overall wellbeing of families, and
- Sharing success stories of families who have benefited from community programs to encourage other families to participate.

### *How Community Partners Can Support School Families*

- Provide after-school or weekend tutoring
- Host workshops for parents and students on subjects like math strategies, reading comprehension, and study skills to boost academic performance
- Establish support centers where students can receive assistance with their homework and school projects
- Offer scholarships and grants to support extracurricular activities, school supplies, or specialized programs
- Provide students with opportunities to explore various careers through internships, job shadowing, and career fairs to help them connect their studies to future goals
- Organize after-school programs that help students engage in academic and extracurricular activities outside of the school day
- Distribute educational materials, such as workbooks, learning apps, and online resources, to support students' learning at home



The Tennessee Department of Education has developed several resources that can be shared with families.

The [Interactive Decodable Book Series](#) is available for **FREE** to all Tennessee families of K–2 children to encourage at-home reading practice.



The [Families as Partners Toolkits](#) provide helpful information to families about their child's education. Each toolkit also includes a glossary to help families better understand academic terms when discussing their child's education. The following toolkits are currently available, and others will be added in the future:

- [Understanding Student Testing](#)
- [Understanding Response to Instruction and Intervention \(RTI\)<sup>2</sup>](#)
- [Understanding Literacy](#)
- [A Guide for Parent-Teacher Conferences and Engaging with Your Child's School](#)
- [Understanding a Sounds-First Approach to Reading](#)
- [Supporting Literacy at Home](#)

Permission is granted to use and copy these materials for non-commercial educational purposes with attribution credit to the "Tennessee Department of Education". If you wish to use the materials for reasons other than non-commercial educational purposes, please contact the office of general counsel at (615) 741-2921.