

# Parent Engagement Information and Tools

## *Moving Beyond Parent Involvement to Parent Engagement*



*Supporting districts in the development,  
assessment, and implementation of  
parent engagement policies, programs and plans*

## Table of Contents

Overview	2
Acknowledgements	3
State Board of Education Policy	4
State and Federal Laws and Policies	5
National Parent and Family Involvement Standards	13
Evaluation and Assessment Tools	19
Parent Involvement Quality Rubric	41
Sample Vision Statements, Policies and Plans	44
US Department of Education Information and Resources	64
Research	71

## Parent Engagement Information and Tools

### *Moving Beyond Parent Involvement to Parent Engagement*

Michigan's educators are among the best in the world and when the state, school districts, schools and parents unite to support one goal: to help Michigan's children succeed, great progress can happen.

Today, with new federal mandates, including annual testing and adequate yearly progress, increasing student achievement is more important than ever before.

To continue the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and State Board of Education's commitment to increasing student achievement, we have developed a wide range of information and resources to assist districts and schools in their parent engagement efforts.

Our first information packet is designed to support districts in the development, assessment, and implementation of parent engagement policies, programs and plans.

Additional packets of parent engagement information on topics dealing with school environment, communications and engagement activities will be released during the first quarter of 2005.

We invite you to review, utilize, reproduce, and share these materials and tools and hope they serve as a meaningful resource.

#### Top Five Reasons to Engage Parents

1. Decades of research show when parents are involved students have:
  - Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
  - Better school attendance
  - Increased motivation, better self-esteem
  - Lower rates of suspension
  - Decreased use of drugs and alcohol
  - Fewer instances of violent behavior

National Parent Teacher Association
  
2. Family participation in education is *twice* as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status. Some of the more intensive programs had effects that were *10 times* greater than other factors. Walberg (1984) in his review of 29 studies of school-parent programs.
  
3. School Benefits:
  - Improves teacher morale
  - Higher ratings of teachers by parents
  - More support from families
  - Higher student achievement
  - Better reputations in the community

*A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*, edited by Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla, Center for Law and Education, Washington, D.C., 1994 (third printing, 1996)
  
4. Parent involvement leads to feelings of ownership, resulting in increased support of schools. Davies, Don. (1988). *Low Income Parents and the Schools: A Research Report and a Plan for Action. Equity and Choice* 4,3 (Spring): 51-57. EJ 374 512.
  
5. Parents express a genuine and deep-seated desire to help their children succeed academically, regardless of differences in socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and cultural background.
 

Mapp (1999)

\*The term "parent" refers to anyone who shares responsibility for the well being of a child and is actively engaged in his/her education

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- Cheyboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle (COP) ESD
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- Ingham Intermediate School District
- Saginaw Intermediate School District
- Wayne RESA
- Baldwin Community Schools
- Battle Creek School District
- Bay-Arenac Community High School
- Cadillac Area Public Schools
- Detroit Public Schools
- Early Childhood Connections of Eaton County
- Grand Rapids Public Schools
- Kalamazoo School District
- Lansing School District
- Saginaw City School District
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- Michigan State University

### Associations:

- Detroit Parent Network
- Michigan Education Association (MEA)
- Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB)
- Michigan School Public Relations Association (MSPRA)
- Middle Cities Education Association
- Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA)
- State of Michigan, Family Independence Agency (FIA)
- Michigan Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

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**STATE OF MICHIGAN  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**FAMILY INVOLVEMENT POLICY**

The State Board of Education believes that the education of students is enhanced by the involvement of parents and families in their children's education. We advocate strong connections between the home, school, and the community as one means of reducing barriers to student achievement. Studies demonstrate that when parents are involved in their children's education, the attitudes, behaviors, and achievement of students are positively enhanced.

Education is an integral part of our society. It is important for all parties to be at the table, providing input and resources to better the learning outcomes for our students. Working in genuine partnerships is mutually beneficial. Developing cooperative efforts and meaningful involvement contribute to improved schools and successful students.

Schools must welcome the public's involvement, and recognize and tap the strengths, dynamism, and resources of all those who wish to participate with the schools in practical and tangible ways. Teacher training institutions also have a responsibility to provide training in family involvement.

The State Board of Education hereby recommends that every school district develop a Family Involvement Plan, which will engage families, educators, businesses, and other community members in education. Such plans will include outreach strategies, related home learning activities, community resources, and supportive school and district policies and actions.

The State Board of Education will disseminate model family involvement plans to assist local districts and school buildings in developing local plans.

Adopted May 15, 1997

**Act No. 107  
Public Acts of 2004  
Approved by the Governor  
May 20, 2004  
Filed with the Secretary of State  
May 20, 2004  
EFFECTIVE DATE: May 20, 2004**

**STATE OF MICHIGAN  
92ND LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2004**

Introduced by Senators Cassis, Stamas, Toy, McManus, Allen, Goschka and Clark-Coleman

## **ENROLLED SENATE BILL No. 307**

AN ACT to amend 1976 PA 451, entitled "An act to provide a system of public instruction and elementary and secondary schools; to revise, consolidate, and clarify the laws relating to elementary and secondary education; to provide for the organization, regulation, and maintenance of schools, school districts, public school academies, intermediate school districts, and other public school entities; to prescribe rights, powers, duties, and privileges of schools, school districts, public school academies, intermediate school districts, and other public school entities; to provide for the regulation of school teachers and certain other school employees; to provide for school elections and to prescribe powers and duties with respect thereto; to provide for the levy and collection of taxes; to provide for the borrowing of money and issuance of bonds and other evidences of indebtedness; to establish a fund and provide for expenditures from that fund; to provide for and prescribe the powers and duties of certain state departments, the state board of education, and certain other boards and officials; to provide for licensure of boarding schools; to prescribe penalties; and to repeal acts and parts of acts," (MCL 380.1 to 380.1852) by adding section 1294.

*The People of the State of Michigan enact:*

Sec. 1294. (1) Not later than January 1, 2005, the board of a school district or intermediate school district or the board of directors of a public school academy shall adopt and implement a parent involvement plan designed to encourage parental participation.

(2) The board or board of directors shall provide a copy of the parent involvement plan to the parent or legal guardian of each pupil. The board or board of directors may provide the copy of the policy by including the policy in its student handbook or a similar publication that is distributed to all pupils and parents.

(3) The board or board of directors shall provide a copy of the parent involvement plan to the department upon request by the department.

(4) The department shall review parental involvement practices that have been implemented by public schools in this state and elsewhere and shall post information at the department website about successful parental involvement policies and practices.

This act is ordered to take immediate effect.  
Secretary of the Senate  
Clerk of the House of Representatives  
Approved  
Governor

## **Public Act 29 of 2001**

### **An act to amend 1976 PA 451**

#### **Parental Involvement Contracts**

Public Act 29 of 2001 was signed into law on June 28, 2001. Section 1295 (1) of this legislation states:

“School districts are encouraged to develop and implement parental involvement contracts with parents of pupils. These parental involvement contracts should be voluntary and should be designed to encourage and facilitate a parent’s involvement in his or her child’s education.”

Subsection (2) of this legislation states that the Michigan Department of Education:

“ . . . shall develop and make available to school districts a model parental involvement contract that may be used for the purposes of subsection (1). The model parental involvement contract shall establish a learning partnership between parent, teacher, and pupil...”

In response, the Michigan Department of Education has developed two models to assist districts in developing their own parental involvement contract in accordance with Public Act 29.

Model A reflects the intent of this legislation.

Model B is a revised Title I parent compact that meets the intent of Public Act 29. This model is based on Standish-Sterling Community School’s Title I parent compact for Sterling Elementary.

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY**  
**IMPROVING AMERICA'S SCHOOLS ACT OF 1994**  
Public Law 103-382, Section 1118  
Title I

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

School districts, with consultation of parents of participating Title I children, must implement parental involvement programs, activities and procedures. This parent component must be integrated into the school district's overall plan for achieving high standards for all students. (School districts with allocations of more than \$500,000 of Title I funds must reserve at least 1% for parental involvement activities.)

The Title I component for parental involvement must:

1. Describe how the school district will:

- Involve parents in the development of a written parent involvement policy.
- Evaluate the policy on an annual basis to determine its effectiveness and identify barriers to greater participation.
- Revise the policy, if necessary, based on the annual evaluation.
- Provide assistance to schools in planning and implementing strong parent involvement programs, activities, and procedures.
- Coordinate parental involvement strategies with other educational programs that are focused on high achievement.

2. Describe how individual schools will:

- Hold an annual meeting for parents of participating children.
- Offer a flexible number of meetings (times and dates).
- Provide parents information about the Title I program.
- Provide school performance profiles and individual student results.
- Describe school curriculum, assessments, and proficiency levels.
- Allow parents to share experiences and make suggestions.
- Provide timely responses to suggestions.
- Jointly develop with parents a school-parent compact that outlines shared responsibility for improved student achievement.

To ensure effective parental involvement, school districts and the individual schools must provide:

- Training to help parents work with their children to improve their achievement.
- Training for personnel on how to work with parents.
- Appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses
- School information in the home language.

March 2000



## TITLE I PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY GUIDELINES

Local school districts must implement parental involvement programs, activities and procedures with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children. Districts with allocations of more than \$500,000 must reserve at least 1 percent for parental involvement activities. Parents of participating children must be involved in decisions on use of funds.

To ensure effective parent involvement, a district must provide the following as part of the school policy:

- Training for parents on student learning goals, how to monitor progress, and how to help children.
- Training for personnel on how to work with parents.
- Coordination of parent involvement activities with preschool and other programs.
- Appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses.
- Information in language used at home.
- Other reasonable support for parent involvement activities.
- The school-parent compact must be jointly developed with parents of all participating children as a component of school policy. The school-parent compact must:
  - Outline shared responsibility for student achievement.
  - Describe school responsibility for instruction and parent responsibility for support.
  - Provide for ongoing communication between teacher and parent.

A parental involvement school policy must describe how school will:

- Hold annual meeting for parents of participating children.
- Offer flexible number of meetings, such as meeting at different times.
- Involve parents in program planning, review, and improvement.
- Provide parents of participating children- -
  - Information about Title I program.
  - School performance profiles and individual student results.
  - Description of school curriculum, assessments, and proficiency levels.
  - Opportunities to share experiences and make suggestions.
  - Timely responses to suggestions.

The local school district policy for parent involvement must be incorporated into the local school district plan. The policy must describe how the local school district will:

- Involve parents in development of local school district plan and process of school review and improvement.
- Provide assistance to schools in planning and implementing parent involvement.
- Build school and parent capacity for strong parent involvement.
- Coordinate parental involvement strategies with other programs.
- Conduct annual evaluation of parental involvement policy to:
  - Determine effectiveness in increasing parent participation.
  - Identify barriers to greater participation.
- Use evaluation findings for school improvement and policy revision.

**NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT OF 2003**  
**Public Law 107-110**

**“SEC. 1118. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT.**

“(a) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY POLICY.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A local educational agency may receive funds under this part only if such agency implements programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents in programs assisted under this part consistent with this section. Such programs, activities, and procedures shall be planned and implemented with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children.

“(2) WRITTEN POLICY.—Each local educational agency that receives funds under this part shall develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents of participating children a written parent involvement policy. The policy shall be incorporated into the local educational agency’s plan developed under section 1112, establish the agency’s expectations for parent involvement, and describe how the agency will—

“(A) involve parents in the joint development of the plan under section 1112, and the process of school review and improvement under section 1116;

“(B) provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist participating schools in planning and implementing effective parent involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance;

“(C) build the schools’ and parents’ capacity for strong parental involvement as described in subsection (e);

“(D) coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies under this part with parental involvement strategies under other programs, such as the Head Start program, Reading First program, Early Reading First program, Even Start program, Parents as Teachers program, and Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters, and State-run preschool programs;

“(E) conduct, with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parental involvement policy in improving the academic quality of the schools served under this part, including identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in activities authorized by this section (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background), and use the findings of such evaluation to design strategies for more effective parental involvement, and to revise, if necessary, the parental involvement policies described in this section; and

“(F) involve parents in the activities of the schools served under this part.

“(3) RESERVATION.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Each local educational agency shall reserve not less than 1 percent of such agency’s allocation under subpart 2 of this part to carry out this section, including promoting family literacy and parenting skills, except that this paragraph shall not apply if 1 percent of such agency’s allocation under subpart 2 of this part for the fiscal year for which the determination is made is \$5,000 or less.

“(B) PARENTAL INPUT.—Parents of children receiving services under this part shall be involved in the decisions regarding how funds reserved under subparagraph (A) are allotted for parental involvement activities.

“(C) DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.—Not less than 95 percent of the funds reserved under subparagraph (A) shall be distributed to schools served under this part.

“(b) SCHOOL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Each school served under this part shall jointly develop with, and distribute to, parents of participating children a written parental involvement policy, agreed on by such parents, that shall describe the means for carrying out the requirements of subsections (c) through (f). Parents shall be notified of the policy in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, provided in a language the parents can understand. Such policy shall be made available to the local community and updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school.

“(2) SPECIAL RULE.—If the school has a parental involvement policy that applies to all parents, such school may amend that policy, if necessary, to meet the requirements of this subsection.

“(3) AMENDMENT.—If the local educational agency involved has a school district-level parental involvement policy that applies to all parents, such agency may amend that policy, if necessary, to meet the requirements of this subsection.

“(4) PARENTAL COMMENTS.—If the plan under section 1112 is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, the local educational agency shall submit any parent comments with such plan when such local educational agency submits the plan to the State.

