

## ***Parents as Partners – How do People Participate?***



### **Self-Mobilization**

*(independent - may use assistance from professionals)*

### **Participation in decision-making**

*(active participation along with professionals)*

### **Participation in implementation**

*(doing, professionals facilitating)*

### **Participation as consultants**

*(input in project design)*

### **Participants as contributors**

*(doing, contribute resources or labour)*

### **Passive Participation**

*(people told what will happen, may receive benefits)*

Adapted from Arnstein's (1969) "ladder of participation", this illustrates a continuum of engagement that shows how people participate or volunteer beginning with a more passive activity and moving through toward independent self-mobilization and full capacity building.

This illustration is helpful in recognizing the range of ways in which parents can be engaged in their child's learning or in the extended school community. There are contexts where it is more relevant to act passively as a volunteer (ie. selling popcorn at a school fundraiser). However, it is important to recognize the potential of this type of participation to be stifling or short termed, and parents may lack further motivation to participate. At the higher end of participation parents are taking initiative, and become self-motivated to support the learning process and the learning community, taking steps to engage supports as needed.

Recognizing that the overall goal for parents to have capacity to make decisions about their child's education, engage supports as needed, become involved by using their own assets and resources, presents a pathway for full and equal participation. Providing experiences for parents that move toward that end goal of increased levels of self-motivation and initiative are critical for overall capacity building and empowerment.

Adapted from:  
S. Arnstein, (1969), "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.