## Partnerships and Services

This component underscores the importance of building strong relationships between the school, students’ families and members of the wider community. The approaches outlined in this component emphasize the importance of implementing **collaborative and integrative efforts** for positive mental health promotion.

Sustained Family Communication

A variety of methods may be employed by teachers and administrators in maintaining active contact and communication with parents/caregivers. These include:

* *Positive news phone calls*: These contacts are intended to share with families something positive that has been noticed or observed about a student.
* *Occasional emails*: Email can serve as a means for maintaining communication with parents and caregivers about their children’s progress and functioning.
* *School/classroom newsletters*: Newsletters about school happenings provide a positive means for families to become aware of classroom events and activities in which their children are involved.
* *Daily or weekly reflection prompts*: This communication strategy involves having students fill out a number of sentence stems or prompts such as: “Today I was proud that…” Students then choose the prompt they would like to take home to share with their parents and family.
* *Weekly learning portfolios*: This communication strategy involves having students take home samples of their work and accomplishments to share with their families. After reviewing the folders, parents/caregivers are invited to record their comments on a form or sheet within the portfolio.

Adult-Student Mentorship Programs

Building positive attachments among children and youth with caring adults is critical

for supporting their positive growth and development. Such relationships within the school and community provide them with sustainable sources of social support and opportunities to learn skills that contribute to their connectedness and resiliency.

Mentorship programs have been found to have a positive influence, especially where

youth are matched with caring adult mentors who have experienced similar issues and have a genuine respect and affection for youth. Research on such programs has been associated with increased school participation, reduced involvement with negative peer associations, and enhanced skills to refuse alcohol and substance use.

Partnerships with Family and Youth-Serving Agencies

Schools may be in a unique position to establish partnerships and host meetings with local and regional service agencies to provide timely step-up services for children, youth or their families who may require additional support or early intervention services. Having schools host and participate in step-up service meetings may increase families’ access to a wider array of services and supports to address areas of identified concern or need. Students and their families may benefit from these arrangements though:

* Provision of accessible services without the need to travel to attend appointments
* Reduction in missed school time usually associated with accessing additional supports or services
* Coordination of services and supports for students and their families

School and Community-wide Mobilization Activities

Schools may act as a catalyst for the creation of community-wide plans or strategies for the promotion of positive mental health practices both within and beyond the educational context. Such approaches are often broad-based and targeted to promote a wide range of familial, school and community level protective factors.

Within school/community mobilization efforts, it is critical that children and youth be invited to be meaningful participants. This includes recognizing students’ membership as part of the school and larger community, providing forums to hear and document their perspectives on setting goals for mobilization, and incorporating opportunities for use of their strengths and gifts in the execution of mobilization activities and initiatives. Creating readiness for student participation in such activities could include:

* Holding forums in which children and youth can exchange perspectives with caring adults on issues and themes that affect their lives in the school, home and community
* Inviting children and youth to provide input into decision-making, problem-solving and action-taking activities within school groups, youth clubs, non-government agencies, and volunteer organizations in the community
* Providing children and youth with opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills through participation in joint school-community action groups, advisory committees or training events designed to develop their communication, problem-solving or interpersonal skills