“(c) POLICY INVOLVEMENT.—Each school served under this part shall—

“(1) convene an annual meeting, at a convenient time, to which all parents of participating children shall be invited and encouraged to attend, to inform parents of their school’s H. R. 1—79 participation under this part and to explain the requirements of this part, and the right of the parents to be involved;

“(2) offer a flexible number of meetings, such as meetings in the morning or evening, and may provide, with funds provided under this part, transportation, child care, or home visits, as such services relate to parental involvement;

“(3) involve parents, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of programs under this part, including the planning, review, and improvement of the school parental involvement policy and the joint development of the school-wide program plan under section 1114(b)(2), except that if a school has in place a process for involving parents in the joint planning and design of the school’s programs, the school may use that process, if such process includes an adequate representation of parents of participating children;

“(4) provide parents of participating children—

“(A) timely information about programs under this part;

“(B) a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet; and

“(C) if requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible; and

“(5) if the school wide program plan under section 1114(b)(2) is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, submit any parent comments on the plan when the school makes the plan available to the local educational agency.

“(d) SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES FOR HIGH STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.—As a component of the school-level parental involvement policy developed under subsection (b), each school served under this part shall jointly develop with parents for all children served under this part a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State’s high standards. Such compact shall—

“(1) describe the school’s responsibility to provide high quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children served under this part to meet the State’s student academic achievement standards, and the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children’s learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching; volunteering in their child’s classroom; and participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time; and

“(2) address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through, at a minimum—

“(A) parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as the compact relates to the individual child’s achievement;

“(B) frequent reports to parents on their children’s progress; and

“(C) reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child’s class, and observation of classroom activities.

“(e) BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INVOLVEMENT.—To ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the school involved, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement, each school and local educational agency assisted under this part—

“(1) shall provide assistance to parents of children served by the school or local educational agency, as appropriate, in understanding such topics as the State’s academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, State and local academic assessments, the requirements of this part, and how to monitor a child’s progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children;

“(2) shall provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children’s achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement;

“(3) shall educate teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school;

“(4) shall, to the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate parent involvement programs and activities with Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, the Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters, the Parents as Teachers Program, and public preschool and other programs, and conduct other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children;

“(5) shall ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the parents of participating children in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand;

“(6) may involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of such training;

“(7) may provide necessary literacy training from funds received under this part if the local educational agency has exhausted all other reasonably available sources of funding for such training;

“(8) may pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with local parental involvement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions;

“(9) may train parents to enhance the involvement of other parents;

“(10) may arrange school meetings at a variety of times, or conduct in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, with parents who are unable to attend such conferences at school, in order to maximize parental involvement and participation;

“(11) may adopt and implement model approaches to improving parental involvement;

“(12) may establish a district-wide parent advisory council to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement in programs supported under this section;

“(13) may develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities; and

“(14) shall provide such other reasonable support for parental involvement activities under this section as parents may request.

“(f) ACCESSIBILITY.—In carrying out the parental involvement requirements of this part, local educational agencies and schools, to the extent practicable, shall provide full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children, including providing information and school reports required under section 1111 in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language such parents understand.

“(g) INFORMATION FROM PARENTAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCE CENTERS.—In a State where a parental information and resource center is established to provide training, information, and support to parents and individuals who work with local parents, local educational agencies, and schools receiving assistance under this part, each local educational agency or school that receives assistance under this part and is located in the State shall assist parents and parental organizations by informing such parents and organizations of the existence and purpose of such centers.

“(h) REVIEW.—The State educational agency shall review the local educational agency’s parental involvement policies and practices to determine if the policies and practices meet the requirements of this section.

## National Standards for Parent and Family Involvement Programs

Standards identified by the National PTA build on six types of parent involvement identified by Joyce L. Epstein of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University (1995). Each standard produces unique gains for students, contributes to effective programs, and fosters school success. Gains for students are greatest when parents participate in activities in each of the six standard areas. (National PTA, 1997).

- Standard I: Communicating - Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- Standard II: Parenting - Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- Standard III: Student Learning - Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Standard IV: Volunteering - Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- Standard V: School Decision Making and Advocacy - Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Standard VI: Collaborating with Community - Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

### Practice

Quality Indicators - The following quality indicators are what the research shows as contributing to effective programs and fostering success. For more specific examples of practical application ideas see the booklet of National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs (National PTA, 1997) or their web site at: <http://www.pta.org/programs/pubstndid.htm>

### Standard I - Communicating

**Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.**

Communication is the foundation of a solid partnership. When parents and educators communicate effectively, positive relationships develop, problems are more easily solved, and students make greater progress.

Too often school or program communication is one-way without the chance to exchange ideas and share perceptions. Effective home-school communication is the two-way sharing of information vital to student success. Even parent-teacher conferences can be one-way if the goal is merely reporting student progress. Partnering requires give-and-take conversation, goal setting for the future, and regular follow-up interactions.

### **Quality Indicators of Successful Programs**

1. Use a variety of communication tools on a regular basis, seeking to facilitate two-way interaction through each type of medium.
2. Establish opportunities for parents and educators to share partnering information such as student strengths and learning preferences.
3. Provide clear information regarding course expectations and offerings, student placement, school activities, student services, and optional programs.

4. Mail report cards and regular progress reports to parents. Provide support services and follow-up conferences as needed.
5. Disseminate information on school reforms, policies, discipline procedures, assessment tools, and school goals, and include parents in any related decision-making process.
6. Conduct conferences with parents at least twice a year, with follow-up as needed. These should accommodate the varied schedules of parents, language barriers, and the need for child care.
7. Encourage immediate contact between parents and teachers when concerns arise.
8. Distribute student work for parental comment and review on a regular basis.
9. Translate communications to assist non-English-speaking parents.
10. Communicate with parents regarding positive student behavior and achievement, not just regarding misbehavior or failure.
11. Provide opportunities for parents to communicate with principals and other administrative staff.
12. Promote informal activities at which parents, staff, and community members can interact.
13. Provide staff development regarding effective communication techniques and the importance of regular two-way communication between the school and the family.

## **Standard II - Parenting**

### **Parenting skills are promoted and supported.**

Parents are a child's life support system. Consequently, the most important support a child can receive comes from the home.

School personnel and program staff support positive parenting by respecting and affirming the strengths and skills needed by parents to fulfill their role. From making sure that students arrive at school rested, fed, and ready to learn, to setting high learning expectations and nurturing self-esteem, parents sustain their children's learning.

When staff members recognize parent roles and responsibilities, ask parents what supports they need, and work to find ways to meet those needs, they communicate a clear message to parents: "We value you and need your input" in order to maintain a high-quality program.

### ***Quality Indicators of Successful Programs***

1. Communicate the importance of positive relationships between parents and their children.
2. Link parents to programs and resources within the community that provide support services to families.
3. Reach out to all families, not just those who attend parent meetings.

4. Establish policies that support and respect family responsibilities, recognizing the variety of parenting traditions and practices within the community's cultural and religious diversity.
5. Provide an accessible parent/family information and resource center to support parents and families with training, resources, and other services.
6. Encourage staff members to demonstrate respect for families and the family's primary role in the rearing of children to become responsible adults.

### **Standard III - Student Learning**

#### **Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.**

Student learning increases when parents are invited into the process by helping at home. Enlisting parents' involvement provides educators and administrators with a valuable support system-creating a team that is working for each child's success.

The vast majority of parents are willing to assist their students in learning, but many times are not sure what assistance is most helpful and appropriate. Helping parents connect to their children's learning enables parents to communicate in powerful ways that they value what their children achieve. Whether it's working together on a computer, displaying student work at home, or responding to a particular class assignment, parents' actions communicate to their children that education is important.

#### ***Quality Indicators of Successful Programs***

1. Seek and encourage parental participation in decision-making that affects students.
2. Inform parents of the expectations for students in each subject at each grade level.
3. Provide information regarding how parents can foster learning at home, give appropriate assistance, monitor homework, and give feedback to teachers.
4. Regularly assign interactive homework that will require students to discuss and interact with their parents about what they are learning in class.
5. Sponsor workshops or distribute information to assist parents in understanding how students can improve skills, get help when needed, meet class expectations, and perform well on assessments.
6. Involve parents in setting student goals each year and in planning for post-secondary education and careers. Encourage the development of a personalized education plan for each student, where parents are full partners.
7. Provide opportunities for staff members to learn and share successful approaches to engaging parents in their child's education.



## **Standard IV - Volunteering**

### **Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.**

When parents volunteer, both families and schools reap benefits that come in few other ways. Literally millions of dollars of volunteer services are performed by parents and family members each year in the public schools. Studies have concluded that volunteers express greater confidence in the schools where they have opportunities to participate regularly. In addition, assisting in school or program events/activities communicates to a child, "I care about what you do here."

In order for parents to feel appreciated and welcome, volunteer work must be meaningful and valuable to them. Capitalizing on the expertise and skills of parents and family members provides much needed support to educators and administrators already taxed in their attempts to meet academic goals and student needs.

Although there are many parents for whom volunteering during school hours is not possible, creative solutions like before- or after-school "drop-in" programs or "at home" support activities provide opportunities for parents to offer their assistance as well.

### ***Quality Indicators of Successful Programs***

1. Ensure that office staff greetings, signage near the entrances, and any other interaction with parents create a climate in which parents feel valued and welcome.
2. Survey parents regarding their interests, talents, and availability, then coordinate the parent resources with those that exist within the school and among the faculty.
3. Ensure that parents who are unable to volunteer in the school building are given the options for helping in other ways, at home or place of employment.
4. Organize an easy, accessible program for utilizing parent volunteers, providing ample training on volunteer procedures and school protocol.
5. Develop a system for contacting all parents to assist as the year progresses.
6. Design opportunities for those with limited time and resources to participate by addressing child care, transportation, work schedule needs, and so forth.
7. Show appreciation for parents' participation, and value their diverse contributions.
8. Educate and assist staff members in creating an inviting climate and effectively utilizing volunteer resources.
9. Ensure that volunteer activities are meaningful and built on volunteer interests and abilities.

## **Standard V – School Decision-Making and Advocacy**

### **Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.**

Studies have shown that schools where parents are involved in decision making and advocacy have higher levels of student achievement and greater public support. Effective partnerships develop when each partner is respected and empowered to fully participate in the decision-making process. Schools and programs that actively enlist parent participation and input communicate that parents are valued as full partners in the educating of their children.

Parents and educators depend on shared authority in decision-making systems to foster parental trust, public confidence, and mutual support of each other's efforts in helping students succeed. The involvement of parents, as individuals or as representative of others, is crucial in collaborative decision-making processes on issues from curriculum and course selection, to discipline policies and over-all school reform measures.

### ***Quality Indicators of Successful Programs***

1. Provide understandable, accessible, and well-publicized processes for influencing decisions, raising issues or concerns, appealing decisions, and resolving problems.
2. Encourage the formation of PTAs or other parent groups to identify and respond to issues of interest to parents.
3. Include parents on all decision-making and advisory committees, and ensure adequate training for such areas as policy, curriculum, budget, school reform initiatives, safety, and personnel. Where site governance bodies exist, give equal representation to parents.
4. Provide parents with current information regarding school policies, practices, and both student and school performance data.
5. Enable parents to participate as partners when setting school goals, developing or evaluating programs and policies, or responding to performance data.
6. Encourage and facilitate active parent participation in the decisions that affect students, such as student placement, course selection, and individual personalized education plans.
7. Treat parental concerns with respect and demonstrate genuine interest in developing solutions.
8. Promote parent participation on school district, state, and national committees and issues.
9. Provide training for staff and parents on collaborative partnering and shared decision making.

### **Standard VI - Collaborating with Community**

#### **Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.**

As part of the larger community, schools and other programs fulfill important community goals. In like fashion, communities offer a wide array of resources valuable to schools and the families they serve.

When schools and communities work together, both are strengthened in synergistic ways and make gains that outpace what either entity could accomplish on its own:

- Families access community resources more easily;
- Businesses connect education programs with the realities of the workplace;
- Seniors contribute wisdom and gain a greater sense of purpose; and ultimately,
- Students serve and learn beyond their school involvement.

The best partnerships are mutually beneficial and structured to connect individuals, not just institutions or groups. This connection enables the power of community partnerships to be unleashed.

### ***Quality Indicators of Successful Programs***

1. Distribute information regarding cultural, recreational, academic, health, social, and other resources that serve families within the community.
2. Develop partnerships with local business and service groups to advance student learning and assist schools and families.
3. Encourage employers to adopt policies and practices that promote and support adult participation in children's education.
4. Foster student participation in community service.
5. Involve community members in school volunteer programs.
6. Disseminate information to the school community, including those without school-age children, regarding school programs and performance.
7. Collaborate with community agencies to provide family support services and adult learning opportunities, enabling parents to more fully participate in activities that support education.
8. Inform staff members of the resources available in the community and strategies for utilizing those resources.

Source: National PTA

## COORDINATION AND EVALUATION TOOL

**OBJECTIVE:** School district will allocate and fund district/school site personnel, facilities, time, and other resources to support Parent Involvement as it relates to academic achievement.

**POLICY ELEMENTS:** (1) Communication, (2) Parenting, (3) Student Learning, (4) Volunteering, (5) Decision-making and Advocacy, (6) Parent, School and Community Collaboration.

Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
1.	1, 6	Develop a two-way communication network among parents, school district, community and community agencies, with the school district Parent Involvement and Volunteer Coordinator serving as the point of contact for Parent Involvement.					
2.	6	Coordinate and integrate Parent Involvement Strategies with other programs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Resource Centers</li> <li>• Birth to Five Programs</li> <li>• Reading First</li> <li>• School Improvement committees</li> </ul>					
3.	6	Establish a district-wide Parent Involvement Council on implementation of parent involvement including but not limited to mandated components of NCLB, Title I, PA 307, and Education YES!					
4.	1	Create and publish a (*Pre and Post-Project) Parent Involvement Survey seeking completion from involved and uninvolved parents to reflect the needs and perceptions of parents throughout school district (*Pre Project to be included in school registration packages).					
5.	1,2, 3,4, 5,6	Define, identify, publicize and implement opportunities for Parent Involvement with respect to district/school site/community activities involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Parenting</li> <li>• Student Learning</li> </ul>					

## COORDINATION AND EVALUATION TOOL

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**POLICY ELEMENTS:** (1) Communication, (2) Parenting, (3) Student Learning, (4) Volunteering, (5) Decision-making and Advocacy, (6) Parent, School and Community Collaboration.

Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
6.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• Decision-making and Advocacy</li> <li>• Parent, School and Community Collaboration</li> </ul> <p>Publish and distribute in a variety of ways a quarterly newsletter (online, in multiple languages, auditory version for low literacy families , print) to reach diverse families, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Parent Involvement Policy</li> <li>• District calendar</li> <li>• Specialized program information</li> <li>• Input from individual schools</li> <li>• School Performance report card</li> <li>• Parent Involvement events/opportunities</li> <li>• Student health</li> <li>• Substance Abuse</li> <li>• Media and media limits for children</li> </ul>					
7.	1	<p>Disseminate information to parents on issues, including: reforms, policies, discipline procedures, assessment tools/results, district goals, supplemental services and opportunities for parent participation using a variety of media, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspapers</li> <li>• Radio</li> <li>• Television</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Telephone/voice mail</li> <li>• Visuals</li> <li>• Videos (English and Spanish)</li> <li>• Email</li> </ul>					

## COORDINATION AND EVALUATION TOOL

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Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
8.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newsletters</li> </ul> <p>Expand opportunities for parents to have two-way communication with Superintendent, School Board, and administrators in order to address questions or concerns and offer ideas about educational issues and parent involvement .</p>					
9.	2,4,5,6	<p>Coordinate Parent Involvement training for parents, volunteers and school district personnel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify training needs of parents, volunteers and school district personnel at the district/school site levels through an assessment of needs:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Obtain input from school personnel, volunteers and parents/parent organizations</li> <li>* Consider the various levels of participation to which parents can commit</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Match the training opportunities of the district and community to the training needs of parents, volunteers and school district personnel</li> <li>• Provide additional trainings as needed</li> </ul>					
10.	4,5	<p>Establish and support parent/ school/ community groups at every school site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage development of strategies for sharing resources among schools</li> </ul>					

## COORDINATION AND EVALUATION TOOL

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**POLICY ELEMENTS:** (1) Communication, (2) Parenting, (3) Student Learning, (4) Volunteering, (5) Decision-making and Advocacy, (6) Parent, School and Community Collaboration.

Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
11.	1	<p>Coordinate scheduling of activities for students and parents to facilitate Parent Involvement. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elementary schools-1st or 3rd Tuesday nights</li> <li>• Middle schools-Thursday nights</li> <li>• High schools-Wednesday nights</li> </ul>					
12.	6	Explore sources of financial support, applying for and acquiring monies to implement and continue Parent Involvement.					
13.	6	Engage employers in the implementation of the school district Parent Involvement Initiative Strategic Plan to increase parent participation.					
14.	6	<p>Encourage employer policies and practices that promote and support adult participation in child education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a business “Best Practices” document</li> </ul>					
15.	6	Advocate for a Parent Involvement strand for under-graduate students in teacher education.					
16.	1	<p>Coordinate (with parents, parent groups, School Support Teams, etc.) the evaluation of Parent Involvement by documenting information such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of parent participation hours</li> <li>• Number of individual participants-including a breakout the types of families</li> <li>• Number of families not involved in district</li> </ul>					

## COORDINATION AND EVALUATION TOOL

**OBJECTIVE:** School district will allocate and fund district/school site personnel, facilities, time, and other resources to support Parent Involvement as it relates to academic achievement.

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Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
17.	1	<p>sponsored involvement activities including a breakout the types of families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of change in the degree of involvement</li> <li>• % of change in the types of families involved</li> <li>• Increase or decrease in numbers or hours of participants</li> <li>• Types of participation, including without limitations:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fundraising</li> <li>- Home supports</li> <li>- Special events</li> <li>- Policy decisions</li> <li>- Curriculum decisions</li> <li>- School-wide improvement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Staffing</li> <li>• At home Student Learning Parent Involvement data</li> <li>• % of academic change seen in children with involved parents as compared to uninvolved parents</li> </ul> <p>Compile and publish Parent Involvement data in an annual accountability report. Provide this information to parents and staff in a format that is easily and quickly comprehended.</p>					

Source: Reprinted with the permission of Washoe County School district, Nevada.



## INCLUSION TOOL

**OBJECTIVE:** The school district, parents and the community will collaborate to support parents' role as vital and necessary partners in their children's academic success, by creating a welcoming, respectful environment and by partnering with them to assure parents have compete, timely and culturally sensitive education related information.

**POLICY ELEMENTS:** (1) Communication, (2) Parenting, (3) Student Learning, (4) Volunteering, (5) Decision-making and Advocacy, (6) Parent, School and Community Collaboration.

Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
1.	1,2,3,4,5,6	Identify and initiate action that establishes positive school/parent partnerships including removing barriers to effective Parent Involvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain information from parents (involved and uninvolved) and parent organizations regarding the current and future state of parent involvement including perceived problems and needs</li> <li>• Obtain input from school personnel, support staff, administrators and area experts regarding perceived problems and needs</li> <li>• Obtain information from students regarding perceived problems and needs</li> <li>• Adjust and improve the climate and environment of the district school system related to parent involvement</li> <li>• Adjust the environment at school sites</li> <li>• Consider all district families with children including families in transition, with disabilities or home language other an English, cultural diversity and differing socio-economic status</li> </ul>					
2.	1,5	Provide opportunities and templates for successful school personnel/parent/student interactions, including without limitations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking parental input and insight into their children's learning</li> <li>• Home visits</li> </ul>					

## INCLUSION TOOL

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**POLICY ELEMENTS:** (1) Communication, (2) Parenting, (3) Student Learning, (4) Volunteering, (5) Decision-making and Advocacy, (6) Parent, School and Community Collaboration.

Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
3.	2,3,5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open houses/ family breakfast meetings/ orientations</li> <li>• New family welcomes and communication throughout year</li> <li>• Daily communication methods</li> <li>• Computer generated student data</li> <li>• Recognition events</li> <li>• Ongoing parent meetings with flexible scheduling, translators as needed, transportation, childcare and home visits if necessary:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* (P-6) within the first three weeks of school in which the teacher will address:</li> <li>* Curriculum</li> <li>* Classroom rules/policies</li> <li>* Homework policy</li> <li>* Parent participation opportunities</li> <li>* Ways parents can share their knowledge and insight as well as ask questions/rise concerns</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Development of strategies for middle and high schools</li> <li>• Purely social events</li> </ul> <p>Develop and support the role of parents as shared decision makers and partners in education in areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum development</li> </ul>					

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**POLICY ELEMENTS:** (1) Communication, (2) Parenting, (3) Student Learning, (4) Volunteering, (5) Decision-making and Advocacy, (6) Parent, School and Community Collaboration.

Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
4.	3,4,6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student goal setting</li> <li>• Parent teacher conferences</li> <li>• School-policy</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Fundraising/non-fundraising events</li> <li>• Hiring committees</li> <li>• Transition from level to level</li> <li>• Parent organizations and ad hoc groups</li> <li>• Legislative support</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• Federal, State, District, Site education budget participation</li> <li>• District and site level committees</li> <li>• Homework, Summer School and supplemental credit offerings</li> <li>• Before and after school programs</li> </ul> <p>Involve parents and community resources in education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify skills of parents/community members and seek to include them in classroom activities</li> <li>• Utilize talents and experiences of parents/community members in classroom activities</li> <li>• Inform parents of the expectations for students in each subject at each grade level</li> </ul>					

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**POLICY ELEMENTS:** (1) Communication, (2) Parenting, (3) Student Learning, (4) Volunteering, (5) Decision-making and Advocacy, (6) Parent, School and Community Collaboration.

Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
5.	4	<p>Consider alternatives for those parents who are unable to participate at a school site during regular school hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address fear of school, family situations, disabilities, transportation/childcare needs, work schedules, cultural differences, etc.</li> </ul>					
6.	1	<p>Develop and promote a variety of communication systems for seeking parent expertise and input as well as informing parents within key community locations including: notes ,newsletters, notices, phone trees, voicemail, after-school programs, employer newsletters, Email and home visits.</p>					
7.	1,5,6	<p>Inform and involve parents regarding educational policy, school decision-making, school site and district needs, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solicit input from site personnel, parents, parent organizations, students and the community.</li> </ul>					
8.	4	<p>Encourage diversity of volunteer resources and opportunities by actively recruiting parent participants from as wide a spectrum of the community as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighborhood Advisory Boards</li> <li>Community Advisory Boards</li> <li>Faith-based and business community</li> <li>Service Clubs</li> <li>Senior groups</li> </ul>					

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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING TOOL

**OBJECTIVE:** The School District and the Community will collaborate to provide training that supports the development of parents, volunteers, teachers, staff, administrators, and the community at large in Parent Involvement within the educational system.

**POLICY ELEMENTS:** (1) Communication, (2) Parenting, (3) Student Learning, (4) Volunteering, (5) Decision-making and Advocacy, (6) Parent, School and Community Collaboration.

Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
1.	1&2	Offer diversity training relating to Parent Involvement for parents, volunteers, district Personnel, board members and others.					
2.	1,5,6	Provide district personnel with training, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective two-way communication techniques such as home visits and daily face-to-face communication.</li> <li>• “Customer” service.</li> <li>• Creating an inclusive environment that welcomes and respects parents.</li> <li>• Effective utilization of volunteer resources.</li> <li>• Collaborative partnering and shared decision-making.</li> <li>• Sensitivity towards diverse family situations.</li> <li>• Creation of effective parent-teacher conferences.</li> <li>• Creation of parent involvement opportunities that reach previously uninvolved parents</li> </ul>					
3.	2,3,4	Provide training for district personnel in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with parents/volunteers to foster learning at home, monitoring homework, and giving input and feedback to teachers related to learning at school and home. * Using technology.</li> <li>• Preparing and assigning homework that requires family discussion and interaction.</li> <li>• Preparing workshops designed to help parents</li> </ul>					

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING TOOL

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Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
4.	1	<p>and teachers develop strong home/school learning partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning and sharing successful approaches to engaging parents/volunteers in children's education: including goal setting and development of personalized educational plans to include post-secondary education/careers.</li> </ul> <p>Developing strategies for engaging parents in the schools (i.e., reaching uninvolved parents, involving parents in shared building decision making, recruitment of volunteers). Provide training for school district personnel, volunteers, and parents in verbal and written -friendly parent communication (e. g., face to face, email, newsletters, web pages).</p>					
5.	2, 3	<p>Provide training for parents and volunteers in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering learning at home by;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Daily supports of rest, good nutrition, encouragement, etc.</li> <li>○ Monitoring homework and giving feedback to teachers.</li> <li>○ Using technology</li> <li>○ Participating in student homework assignments that require family discussion and interaction</li> <li>○ Teaching their students how to get needed help, meet class expectations, and perform well on all educational tasks and assessments</li> <li>○ Parent leadership</li> </ul> </li> </ul>					

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING TOOL

**OBJECTIVE:** The School District and the Community will collaborate to provide training that supports the development of parents, volunteers, teachers, staff, administrators, and the community at large in Parent Involvement within the educational system.

**POLICY ELEMENTS:** (1) Communication, (2) Parenting, (3) Student Learning, (4) Volunteering, (5) Decision-making and Advocacy, (6) Parent, School and Community Collaboration.

Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
6.	2, 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Applying successful approaches to engaging in their children’s education:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Annual goal setting</li> <li>* Development of a personalized educational plan, to include postsecondary education/career plans</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Offer on-going parenting trainings related to child academic success, including without limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate sleep</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Nutrition</li> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Television and video game usage</li> <li>• Homework behaviors</li> <li>• Time and conflict management</li> <li>• English language skills</li> <li>• Family literacy</li> <li>• Creation of effective parent-teacher communication, including conferences</li> </ul>					
7.	2, 4, 5, 6	<p>Provide parents/volunteers with advocacy and leadership training, including without limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising issues or concerns in a school environment</li> <li>• Creating effective parent-teacher conferences</li> <li>• Making and appealing decisions (e.g. budgets)</li> <li>• Resolving problems (conflict management)</li> <li>• Collaborating and partnering</li> <li>• Group processing/developing strategies for recruiting other parents</li> </ul>					

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**POLICY ELEMENTS:** (1) Communication, (2) Parenting, (3) Student Learning, (4) Volunteering, (5) Decision-making and Advocacy, (6) Parent, School and Community Collaboration.

Number	Policy	Action Step	Assigned To	Initiation Date	Completion Date	Funding Source	Measurement
8.	1,2,3,4,5,6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared decision-making</li> <li>• Neighborhood coalition building</li> <li>• Processes for influencing decisions</li> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">*Provide childcare, translation, transportation, convenient scheduling and family disabilities</li> </ul> <p>Create and/or support non-fundraising activities such as home visiting, annual "Parent Nights" and "Kinderfairs" for parenting/volunteer education, insuring adequate training in such areas as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's development</li> <li>• Parenting skills</li> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Curriculum</li> <li>• Educational options</li> <li>• Drop-out prevention</li> <li>• Budgets</li> <li>• School reform initiatives</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Gang prevention</li> <li>• Personnel issues</li> <li>• Volunteer procedures and school protocol</li> <li>• Drug, alcohol and violence prevention</li> <li>• Other</li> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">*Provide childcare, translators, transportation</li> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">* Offer convenient scheduling</li> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">* Consider family disabilities</li> </ul>					

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## **Assessing Existing Parent Involvement**

### **A Checklist of the Differing Levels of Involvement**

Schools often judge the effectiveness of their parent involvement by the degree of fundraising activities that occur, the percentage of parent attendance at parent/teacher conferences, and the number of parents coming to school open houses. Many parents, however, do not engage with these traditional methods of parent involvement due to conflicting demands on their times, past negative experiences with the educational setting, and their own feelings of competency.

