

# A Hands-On Approach to Nurturing the Parent Partnership

By Edna Wallace

## Parents and Teachers Working Together

Parents have good ideas. Together you can create a great environment for children.

**Suggestion Box:** Place the box, index cards, and pencils in an easily accessible location, but out of the way – a place that assures some privacy and anonymity.

**Parent Survey:** Make the survey short, conduct it yearly, and provide some type of incentive so that parents will return it.

**Parent Advisory Council:** Enlisting a group of helpful, concerned parents is one of the best ways to demonstrate that you want to create a true partnership.

## Communication Connections

Including parents in day-to-day activities creates a sense of belonging, a foundation for building trust and loyalty.

**Newsletters and Memos:** No news is bad news. It's imperative to keep parents informed of what's happening.

**Parent Support Programs and Seminars:** Learning more about brain and child development, literacy, children with special needs, the power of play, and a host of other topics is important to parents.

**Family Visits:** A lot can be learned from visiting a child's home. This effort of reaching out can also break down barriers; families often feel most comfortable on their own turf.

## Creating an Environment for Parents

Reaching out to parents, nurturing the strengths in their families, and creating an environment where they feel special and needed is a necessary step in creating partnerships.

**Bulletin Boards and Picture Albums:** Place picture albums on a table depicting field trip excursions, story time, or the ice cream social. Pass on information by posting interesting articles, reminders, and a calendar of events.

**Lending Library or Resource Center:** The child care setting is an excellent place to house the best books for children along with handouts for parents, parenting books, and videos.

## Tapping Into Talent

Parents generally love to offer a helping hand, especially if they feel appreciated for what they do well.