Review of research and Best Practices by Michigan State University has shown that parent involvement needs occur at differing levels for different families. As not all families can participate at the same level, it is important to have varying levels of engagement at your school. Levels include:

- Communication to and from Parents
- Partnership in Student Learning
- Parent Volunteers
- Parents Using the School as a Resource
- Parents as Decision Makers

The following assessment tool is an excerpt adapted from an assessment tool developed by Outreach Partnerships, Michigan State University. The purpose of the tool is to provide buildings with a checklist to easily assess a building's parent involvement related to the above-mentioned levels. (Excerpt reprinted with permission from: Parent Involvement In School, Best Practice Brief No. 30, Outreach Partnerships, Michigan State University. Entire original document can be found at <http://outreach.msu.edu/bpbriefts/issues/brief30.pdf>).

## LEVEL 1

### Communication To and From Parents

The effective school keeps parents informed through regular two-way communication. Sharing of information vital to student success is facilitated by the activities outlined below.

	YES		NO	
	OK	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
An early conference prior to school start or during first weeks enables parents to communicate information about their child's characteristics and their desired goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contracts between the school and each parent are developed that include agreements concerning expectations for the child's progress, parental provision of a place to study, and a commitment to talk daily about school tasks, pay attention to academic progress, and compliment gains.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents know how to reach teachers directly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers encourage parents to let them know what is happening in the child's life that may affect school performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principal and teachers set aside a small amount of time each day and use all possible means to communicate frequently with parents, using as appropriate:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letters by mail.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E-mail.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telephone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Face-to-face.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A homework log gives the parent instructions for facilitating homework and incomplete schoolwork.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principal and teachers have established a regular schedule for positive communications to parents:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Celebration notes on positive things that have happened.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Folders of completed student work are sent home weekly or monthly for parents to review and return with comments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communications emphasize strengths and how the parents can help.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Report cards and regular progress reports are sent, or given, to parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	YES		NO	
	OK	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
Communication process is modified as needed for non-English-speaking or low-literacy parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conferences with every parent are held at least twice a year with follow-ups as needed, and at times when parents can attend.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principal and teachers schedule a home visit to all children during the year, giving priority to those children and parents who are new to the school and those children where there is an immediate concern.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For low-income families and families in some cultures, offering home visits is more successful at involving parents than programs requiring parents to visit the school. However, when parents do become involved at school, their children make even greater gains.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children and staff collaborate on classroom newsletters that provide information about school activities, policies and schedules, an opportunity to answer questions and elicit suggestions, and information on community resources and family activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The school provides parents with clear information on class level achievement expectations, school activities, school policies, discipline procedures, assessment tools, and school goals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The school promotes informal activities that facilitate the interaction of parents and staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The school conducts an annual person-to-person survey of families on students' needs and families' suggestions and reactions to school programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A special effort is made to reach parents not normally involved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The school provides staff development on effective communication techniques.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The school's practices to inform and involve parents are stronger determinants of whether inner-city parents will be involved with their children's education than are parent education, family size, marital status, and student grade level.

When parents receive frequent and effective communication from the school, their involvement increases, their overall evaluation of educators improves, and their attitudes toward the school are more positive.

## LEVEL 2

### Partnership in Student Learning

The effective school views parents as partners in facilitating children’s learning and enables them in various ways.

	YES		NO	
	OK	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
Parents are given information and orientation/training on:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Required skills in all subjects at each grade.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ Homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ How to assist children with skills that they will be developing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
○ How sufficient sleep, nutritious food, limited TV, discussion at meals together, and a quiet place to study can improve academic performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents participate with teachers in helping children set academic goals each year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers have a regular schedule of interactive homework that requires children to demonstrate to and discuss with parents what they are learning in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The school library has preschool and elementary books that parents can borrow to read to and discuss with their young children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Parents are much more likely to become involved when educators encourage and assist parents in helping their children with schoolwork, when they are treated as partners and given relevant information by people with whom they are comfortable, parents put into practice the involvement strategies they already know are effective, but have been hesitant to utilize.

Parent effectiveness is enhanced when the school provides orientation/training; for example, written directions with a send-home instructional packet, workshops where parents participate in constructing and using instructional games, or training and ongoing supervision by school personnel.

### LEVEL 3

#### Parent Volunteers

The effective school stretches its resources by encouraging parents to volunteer. Parent volunteers have traditionally been stay-at-home mothers. However, there may be other possibilities, including arrangements with FIA to define consistent part-time volunteering as a “work” activity for women moving from welfare to work.

The precondition for parent volunteers is a welcoming school.

	YES		NO	
	OK	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
The school encourages participation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provides clear instructions including a volunteer orientation packet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creates ways to express appreciation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents accompany classes on field trips.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents volunteer to extend the capacities of staff by:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tutoring or serving as a teacher’s aide in the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bringing their talents, skills, knowledge, experiences, or unique culture to the classroom as guest instructors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring in the cafeteria and on the playground during lunchtime.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents volunteer to improve the school environment or equipment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent teams welcome and orient new families at the beginning and during the year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents volunteer in a telephone tree to provide all families with school-related information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents volunteer to organize and manage resources under Level 5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents have the use of a room as a place for volunteers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## LEVEL 4

### The School as a Resource for Parents

The effective school connects to parents by serving as a resource, becoming a full service school. The full service school is a logical extension of the welcoming school and the school as part of the community. The school provides access to resources identified by parents as important to families.

	YES		NO	
	OK	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
The school is available for meetings of community groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The principal and teachers may link family to needed resources, especially if children are frequently absent because of illness or family issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children can have breakfast at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The school houses a clothing exchange.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents and school staff agree on and put into effect a plan of action to contain community problems such as traffic safety, drug dealing, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## LEVEL 5

### Parents as Decision Makers

Effective schools have access to financial resources and a team of administrators, teachers, and parents makes decisions.

	YES		NO	
	OK	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
Parents participate in review of proposed school policies and curriculum as part of parent organization committees or principal-appointed advisory committees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents participate on all decision making and advisory committees:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Committees meet at times convenient for parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of technology permits parents to participate offsite.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	YES		NO	
	OK	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
The school provides parents with an understandable, well-publicized process for influencing decisions, raising issues or concerns, appealing decisions, and resolving problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training is provided to staff and parents on shared decision making.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The more the relationship between parents and educators approaches a comprehensive, well-planned partnership, the higher the student achievement. Partnering requires give-and-take conversation, goal setting for the future, and regular follow-up interactions.

**Policies, Procedures, Contracts, and Handbooks:  
Reviewing Language that Fosters/Hinders a Welcoming Parent Environment, and  
Examining District Policies, Handbooks/Communication,  
Missions, Procedures, and Practices**

Below is a list of questions related to the policy and procedural structure of the district’s view of parent involvement. The greater number of “yes” answers marked on this checklist, the closer a district is toward having a structure for effective parent involvement.

Question	Yes	No
<p>Is there a specific Board of Education policy that addresses the importance of a school/parent partnership for student success in school? If yes, does this policy and its subsequent procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish parent involvement as a district priority?</li> <li>• Direct the Superintendent to establish the means by which parent involvement is fostered and maintained at the building and district level?</li> <li>• Speak to an on-going process of involvement that actively seeks to engage all families of the district in different ways?</li> <li>• Speak to involving parents across the different levels of parent involvement, which are supported by research?</li> </ul>		
Does the professional development plan for the district include continuous improvement of all staff regardless of role related to more effective parent involvement?		
Are staff given time and financial resources, to implement parent involvement policies and procedures more effectively?		
Does the facility use policy to make it easy for parent involvement events to occur outside of normal school hours and sports game nights?		
Does the facility use policy to form a fee structure that encourages the use of district buildings by parents?		
<p>Do policies and procedures related to district goals and priorities, school environment, curriculum development, administrator hiring, communication structures (i.e., phone system), school security, parental rights and responsibilities, etc., seek and encourage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental input in the development, implementation and review of district policy/procedure?</li> <li>• Parents to be part of district and building advisory and decision-making teams, as appropriate?</li> </ul>		



Question	Yes	No
<p>Do school improvement teams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule their meetings at times when parent representatives can attend?</li> <li>• Work to actively gain input from parents who traditionally aren't engaged?</li> <li>• Use technology or other means of communication to connect and involve parents who aren't physically present at a meeting (i.e., conference call, email updates, etc.)?</li> </ul>		
<p>Do policies and procedures reference District staff's role in fostering parent involvement (including non-certified staff)?</p>		
<p>Do student handbooks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an opening section that invites parents to become engaged, and provide ways in which they can become engaged?</li> <li>• Speak to the importance of parents in children's school success?</li> <li>• Address how parents can help promote positive occurrences at schools vs. the parent's responsibility in students' disciplinary actions or missing school?</li> <li>• Provide a balance between inviting/positive language and language that is controlling and directing? Is there a balance between terms like parents are "invited" or "encouraged" and terms like parents "must" or "expected to?"</li> <li>• Have printings in the languages spoken by student's families?</li> </ul>		
<p>Does contract language allow parent volunteers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist with after school enrichment activities that support and/or supplement the curriculum?</li> <li>• Assist in classrooms, media center and the office?</li> </ul>		
<p>Does contract language regarding extra-curricular assignments and pay reflect a staff member's leadership of established building parent involvement committees?</p>		
<p>Does contract language speak to staff being involved in parent engagement activities outside of the normal school day and at locations other than district buildings (home visits, parent/teacher conference times and locations)?</p>		
<p>Does a parent handbook exist that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives parents initial information that fosters a home/school partnership?</li> <li>• Uses collaborative, welcoming language vs. directing, controlling language?</li> </ul>		

Source: Developed by the Michigan Department of Education from parent and school district administrator interviews, and reviewed by the Michigan Association of School Boards staff

## Parent Involvement/Engagement Rubric

The below rubric was designed to provide school districts with a clear understanding of how parents are involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of instructional programs at the building level. The level of involvement can be explicitly described including how parental input will be utilized and valued throughout the instructional initiative.

This may provide a useful tool as school personnel and community members mark the attributes, which reflect their perception of the school district.

Marginal Engagement	Active Participant in Decision Making	Exemplary Collaboration
The district's parental involvement plan:	The district's parental involvement plan:	The district's parental involvement plan:
<b>Successful Partnerships</b>		
Sets policies that give the impression schools belong to school personnel and parents are not encouraged to interfere through the use of explicit or implicit communication.	Sets policies that give the impression parents may become involved in the school in limited ways. Communication speaks only to these limited ways.	Sets policies where school personnel actively encourage parents to become involved in establishing goals, planning and a wide variety of ways through all forms of communication.
Establishes guidelines where parents are spectators and their responsibility ends with the delivery of the child to school. School personnel report to families about school decisions.	Establishes procedures where parents expect to help establish guidelines and have a reciprocal report structure that allows parents and school personnel to interact easily and frequently.	Establishes numerous methods by which parents can become involved in their children's education both at home and school, recognizing family differences, schedules and cultures. School personnel listen to parents and value their insight on how best to work together.
Directs school personnel to determine all education program goals, rules, and guidelines without consultation of parents.	Assigns responsibility to Parent Teacher Organization leaders to serve on any ad-hoc committees.	Describes a well-designed education community committee, which meets year around with responsibilities divided across a multi-year commitment.

<b>Marginal Engagement</b>	<b>Active Participant in Decision Making</b>	<b>Exemplary Collaboration</b>
The district's parental involvement plan:	The district's parental involvement plan:	The district's parental involvement plan:
Provides little evidence of avenues for the development of <b>mutual</b> respect between parents and school personnel.	Describes structures that promote mutual respect between parents and school personnel.	Provides examples of and describes structures that promote mutual respect between parents and school personnel.
<b>Welcoming Environment</b>		
Uses signage, which may intimidates parents.	Uses signage to welcome parents.	Uses signage to welcome and guide parents to spaces designed to encourage parents' and families' interactions at school.
Demonstrates that the primary source of authority is the school and its designated personnel.	Describes plans for shared authority between parents and school personnel.	Provides exhibits that the authority for decisions is shared between parent representatives and school personnel.
Encourages parents to sit on ad-hoc committees.	Encourages parent organizations to have a representative on planning and other ad-hoc committees.	Expects participation and provides support that assures parents are on planning, ad-hoc, and evaluation committees.
Provides limited information regarding indicators of student progress and assessment to communicate student achievement to parents.	Describes vague uses for standardized assessment tools to communicate student progress to parents.	Uses specific formative and summative assessment tools to communicate student progress to parents.
<b>Support for Home Learning</b>		
Does not specify a process for allowing parents to gain information about involvement in instructional programs	Provides descriptions of instructional that are available through the school, along with a timeline, and school policies.	Describes the process of parents and school personnel working to develop instructional programs and support for learning at home.
Provides little descriptive information regarding selection and distribution process of support resources.	Demonstrates how instructional support materials are selected based on student assessment performance and sent home to extend learning through practice.	Identifies family survey activities that provide current family information to support selection of materials for extended learning and practice at home.

<b>Marginal Engagement</b>	<b>Active Participant in Decision Making</b>	<b>Exemplary Collaboration</b>
The district's parental involvement plan:	The district's parental involvement plan:	The district's parental involvement plan:
<b>Communication</b>		
Assures that parents receive communication from school personnel.	Periodically reviews the school's communication policy for effectiveness.	Intentionally utilizes multiple media types for communicating with school families and community service organizations.
<b>Parent Teacher Conferences</b>		
Sets Parent Teacher Conferences with little consideration of the needs of families.	Provides flexible scheduling for parent teacher conferences during the day and evening hours.	Utilizes a parent survey to gain information about the availability of the schools' families and maximizes teachers' availability for conference scheduling.
Provides minimal privacy or accommodations when communicating with parents.	Articulates a plan for engaging parents in a meaningful manner when waiting for appointed conference time.	Periodically reviews the physical space to assess privacy and comfort of participants during parent teacher conferences.

Source: Basis for this rubric was adapted from Henderson, A.T., & Berla, N. (Eds.) (1994). A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement. Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

## **SAMPLE DISTRICT OR SCHOOL BUILDING VISION STATEMENT**

“In order to improve academic achievement, every student in District or School Name will have a parent or a parent substitute who is empowered to participate actively in all aspects of his or her education.

All District or School Name schools will actively solicit and welcome parental participation and advocacy in all aspects of the educational process.”

## **Sample District Board Policy**

### **Modified with the permission of the Michigan Association of School Boards**

Sample District Board Policy on Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Involvement Policy—This sample policy has been developed from a model policy written by the Michigan Association of School Boards for its members. The section prior to Title I Programs has been modified with additional language to reflect the idea of a school/ family partnership and to list areas of effective parent involvement supported by research.

#### Parent/Guardian Involvement and School Partnership

The Board strongly encourages and welcomes the involvement of parent(s)/guardian(s) in all of the District's educational programs. It is recognized a parent's involvement in a child's education is a critical component in that child's academic success. The Board further appreciates and respects parents/guardians as the "first teachers" of their children, and believes the interest and involvement of parents in the education of their children should not diminish once children enter the schools of the District. An effective school/parent partnership focused on students' educational success must exist, which involves all district staff and parents/guardians, for the District's educational goals to be achieved.

Accordingly, the Board directs, by the adoption of this policy, that the administration shall design a program/plan that will encourage and foster a partnership between families and the schools for increased /parent(s)/guardian(s) involvement in children's education. The plan may include, but not be limited to:

- Establishment of welcoming school environments
- Communication to and from parents and school
- Parents as volunteers
- Supportive home learning environments
- Schools as a parent resource centers
- Parents as decision makers.

Included in these areas may be surveying parents as to their ideas and needs related to parent involvement, communicating in languages understood by district families, the development and review of instructional materials and district procedures, review of individual school environments, input on the ways that the District may better communicate with parent(s)/guardian(s) about information and resources they may need (e.g., current laws, regulations, instructional programs; and community resources), educational programs to assist parent(s)/guardian(s) in their support of academic achievement, increasing parents opportunities to be involved in building decisions, as well as district staff development looking at staff attitudes and effective parent involvement programs.

Pursuant to state law, the Superintendent shall provide a copy of the District's Parental Involvement plan to all parents.<sup>1</sup> The effective implementation of the plan should be

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<sup>1</sup> MCL 380.1294 (1) Not later than January 1, 2005, the board of a school district or intermediate school district or the board of directors of a public school academy shall adopt and implement a parent involvement plan designed to encourage parental participation. (2) The board or board of directors shall provide a copy of the parent involvement plan to the parent or legal guardian of each pupil. The board of directors may provide the copy of the policy be including the policy I its

reviewed and evaluated by the district and parents on a regular basis with Superintendent recommendations to the Board as to related policy and budgetary needs.

### Title I Programs

In accordance with the requirement of the No Child Left Behind Act, the \_\_\_\_\_ Board of Education encourages parent(s)/guardian(s) participation in Title I programs. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) shall be offered substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children by this policy.

The Board directs that the following actions be implemented by the administration to insure compliance with federal law and to invite parents to become involved highly in the education of their children:

#### Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Involvement Policy (Cf. 7170)

The involvement of parent(s)/guardian(s) in the planning, implementation, evaluation, and improvement of Title I programs/services through participation on building School Improvement Teams;

- Invitations to parent(s)/guardian(s) to attend at least one annual meeting for Title I parents, with additional meeting opportunities being available as needed, designed to provide Title I information and program services, and to solicit parent(s)/guardian(s) suggestions on program development, planning, evaluation and operation;
- Assistance to parent(s)/guardian(s) in understanding Title I, including the providing of information in a language understandable to the parent(s)/ guardian(s) if practicable;
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) notification of Title I student selection and criteria for selection;
- Information regarding child's achievement and progress;
- A provision for input by Title I staff at regularly scheduled parent/guardian-teacher conferences and any additional communication as requested by the Title I staff or parent(s)/guardian(s);
- Opportunities to enhance parent(s)/guardian(s) capacity to work with children in the home on school learning;
- Professional development opportunities for teachers and staff to enhance their understanding of effective parent(s)/guardian(s) involvement strategies;
- Ongoing communication between school and parent(s)/guardian(s); and
- Other appropriate activities (i.e. Family Math Nights, parent(s)/guardian(s) sessions, science, theatre, etc).

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student handbook or a similar publication that is distributed to all pupils and parents. (3) The board or board of directors shall provide a copy of the parent involvement plan to the department upon request by the department.

## Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Involvement Policy (Cf. 7170)

### Written Plans/Policies

*(MASB Note: The District has the option of either having EACH SCHOOL develop written Title I plans OR having DISTRICT-WIDE Title I policies and plans. MASB suggests that, for the sake of uniformity, there be ONE District policy. That sample language appears below.)*

The \_\_\_\_\_ School District, as a recipient of Title I funds, hereby adopts the following policy statement regarding the development of a District-wide plan for parent(s)/guardian(s) involvement in the development of a Title I plan, and directs the administration to:

- Involve parent(s)/guardian(s) in the development of the plan;
- Develop a plan that provides for the involvement of parent(s)/guardian(s) in the Title I activities of the school;
- Provide the necessary technical, research, staff and administrative support to schools in the planning and implementing of effective parent(s)/guardian(s) involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance;
- To integrate and coordinate the plans/policies for parent(s)/guardian(s) involvement in Title I programs with parent(s)/guardian(s) involvement in other programs, including but not limited to Head Start;
- To review and evaluate the District's plan annually and to share the results of that review and evaluation with the Board;
- To assure that the policy/plan contains a compact that outlines how parent(s)/guardian(s), the school staff and students will share the responsibility of improved student achievement; and
- To distribute the District plan to parent(s)/guardian(s) of participating children and to the local community.

## Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Involvement Policy (Cf. 7170)

### Migrant Education Program (MEP) Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Involvement

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of students in the MEP will be involved in, and regularly consulted, about the development, implementation, operation, and evaluation of the program.

### Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Involvement

In accordance with federal law, parent(s)/guardian(s) of LEP students will be provided notice regarding their child's placement in and information about the District's LEP program. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be notified about their rights regarding program content and participation including the right to choose among programs if alternatives are available. The notice must also include an explanation of the value of the program in terms of academic development, mastery of English, and the achievement of promotion and graduation standards. The notice will also include an explanation of the right to remove the child from an LEP program and to place the child in the regular program. The notice must be in a format that families can comprehend and, if possible, in a language that is understood by the family. LEGAL REF: 20 USCA 6318 (No Child Left Behind Act); MCL 380.1294 (PA 107 of 2004).source:

Modified with the permission of the Michigan Association of School Boards



## **Model Parent/Family Involvement Policy**

The Board of Education recognizes that a child's education is a responsibility shared by the school and family during the entire period the child spends in school. To support the goal of the school district to educate all students effectively, the schools and parents must work as knowledgeable partners.

Although parents are diverse in culture, language, and needs, they share the school's commitment to the educational success of their children. This school district and the schools within its boundaries, in collaboration with parents, shall establish programs and practices that enhance parent involvement and reflect the specific needs of students and their families.

To this end, the Board supports the development, implementation, and regular evaluation of a parent involvement program in each school, which will involve parents at all grade levels in a variety of roles. The parent involvement programs will be comprehensive and coordinated in nature. They will include, but not be limited to, the following components of successful parent involvement programs:

- Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- Responsible parenting is promoted and supported.
- Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Community resources are made available to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning.

The Board of Education supports professional development opportunities for staff members to enhance understanding of effective parent involvement strategies. The Board also recognizes the importance of administrative leadership in setting expectations and creating a climate conducive to parental participation.

In addition to programs at the school level, the Board of Education supports the development, implementation, and regular evaluation of a program to involve parents in the decisions and practices of the school district, using to the degree possible, the components listed above. Engaging parents is essential to improved student achievement. This school district shall foster and support active parent involvement.

Source: This sample policy is based, in part, on the Parent Involvement Policy adopted by the California State Board of Education.

## SAMPLE DISTRICT PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY

The (Name of District) School Board/Board of Trustees recognizes that parental involvement is key to academic achievement. **The term “parent” refers to any caregiver/guardian who assumes responsibility for nurturing and caring for their children.** When parents are involved in their children’s education, the attitudes, behaviors, and achievement of students are positively enhanced.

Parents and families provide the primary educational environment for children; consequently, parents are vital and necessary partners with the educational communities throughout their children’s school career. Although parents come to the schools with diverse cultural backgrounds, primary languages, and needs, universally all parents want what is best for their children. (Name of District), in collaboration with parents, teachers, students and administrators, shall develop and promote strategies that enhance parental involvement and reflect the needs of students, parents and families.

In order to enhance parental involvement, six essential elements shall be promoted:

1. **Communication** between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful: Effective communication requires school-initiated contact with the parent and parent-initiated contact with the school where both parties provide vital information about a child’s strengths, challenges and accomplishments. To communicate effectively, both parties must be aware of and address issues such as cultural diversity, language differences and special needs. Appropriate steps shall be taken to allow clear communication between participants.
2. Responsible **parenting** is promoted and supported: The family plays a key role in a child’s educational environment. School personnel and program staff shall support positive parenting by respecting and affirming the strengths and skills needed by parents to fulfill their role. Parents shall be linked to programs and resources within the community that provide needed support services.
3. **Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning:** Student achievement increases when parents are actively involved in the learning process. Schools shall therefore provide opportunities for parents to learn effective ways to support their child’s educational needs including information about how parents can support student behaviors such as punctuality and regular attendance that are closely tied to student success in school.
4. Parents are welcomed as **volunteers** in schools: Parent volunteers are essential for advancing student achievement. Therefore, parents shall be welcome and invited to volunteer at all educational levels. Volunteer opportunities shall capitalize on the expertise, interests and skills of the parents, and have a direct connection to school and district goals.

5. Parents are full partners in the **decisions** that affect their children and families: Parents and educators have a mutual responsibility to make informed decisions related to all aspects of the education provided to our students. Schools shall actively enlist parent participation in decision-making. Further, efforts shall be made to recruit and support participation by parents representing diverse student groups such as: limited English proficient, special needs, gifted and talented, and homeless. The role of parents in decision-making shall be continually evaluated, refined, and expanded at the district and school levels.
  
6. Parents, school and community **collaborate** in order to enhance student learning, strengthen families and improve schools: Parents, educators and community members will work together in order to promote and effectively increase educational opportunities for children. When schools and communities form partnerships, both make gains that outpace what either entity could accomplish on its own. Providing all students with equal access to quality education is a primary goal. It is vital that all partners (parents, educators, businesses and communities) have the opportunity to provide input and offer resources to meet this goal. Developing cooperative efforts and providing access to resources will ensure improved academic achievement for all students, as well as quality schools.

Source: Reprinted with the permission of Washoe County School District, Nevada, November 25, 2003.

## **SAMPLE DISTRICT PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY**

(Name of School District) believes that parents (including those who are economically disadvantaged, have disabilities, have limited English, have limited literacy, are of any racial or ethnic minority background, or are parents of migratory children) are partners with teachers and other staff in the education of their children and that parent involvement and empowerment are essential at all levels throughout the school district.

(Name of School District) believes that student academic achievement requires that parents have an understanding of curriculum, academic achievement standards, assessments, district/school policies and procedures, and of how to monitor their children's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children.

**District Administration shall work in collaboration with parents and guardians and shall actively support the schools and parents in enhancing parent involvement by:**

- respecting parents as partners in the education of their children;
- valuing diversity and the need for equity in each school;
- promoting parent involvement in district leadership and decision-making;
- fostering a welcoming and responsive environment for parents;
- ensuring accountability of the staff at all levels throughout the district in working with parents as partners;
- valuing the need for partnerships within public and private entities in the Denver community;
- ensuring flexibility and accessibility within Central Administration operations and flexibility within district-wide processes and procedures; and
- establishing and promoting communication as a source of trust and understanding between the district and parents.

**Principals, teachers and all school staff shall work in collaboration with parents and guardians by:**

- respecting parents as partners in the education of their children and honoring their role as first and life-long teachers;
- valuing diversity and equity in each child's learning;
- setting high expectations for excellent customer (student/parent) service;
- expecting high student achievement for all students;
- promoting parent involvement in site-based leadership and decision making;
- valuing partnerships within the public and private entities within the Denver community;
- ensuring flexibility and accessibility within school-wide operations and flexibility within school processes and procedures; and
- establishing and promoting communication as a source of trust and understanding between the school and parents.

**Parents/Guardians are asked and encouraged to be involved in their children's learning and education by:**

- taking the initiative to seek the best educational opportunities for their children;
- understanding and respecting the mission and values of the school;
- respecting teachers and supporting school staff as partners in the education of their children;
- demonstrating respect for the school as a whole, including the faculty and staff;
- developing jointly with the teacher, a school-parent compact for their child that outlines how the parents, the school and the student will share the responsibility for improved academic achievement;
- identifying and addressing barriers to parent involvement;
- understanding school procedures and opportunities to contribute or receive support;
- participating in the development of the school parent involvement plan and the review and evaluation of the plan;
- utilizing two-way lines of communication between parents, school staff and the district on the instruction, achievement and conduct of their children;
- participating in training opportunities that will include but are not limited to: strategies/reinforcing learning at home, discipline and understanding cultural differences;
- valuing diversity and the need for equity in each child's learning;
- participating in site-based leadership and decision making;
- volunteering in their children's schools; and
- supporting and engaging in developing partnerships within the Denver community.

A district-wide parent advisory council, made up of district stakeholders to be appointed according to procedures approved by the Superintendent, shall be established to make recommendations to the Board regarding strategies to implement and ensure success of this policy. The council shall draft regulations to address the requirements of Section 1118 of the *No Child Left Behind* Act, which shall be reviewed annually and revised as needed, by the Board of Education and the Superintendent.

Source: Adapted with the permission of Denver Public Schools

## Sample Parent Involvement Board Policy

The School Board/Board of Directors respects parents as the primary decision makers for their children's education and believes that schools and families must work together for the education of students. Further the board believes that meaningful parent/family involvement is critical to success for all students. To ensure that the interests of parents and the educational needs of students are identified and served, schools must develop collaborative relationships between home and school. When teachers and parents communicate and share similar high and realistic expectations for student achievement and behavior, students can be expected to learn more and perform better in school.

The board directs the superintendent to require each school leadership team to develop, implement, and maintain an effective parent/family involvement program appropriate to the interests of its families and the needs of its students.

To support the development of partnerships between home and school, each school's parent/family involvement program must include practices which:

1. Create two-way communication with all families;
2. Offer a variety of volunteer opportunities which respect the differing needs of families;
3. Provide parents information necessary to enhance learning at home; and
4. Involve parents and educators in joint decision-making that affects student learning, including but not limited to the development of school learning plans.

Each program will:

1. Identify specific measurable goals;
2. Create permanent structures to support involvement;
3. Demonstrate a long-term commitment to involvement;
4. Have explicit connections to learning plan goals; and
5. Contain a variety of involvement practices to reach out to diverse families.

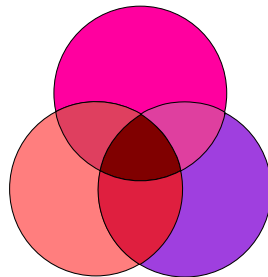
Additionally, it is recommended that schools offer educational programs responsive to the needs of families, and that they link parents with services in the community that provide support for student success.

Parent/family involvement programs will be evaluated and reviewed on the same cycle as school learning plans. Each school's parent involvement program will identify indicators of success unique to its program including the spring climate survey.

Adapted with the permission of Federal Way Public Schools, Federal Way, WA, 98003



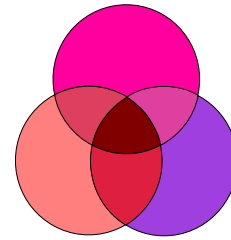
# **School-Based Community Engagement Model**



**April, 2004**

# Introduction

“**Community Engagement**” is key to a successful school system. In Grand Rapids Public Schools, two of our guiding principles, openness and service, are critical to the development of engagement.



Effective community engagement requires that we strive to be a more open system, sharing our resources as well as our problems with the community as we seek their partnership. In addition, successful engagement requires us to hold in mind that we exist to serve our public must be evident in the caring behavior we exhibit toward our children and our community. In that spirit, we offer the following “Model for Community Engagement.”

## District Advocacy for Engagement

<b>Definition:</b>	District leaders will consistently and effectively give priority to engaging parents and the community in student learning.
<b>Expectations:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District staff will be accountable for fostering a culture of openness and acceptance in GRPS</li> <li>• District staff who are responsible for core district work (Second Language, Character Education, Secondary Study, Early Childhood, etc.) will ensure that community partners are involved in the work.</li> </ul> <p>Administrative Coaches will support the implementation and hold building teams accountable for on-going community engagement.</p>
<b>Timeline:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In summer of 2004, training regarding community engagement strategies will occur with district leaders. Additional training, tailored to the needs of each school, will occur in 04-05.</li> <li>• During the 2004-05 school year, implementation of this model will occur</li> </ul>
<b>Measurement:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measurement will be documented in each school’s Action Plan for Learning Agendas, meeting rosters, email copies and other copies will be kept on file as evidence</li> </ul>



## Shared Leadership

<b>Definition:</b>	Shared Leadership means staff members and community members will be empowered to lead the Community Engagement process in partnership with the principal.
<b>Expectations:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principal shall help build capacity in the school, and help community and staff members develop the skills necessary to participate in shared leadership.</li> <li>• Every school shall have in place a system of Community Engagement communication to staff members, parents, and members of community partner groups. This communication shall provide coordination and collaboration on efforts in the building.</li> <li>• The principal shall be responsible for establishing, monitoring, and maintaining positive working relationships with partners.</li> <li>• The school will be an inclusive community with shared responsibility and high expectations, where everyone contributes and benefits. All students are seen as EVERYONE'S responsibility.</li> <li>• Staff and Community Engagement partners will be involved in a yearly training for their roles and functions. Training will be customized to the needs of the school's team.</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline:</b>	The Community Engagement communication method should be in place by September 15, 2004. Schools should establish timelines for leadership training for staff and partners as needed.
<b>Measurement:</b>	Documentation will be kept at the building of dates for activities, trainings, and specific partnership initiatives. A brief end of the year survey will be developed for partners and school personnel in May 2005, in order to gather feedback about Community Engagement.

## Parent Involvement

<p><b>Definition:</b></p>	<p>Every parent will be expected to participate to some degree with his or her child's education. Parent involvement will be encouraged and empowered through the use of committees whose charge is to empower and enable parents to be effectively involved in their children's education.</p>
<p><b>Expectation:</b></p>	<p>This model will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the numbers of parents actively involved with their child's educational experience.</li> <li>• Improve the effectiveness of our schools to create optimal learning environments and a correlating improvement in student achievement.</li> <li>• Provide on-going training for parents, teachers, and principals to create the skills that will enable this model to succeed.</li> <li>• Expect leaders in every arena of activity to mentor the next generation of leaders to build continuity and capacity into the system of committees.</li> <li>• Clearly express the bounds of responsibility and accountability for each arena of participation and clearly establish procedural pathways to address concerns and implement change.</li> <li>• Expect a measurement tool be created to track changes in the areas it is expected the model will affect.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Timeline:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By fall 2004 the model will be published and announced to parents and the community.</li> <li>• By the fall of 2004 School Parent Action Leaders will be recruited for each school and trained in the model's goals and structure.</li> <li>• The school year will start with the Parent Action Leader being responsible for recruitment, orientation and training of sub committee members and volunteers.</li> <li>• By the second semester the committees will be in place and we should start seeing actions that have resulted from their formation.</li> <li>• By the end of the school year, each school will have created a report on their first year's activities, an evaluation of their experience and a statement about their vision for the coming year with recommendations for changes and refinements that would improve the committee's effectiveness. This report will be presented to parents, the school administration and the school board.</li> </ul>

<b>Measurement:</b>	A district-sponsored survey will be administered to measure the change in the level of parental involvement and its impact on the perception of a school's performance. Measurement will encompass areas of strengths and improvement for students, parents, teachers, and principals as well as the impact on academic performance.
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## Community Connection

<b>Definition:</b>	Community Connection means welcoming any interested parties in the community that wants to help support our schools.
<b>Expectations:</b>	<p>Each school staff will conduct a total asset review of their resources so they may realize and develop all potential partnerships.</p> <p>Each school shall explore developing relationships with a one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations in the faith community</li> <li>• Business Partners (think about what the school needs as well as what the school can give back to its partner)</li> <li>• Neighborhood Associations (raise visibility, get on meeting agendas, bounce ideas off of this group)</li> <li>• Schools in other districts and/or non-public schools (sharing resources, mutual projects)</li> <li>• University Partners (mentoring, research studies, after school activities, special events or projects)</li> <li>• Civic and service organizations and individuals that support the school's mission.</li> <li>• Alumni of the school.</li> </ul> <p>The roles of each of the above relationships will be established as formed.</p> <p>Partners will be acknowledged and appreciated at each site.</p>
<b>Timeline:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School personnel should establish relationships beginning in the fall of 2004 and work on these on an on-going basis.</li> <li>• Development of a communication to all partners by October 1.</li> </ul>
<b>Measurement:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation will be kept at the building of dates for activities, trainings, and specific partnership initiatives. A brief survey will be developed for partners and school personnel in 2004-05, in order to gather feedback about Community Engagement.</li> </ul> <p>Descriptive data will be recorded in both the Education Yes and Annual Report Data that each school completes.</p>

## Support Staff Contribution

<b>Definition:</b>	Support Staff need to be highly motivated, professional, and willing to work collaboratively for the good of the children they serve. Support Staff includes secretaries, custodians, food service, bus drivers, security officers, and other professionals.
<b>Expectations:</b>	<p><b>Support Staff will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to the ongoing goals of the building and exhibit ownership of their part in attaining their goals.</li> <li>• Be aware of the unique quality of the student population.</li> <li>• Communicate regularly with principal and classroom staff</li> <li>• Participate in staff development opportunities.</li> <li>• Support the maintenance of a safe, secure, welcoming climate within each building.</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning 2004-05 staff professional development and community engagement training will occur as deemed by building plans.</li> <li>• Ongoing as needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Measurement:</b>	A district-sponsored survey will be disseminated to gather feedback in regards to support staff involvement with Community Engagement.

## Teacher Participation

<b>Definition:</b>	Teachers need to be highly motivated, professional and willing to work collaboratively with parents for the good of their children.
<b>Expectation:</b>	<p><b>Beginning of the school year</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a warm and visitor-friendly environment, for example classrooms need to be attractive and appropriate for the grade level.</li> <li>• During the first 2 weeks of school the teacher will make a positive parent contact (either face to face or by phone).</li> <li>• The teacher will express that each child's education is a team effort, and will inform parents of his or her available time for meetings.</li> <li>• The teacher will provide the parent with information regarding the school (examples: a school brochure, the discipline code book, grade level and room expectations)</li> <li>• The teacher will set clear expectations for the parent at the beginning of the year (for example, attend grade level meetings, orientation, attend conferences, read class and school</li> </ul>

	<p>communications, volunteering)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Teachers will work in conjunction with the Parent Involvement plan in the school.</i></b></li> </ul> <p>During the school year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers should set up a meeting with new parents to get to know them and share information about the child.</li> <li>• Teachers will be willing to meet with parents at a mutually convenient time.</li> <li>• Teachers will provide experiences/activities that parents can attend during and after school hours, for example school programs, classroom visitations, etc.</li> <li>• Teachers will acknowledge the cultural differences of their students and strive to incorporate cultural contributions to the classroom, building, district, and community.</li> <li>• Teachers will send positive communications to parents and community partners on a regular basis, for example classroom newsletters, phone calls, notes.</li> <li>• Training principals, teachers, support staff, and parents (focusing on teacher and parent roles) will occur</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline:</b>	Beginning in 2004-05 and ongoing
<b>Measurement:</b>	Documentation such as building visitor log, classroom parent involvement log, copies of written parent communications will be kept in the classroom file.

Source: Published with the permission of Grand Rapids Public Schools

## Sample Parent Involvement Title I School Policy

The goal of (Name of School) is to provide a high quality education to meet the challenging standard of serving ALL children. The purpose of the (Name of School) Title 1 Program is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency in meeting challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. We value the role parents play as their children's first teacher and the influences of their continued support to promote higher student academic achievement and school performance.

(Name of School) envisions quality education for all by maintaining a positive, nurturing, and self-motivating environment. (Name of School) promotes life-long learning to prepare its community to become contributing members of our ever-changing society.

The following outline is in compliance with the legal requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (PL 107-110, Section 1118). The document represents joint development with parents, teachers, and principal. The policy will be available to all parents in the district.

1. Parents will have an opportunity to assist in developing the building plan, review the program and make suggestions. To accomplish this:
  - All parents will be invited to an annual meeting offered at a variety of times before October 15 to maximize the opportunity for parents to participate to inform the following: Title 1 Objectives; instructional methods; school wide objectives and instructional methods; the student selection process; test scores and how schools are identified for school improvement (section 1116); and that they, the parents, have the right to request to know the qualifications of teachers and paraprofessionals in their school (section 1119). The parent coordinator/facilitator with the assistance of the school wide facilitators will schedule, notify parents and conduct meetings.
  - The School District will hold a minimum of four meetings/forums annually, which will be held for the purposes of consultation, advising and evaluation. The participants will be parents, Parent Coordinator/Facilitator, school wide support staff, teachers, community representatives and principal. These meetings/forums will be advertised and open to all parents. The Parent Coordinator/Facilitator will set the agenda and conduct the meetings.
2. Support will be provided to parents and teachers as they plan and implement effective parent involvement by:
  - Providing parent and parent/child workshops and activities based on the assessed needs and interests. The parent group with the Parent Coordinator/Facilitator's leadership will plan and conduct 4 workshops per year.

- Developing a Parent/Teacher/Student Compact in cooperation with both parents and teachers and promoting its use for the betterment of the students. The compact shall be presented in a way that attends to the literacy and language levels of parents. The compact will include an explanation of how it will be distributed, monitored and assessed.
  - Providing a facility that will be a working site for parents to hold meeting/workshops, work on projects and obtain materials to encourage parents to support their child's learning. The maintenance of the active parent center will be undertaken to the extent possible.
  - Providing current, reputable parent literature/materials in a format that is understandable to parents.
3. In order to promote the school's and parents' capacity to form a strong partnership and work toward higher student academic achievement, will:
- Assist parents in such areas as the State's academic content standards, State student academic achievement standards, State and local assessments, the requirements of this part and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the academic achievement of their children as well as provide information on how parents can participate in decisions regarding the education of their children.
  - Encourage parents to visit their children's classroom during the school day through participation in side-by-side and daily classroom activities.
  - Inform parents of school activities through newsletters, phone calls, web sites, e-mail and other media.
  - Encourage staff to have regular two-way meaningful communication with parents through parent teacher conferences, progress reports, home visits, classroom newsletters, school web site and providing opportunities for observation of classroom activities.
  - Cooperate with other agencies and resources to promote necessary training for parents. Parents will be provided with information as to ways to secure their GED through Adult Education Programs and by informing parents that the public library has literacy tutors.
  - Encourage the education of teachers, pupil services personnel, principals and other staff with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contributions parents can make as classroom volunteers, sharing skills and interests, assisting and coordinating workshops, helping in the parent center and encouraging other parents. The Parent Coordinator/Facilitator and parent group will provide staff development to inform teachers of the value of parental involvement in the school.
  - Develop partnerships with community based organizations and business sponsored programs, workshops and training, and having representation at school functions.
  - Develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations & businesses to work with parents and Irving School, and encourage the formation of partnerships between Irving School and local businesses that includes a role for parents.

- Make information available, in a format and, to the extent possible, in the language parents can understand. Translating can be facilitated through the district's bilingual department, principal and bilingual instructors.
  - Provide materials and training to help parents work with their children to improve their children's academic achievement. Such training would include literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement.
4. (Name of School) will encourage coordination of parent involvement activities with Head Start, P.A.C.T., Reading First, and Parents as Teachers by sharing information, co-sponsoring workshops, and encouraging attendance and/or participating in activities that serve the needs of both groups.
  5. Parents will participate in the annual evaluation of the content and effect of the school parental involvement policy and practice. They will also consider:
    - Increasing parent involvement
    - Ways to overcome barriers which may limit participation for those who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, have limited literacy, have limited English proficiency or are of any racial/ethnic minority background.

The annual evaluation will be used to revise and/or design parent policy practices to better parental involvement and parental input.



**U.S. Department of Education - Successful Local Approaches**  
*Family Involvement in Children's Education - October 1997*

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**Maine School Administration District #3:**  
**A Geographically Dispersed, Rural District Draws Parents into Schools**  
**Thorndike, Maine**

**Overview**

The parent involvement programs in Maine's School Administration District (SAD) #3 focus on drawing parents into the schools, providing them and their children with interactive learning experiences, and involving parents as well as teachers in curricular and instructional planning. Thanks to the efforts of involved administrators, teachers, community members, and a special projects director who works in the district's central office, the district has won grants to supplement Title I funding and support training for teachers and parents in experiential learning and other ways to participate in their children's education. Through these activities, teachers have become more comfortable with bringing others into their classrooms, and many no longer believe that they alone are the "keepers of the knowledge." The district found that, once teachers accept the idea of having other adults in the classroom, they actively seek out parents.

**Context**

Geographic isolation is a significant barrier to developing parental involvement programs in this rural, primarily agricultural region of eastern Maine, which is known for its dairy products and blueberry farms. The district covers an area of 400 square miles and includes 11 small towns, of which Unity is the largest with a population of 11,000. There are six elementary schools, one junior high, and one high school. Some towns traditionally support strong parent-teacher organizations, but others, which are experiencing an influx of new residents from larger cities, struggle to develop a sense of community. There is also a small but growing migrant population that comes to the area during blueberry and apple picking seasons.

The student population is 99 percent white, and approximately 50 percent are eligible for free and reduced price lunches. All but two of the district's schools have implemented school wide programs.

## **Breaking Down Barriers to Family Involvement in Schools**

To improve home-school relations, the district and school staff try to address (1) the difficulties of parent involvement in a geographically dispersed, rural district, and (2) the perception held by many parents that older students do not require as much parent involvement in their education as younger students do. In addition, they wanted to address teachers' reluctance to involve parents in classroom and school activities. To promote student learning as a shared responsibility, the district has implemented outreach strategies aimed at relieving families' physical isolation from schools and bringing parents and staff together for reasons of information, training, and decision-making.

### **Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints**

In SAD #3, several communication strategies address barriers posed by the long distances between homes and schools and by the limited time that busy parents have for communicating with school staff.

#### ***High-tech home-school communications***

By combining the resources provided through a series of grants (including a Nynex-Public Utilities Commission grant), the district created a hub site for telephones and computers at the high school. Unitel, a local telephone company, contributed materials to establish all schools as communications links so that parents can visit any school to contact the one their children attend.

This computer/telephone hub also receives support through a state-funded project called Waldo's Window, which improves communications between people in districts and isolated towns. Parents with home computers will be able to communicate with schools, and those without computers will be able to log in at school sites. In the 5 district towns that have no schools, parents will be able to log on at designated offices, which will serve as community computer access points.

#### ***Time and resources for working parents to focus on education***

At parents' suggestion, district staff offer Potluck Nights as a way to encourage school-family communication between teachers and families despite their busy schedules. Originating at the junior high school as a way for older students, parents, and teachers to decide how best to meet students' educational needs, these casual dinners make it convenient for parents to attend evening meetings and events without interrupting dinner schedules, providing an informal setting for interaction among parents, teachers, and students. According to the district volunteer coordinator, these dinners foster the kind of informal communication that can be otherwise difficult to achieve. Teachers and parents are both encouraged to bring their families (child care is provided if needed), a strategy that has led to higher attendance rates.

### ***Finding time for teachers***

In addition, the district employs a home-school coordinator who, upon request, can support families and relieve some of the time demands placed on teachers by working with students who need extra support to succeed in school.

## **Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff**

The district reaches out to parents in several ways, including a quarterly newsletter that provides information about how families can help students with their homework and district-sponsored activities that offer family learning workshops. Some of these activities take place at a local conference center, and others take place at 1 or more of the district's eight schools. All of the district's workshops are offered to parents. Workshops have also been offered to parents and other community members who have been particularly interested in learning to browse the district's Web site by using the Waldo's Window community access computers.

### ***Training that brings families and teachers together***

The district sponsors community workshops at Camp Kieve, a leadership-training institute that attracts teachers from throughout the Northeastern United States and Canada. Workshops have included:

- **Leadership Decisions Institute**, an annual weeklong retreat for all seventh-grade students that focuses on experiential learning activities designed to teach life skills and decision-making strategies. Parents and community members join teachers and administrators for a workshop on parenting skills where parents learn what their children are studying and what projects they will participate in at the camp. Last year more than 20 participants attended this workshop, and more than 200 parents attended an evening follow-up session.
- **Retreats for parents and teachers**, which focus on increasing community and parent involvement. The daylong retreats for parents feature discussions led by teachers and students. One recent retreat focused on conflict resolution and on solving communication problems between parents and adolescents. Attendance averages 20 to 30 participants.

Along with the Camp Kieve activities, the district sponsors other training that not only brings families and teachers together but also provides opportunities for learning at home:

- **Community Day** is an annual community-wide outreach and training effort. It seeks to bring families and community members together with teachers and school staff to participate in team-building activities, set educational goals, and devise strategies for accomplishing these goals. As a result of one recent Community Day, the town of Liberty initiated a plan to open a community library. Open to the general public, the Community Day activities are advertised through direct mailings, spots on a local cable station, newspaper advertisements, and local grassroots networking.

This year, a local businessman, who owns the Moosehead-Belfast train line, has donated two train runs to the project. Up to 300 people can ride on each train run and participate in project activities. At stops along the trip, Camp Kieve trainers will lead community-building workshops on the train, and representatives of the Beacon Project (a Statewide Systemic Initiative effort supported by the National Science Foundation) will provide math and science workshops intended to develop community awareness about the state's new math and science framework and its performance standards, known as Learning Results.

- Individual schools hold an open house-spaghetti dinner, in which families and school staff share what children are learning with one another. For example, in the most recent open house, teachers and students performed skits and conducted lessons to teach community residents about the school's new peer mediation and conflict resolution program.
- The district designed a parent-student Internet workshop to introduce families and other community members to the Internet; about 25 community members were trained by students.
- One of the district's most popular professional development programs, entitled Critical Skills Education By Design, is available through Antioch College to teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. More than 80 percent of the K–12 teachers and 100 percent of district administrators have attended one of these workshops, which are based on research indicating that students learn best in experiential, problem-based, collaborative environments and that they need to practice hands-on activities in both school and non-school settings, such as the home.
- Several schools in the district host Family Math/Science Nights. These workshops, modeled after the program developed by the Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California, allow children and parents to explore interesting math or science activities, such as games that families can subsequently play at home. The program typically attracts 75 to 100 parents.

### ***Volunteer preparation***

For the past two years, a district volunteer coordinator has directed parent volunteer activities. As part of her job, she recruits volunteer coordinators for each school, and these individuals--typically parents--survey parents and teachers, distribute volunteer handbooks, and coordinate the yearly volunteer activities and schedules. To support individual school volunteer efforts, the district hosts an evening program for parents at the beginning of each year to inform them of volunteer activities available at each school. This also serves as an orientation workshop at each school--also at the beginning of each year--to teach parents how to become involved in their children's school and education. This year, the district volunteer coordinator plans to bring all of the coordinators together to compile a district-wide volunteer manual.

Finally, the coordinator organizes an annual teacher workshop entitled Building Effective Relationships with Volunteers to provide participants with ideas and skills for viewing parents as a resource.

### **Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement**

Because many teachers in SAD #3 are accustomed to working independently, they find it difficult to open their classrooms and solicit input from parents. This reluctance on the part of teachers reinforces the traditional beliefs held by many parents; namely, that schools provide few opportunities for parents to get involved. Some of the above-mentioned workshops, which bring parents and teachers together, are breaking down these attitudinal barriers, and other efforts, such as including parents in district and school decision-making, are also building stronger school-family partnerships throughout the district.

Parents participate in decision-making at the district level and the individual school level. The district's special projects director encourages parents to help with school projects, seek funding, and offer their opinions on district activities. For example, parents at Unity Elementary worked with the special projects director and other school staff to rewrite and revamp report cards for students in grades 4-6.

Also, SAD #3 involves parents in the planning and implementation of Title I activities. The district invited parents from each school to participate in the yearlong effort to write the plan for implementing Title I and other federal programs, which will include parents' feedback on developing new forms for reporting students' academic progress.

The district's five-year Title I plan also pledges to facilitate a community-oriented approach for educating children system wide. The plan promotes the philosophy that all elements of the community must work hand-in-hand to educate children and that these programs are most effective when they are based on a mutual consensus around common needs.

### **Tapping External Supports for School-Family Partnerships**

SAD #3 not only provides support for individual schools but also raises funds to support parent involvement activities. Some examples of the funding sources for the activities described above include:

- The Rural Leadership Initiative, a \$500,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation, is a three-year grant that supports activities that build community spirit, cultivates community involvement, and enhances the potential for leadership among school staff and members of the community. This grant supports the experiential learning activities and the related parental involvement programs at Camp Kieve. A grant from the L.L. Bean Company through the Maine Development

Foundation also contributes to these programs.

- A Noyce Grant (sponsored by local philanthropist Roberta Noyce) supports professional development activities that help teachers make the transition from lecture-based teaching to a more interactive, hands-on approach. Funding for Critical Skills Education workshops comes from the district through Noyce grants and National Science Foundation funds.
- Federal Reflective Practice Grants have funded activities in the district for years. Home-school coordinators, who are funded through federal dollars, work with students who need extra services.
- Maine's Statewide Systemic Initiative provides schools with Beacon grants (funded by the National Science Foundation) targeted at improving mathematics and science education, an arrangement that can include parent involvement activities. Monroe School, for example, used a Beacon grant for a garden building project that involved parents as well as teachers and students.

### **Evidence of Success**

By first encouraging collaboration among parents and teachers and then by supporting events, such as potluck dinners, that provide teachers and parents with opportunities to interact more informally, the district has increased the number of teachers who encourage parental involvement. As the district's special projects director notes, although teachers previously had very little contact with parents, now many call parents and invite them into their classrooms.

"I've seen a great shift in SAD #3 as teachers move from [the role of] keepers of the knowledge to the realization that it's okay to have other adults in their rooms and to access their knowledge. As the teachers' comfort levels increase, they open their doors, reduce their isolation, and make parents feel welcome. Now teachers even call parents to encourage them to come into their classrooms." District special projects coordinator, Maine SAD #3

In addition, in her two years as the district volunteer coordinator for Maine's SAD #3, she has seen the number of active volunteer programs at district schools grow from two to all eight campuses. And although the district has only recently begun to track participation in school-sponsored events, some indicators show gains in attendance. For example, increasing numbers of parents and teachers have attended each successive potluck dinner. Although 60 parents attended the first dinner of 1995-96, and 40 stayed for a meeting on communication strategies, 75 parents attended the second dinner, with 42 attending a post-meeting on teacher-student needs and resources, and 95 parents attended the third potluck dinner, with 70 staying on for an adult-teen dialogue session facilitated by staff from Camp Kieve. Finally, all schools now have on-site volunteer coordinators who serve as liaisons to the district coordinator and are dedicated to helping meet the needs of teachers and families in their schools.

## Additional U.S. Department of Education Resources

[U.S. Department of Education Web Cast on Parent Involvement](#) Lorraine Wise, Office of Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs

### Family Involvement in Children's Education - Successful Local Approaches (*An Idea Book*)

#### [Successful Local Approaches to Family Involvement in Education](#)

- [Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints](#)
- [Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff](#)
- [Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement](#)
- [Bridging School-Family Differences](#)
- [Tapping External Supports for Partnerships](#)
- [Effects on Students and Families](#)

#### [Conclusions About Establishing and Sustaining Partnerships](#) [Profiles of Successful Partnerships](#)

- [Atenville Elementary School](#): *Parents as Education Partners in a Rural Setting*
- [Buffalo Parent Center](#): *A Large Urban School District Gives Parents a Place of Their Own*
- [Cane Run Elementary School](#): *A Parent-Friendly, Family Focused Urban School*
- [Rodney B. Cox Elementary School](#): *A Small Town, Full Service School*
- [Ferguson Elementary School](#): *Restructuring an Inner-City School to Support Family Involvement*
- [Hueco Elementary School](#): *Promoting Cultural Understanding and Communication in a Rural School*
- [Maine School Administration District #3](#): *A Geographically Dispersed, Rural District Draws Parents into Schools*
- [Stockton Unified School District Parent Resource Center](#): *A Racially Diverse, Urban District Stresses Information and Training for Parents*
- [Wendell Phillips Visual and Performing Arts Magnet](#): *An Open-Door Policy for Inner-City Parents*
- [Roosevelt High School \(The Alliance Schools Initiative\)](#): *An Inner-City High School Joins a Statewide Effort*

#### [Contact Information for Profiled Partnership Programs](#)

#### [Resources for Building Successful Partnerships](#)

#### [Educational Resources and Information Center \(ERIC\) Information Related to School-Family Partnerships](#)

## WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT PARENT INVOLVEMENT In Relation to Academic Achievement

### Where Children Spend Their Time

- School age children spend 70% of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside of school.<sup>1</sup>

### When Parents Should Get Involved

- The earlier in a child's educational process parent involvement begins, the more powerful the effects.<sup>2</sup>
- The benefits of parent involvement are not confined to early childhood or the elementary grades, but last through high school.<sup>3</sup>

### Impact on Student Achievement

- Decades of research show that when parents are involved students have:<sup>4</sup>
  - Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
  - Better school attendance
  - Increased motivation, better self-esteem
  - Lower rates of suspension
  - Decreased use of drugs and alcohol
  - Fewer instances of violent behavior
- Eighty-six percent (86%) of the general public believes that support from parents is the most important way to improve the schools.<sup>5</sup>
- Lack of parental involvement is the biggest problem facing public schools.<sup>6</sup>
- Family participation in education was *twice* as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status. Some of the more intensive programs had effects that were *10 times* greater than other factors.<sup>7</sup>
- The more intensely parents are involved, the more beneficial the achievement effects.<sup>8</sup>
- The more parents participate in schooling, in a sustained way, at every level -- in advocacy, decision-making and oversight roles, as fund-raisers and boosters, as volunteers and

paraprofessionals, and as home teachers -- the better for student achievement.<sup>9</sup>

- The most effective forms of parent involvement are those, which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities at home.<sup>10</sup>
- The availability of a quiet place at home to study with appropriate books, references materials, and other learning materials has a major influence on student achievement.<sup>11</sup>

### Impact on Educators and Schools

- Where teachers reported high levels of outreach to parents, reading scores grew at a rate 50 percent higher, and math tests scores 40 percent higher, than in schools where teachers reported low levels of outreach. Outreach to parents measured the extent to which teachers communicated with parents.<sup>12</sup>
- Benefits of parent involvement for Schools<sup>13</sup>
  - Improves teacher morale
  - Higher ratings of teachers by parents
  - More support from families
  - Higher student achievement
  - Better reputations in the community
- The "amount of support from parents" was the number one factor people cited for why some schools are better than others.<sup>14</sup>
- Teachers report that their lives are made easier if they get help from parents, and involved parents tend to have more positive views of teachers.<sup>15</sup>
- Parent involvement leads to feelings of ownership, resulting in increased support of schools and willingness to pay taxes to support schools.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clark, R.M. (1990). Why Disadvantaged Children Succeed. Public Welfare (Spring): 17-23.

<sup>2</sup> Cotton, K., Wikeland, K., Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, School Improvement Research Series. In Parent Involvement in Education.

<sup>3</sup> W. Rioux and N. Berla, Education Week, Jan. 19, 1994

<sup>4</sup> Parent Teacher Association

<sup>5</sup> Rose, Gallup, & Elam, 1997

<sup>6</sup> Rose, Gallup, & Elam, 1997

<sup>7</sup> Walberg (1984) in his review of 29 studies of school-parent programs.

<sup>8</sup> Cotton, K., Wikeland, K., Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, School Improvement Research Series. In Parent Involvement in Education.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, D.L. & Chavkin, N.F. (1989). Essential elements of strong parent involvement programs. Educational Leadership, 47, 18-20

<sup>10</sup> Cotton, K., Wikeland, K., Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, School Improvement Research Series. In Parent Involvement in Education.

<sup>11</sup> Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom (1993)

<sup>12</sup> Westat and Policy Studies Associates study, U.S. Department of Education, 2001, summarized.

<sup>13</sup> *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*, edited by Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla, Center for Law and Education, Washington, D.C., 1994 (third printing, 1996)

<sup>14</sup> 1997 Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools

<sup>15</sup> Epstein, J.L. (1992) *School and Family Partnerships*. In M. Alkin (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*. New York: MacMillan.

<sup>16</sup> Davies, Don. (1988). Low Income Parents and the Schools: A Research Report and a Plan for Action. *Equity and Choice* 4,3 (Spring): 51-57. EJ 374 512.



## Parent Expectations and Student Achievement

- The most consistent predictors of children's academic achievement and social adjustment are parent expectations of the child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education at school.<sup>17</sup>
- Parents of high-achieving students set higher standards for their children's educational activities than parents of low-achieving students.<sup>18</sup>
- Parents express a genuine and deep-seated desire to help their children succeed academically, regardless of differences in socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and cultural background.<sup>19</sup>
- Lower-income parents often become passionately involved in their children's school when that school adopts as part of its mission an inclusive policy that helps families feel valued, encouraged, and supported.<sup>20</sup>

## Major Factors of Parent Involvement

- Three major factors of parental involvement in the education of their children:<sup>21</sup>
  1. Parents' beliefs about what is important, necessary and permissible for them to do with and on behalf of their children;
  2. The extent to which parents believe that they can have a positive influence on their children's education; and
  3. Parents' perceptions that their children and school want them to be involved.

## Type of Involvement

- Although most parents do not know how to help their children with their education, with guidance and support, they may become increasingly involved in home learning activities and find themselves with opportunities to teach, to be models for and to guide their children.<sup>22</sup>
- When schools encourage children to practice reading at home with parents, the children make significant gains in reading achievement compared to those who only practice at school.<sup>23</sup>
- Parents, who read to their children, have books available, take trips, guide TV watching, and provide stimulating experiences contribute to student achievement.<sup>24</sup>

- For elementary students, parent participation in reading and literacy programs, even for parents with lower literacy skills and varied language backgrounds, enhanced student achievement. For middle and high school students, parents who were aware of what their children were studying in school, communicated regularly with teachers, and reinforced schoolwork had children who made greater achievement gains.<sup>25</sup>
- Families whose children are doing well in school exhibit the following characteristics:<sup>26</sup>
  1. **Establish a daily family routine.**  
Examples: Providing time and a quiet place to study, assigning responsibility for household chores, being firm about bedtime and having dinner together.
  2. **Monitor out-of-school activities.**  
Examples: Setting limits on TV watching, checking up on children when parents are not home, arranging for after-school activities and supervised care.
  3. **Model the value of learning, self-discipline, and hard work.**  
Examples: Communicating through questioning and conversation, demonstrating that achievement comes from working hard.
  4. **Express high but realistic expectations for achievement.**  
Examples: Setting goals and standards that are appropriate for children's age and maturity, recognizing and encouraging special talents, informing friends and family about successes.
  5. **Encourage children's development/ progress in school.**  
Examples: Maintaining a warm and supportive home, showing interest in children's progress at school, helping with homework, discussing the value of a good education and possible career options, staying in touch with teachers and school staff.
  6. **Encourage reading, writing, and discussions among family members.**  
Examples: Reading, listening to children read and talking about what is being read.

## Communication

- Parents and teachers consider communication the number one factor to increase trust.<sup>27</sup>
- When teachers and parents are on the "same page" they can engage in more individual and concrete discussion around student progress and develop realistic goals and plans of action that are linked to student achievement.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Reynolds, et. al., (6)

<sup>18</sup> Clark (7:85-105)

<sup>19</sup> Mapp (1999)

<sup>20</sup> Lewis A.C., & Henderson, A.T. 1997, Urgent Message: Families crucial to school reform.

<sup>21</sup> 1997 Review of Educational Research, a journal of the American Educational Research Association

<sup>22</sup> Roberts, 1992. In Online Resources for Parent/Family Involvement. ERIC Digest by Ngeow, Karen Yeok-Hwa, 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Tizard, J.; Schofield, W.N.; & Hewison, J. (1982). Collaboration Between Teachers and Parents in Assisting Children's Reading.

<sup>24</sup> Sattes (5:2)

<sup>25</sup> Ziegler (1987)

<sup>26</sup> Henderson (1:9)

<sup>27</sup> Adams & Christenson, 2000.

<sup>28</sup> Drake, 2000; James, Jurich & Estes, 2001.

- Parents who receive more consistent information about their children's school performance report a higher degree of commitment to helping children improve.<sup>29</sup>
- Involved families tend to agree that the level of their involvement depends on outreach from teachers and administrators.<sup>30</sup>
- Appropriate communication with parents through conferences, phone calls, workshops, school meetings, notes or newsletters and home visits can:
  1. Increase parents' ability to construct a healthy home learning environment for children<sup>31</sup>
  2. Help teachers develop better instructional strategies for use in classroom lessons.
  3. Have a positive effect on students' academic achievement.<sup>32</sup>

### **Student Interest**

- Most students at all levels – elementary, middle, and high school – want their families to be more knowledgeable partners about schooling and are willing to take active roles in assisting communications between home and school.<sup>33</sup>
- When parents come to school regularly, it reinforces the view in the child's mind that school and home are connected and that school is an integral part of the whole family's life.<sup>34</sup>

### **School and District Leadership**

- The strongest and most consistent predictors of parent involvement at school and at home are the specific school programs and teacher practices that encourage parent involvement at school and guide parents in how to help their children at home.<sup>35</sup>
- School initiated activities to help parents change the home environment can have a strong influence on children's school performance.<sup>36</sup>
- Teachers who provide regular, explicit, extensive feedback elicit higher achievement.<sup>37</sup>

- The most effective parent involvement programs are guided by these ideas.<sup>38</sup>:
  - All parents have strengths and know they are important.
  - All parents can contribute to their children's education and the school.
  - All parents can learn how to help their children in school.
  - All parents have useful ideas and insights about their children.
  - Parents should be consulted in all decisions about how to involve parents.
  - All parents really do care deeply about their children.
- The most common types of training educators provide parents to increase their knowledge and skills include<sup>39</sup>:
  - Basic parenting skills<sup>40</sup>
  - Knowledge of school systems and procedures<sup>41</sup>
  - Strategies for helping their children with specific subject matter or with homework in general<sup>42</sup>
  - English language or other adult education content<sup>43</sup>

### **Obstacles**

- Hindrances to family involvement tend to fall into one of six major categories:
  1. Contextual factors
  2. Language barriers
  3. Cultural beliefs regarding appropriate roles for parents, teachers, and students
  4. Families' lack of understanding of U.S. schools
  5. Families' lack of knowledge about how to help their children with homework
  6. Issues of exclusion and discrimination.<sup>44</sup>
- Research finds that:
  1. Schools tend to see the parental role as traditional, passive and home-based, whereas many parents are interested in more active roles.
  2. Schools are often guilty of not taking the initiative to ask parents for help, and of not welcoming their participation.

<sup>29</sup> Helling, 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Urban Institute, 1999.

<sup>31</sup> Yap, Kim Onn. "Improving Chapter 1 Through Parents: A Family Goal Program." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC, 1987.

<sup>32</sup> Erbe, Brigitte. "Parent Participation in the Chicago Public Schools." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, 1991. Evans, Ian M. et al. "Experimental Evaluation of a Preventative Home-School Partnership Program for At-Risk Elementary-Aged Children." Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development.

<sup>33</sup> Epstein, 1995, p. 703

<sup>34</sup> Steinberg (8)

<sup>35</sup> Dauber and Epstein (11:61)

<sup>36</sup> Leler, H. (1983) Parent Education and Involvement in Relation to the Schools and to Parents of School-aged Children.

<sup>37</sup> Brophy, 1986

<sup>38</sup> A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement, edited by Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla, Center for Law and Education, Washington, D.C., 1996

<sup>39</sup> National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Diversity School, Family, & Community Connections, 2004

<sup>40</sup> Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1998; Zellman et al., 1998

<sup>41</sup> Zellman et al., 1998

<sup>42</sup> Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1998; Lopez & Cole, 1999;

Rodríguez-Brown, Li, & Albom, 1999; Starkey & Klein, 2000

<sup>43</sup> Johnstone & Hiatt, 1997; Paratore, Melzi, & Krol-Sinclair, 1999

<sup>44</sup> National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Diversity School, Family, & Community Connections, 2004

3. Schools often organize events for their own convenience and pay little attention to the needs of at-risk parents.<sup>45</sup>
- 61 percent of schools did not consider parent input in issues involving allocation of funds.<sup>46</sup>
  - 53 percent of schools did not consider parent input in issues involving curriculum and instruction.<sup>47</sup>
  - 49 percent of schools did not consider parent input in issues involving discipline policies and procedures.<sup>48</sup>
  - 95 percent of schools did not consider parent input in issues involving monitoring and evaluating teachers.<sup>49</sup>
  - When families aren't encouraged to come to school, and treated poorly if they do come, they get the message that they are NOBODY. And so do their kids.<sup>50</sup>
  - Power differentials that often exist between families and schools may affect home-school communication. Some schools tend to hold negative stereotypes of poor single minority mothers and communicate with them in controlling, disrespectful, and demoralizing ways.<sup>51</sup>
  - School activities to develop and maintain partnerships with families decline with each grade level, and drop dramatically at the transition to middle grades.<sup>52</sup>
  - Children on average spend 28 hours per week watching television, in addition to watching other media. When TV watching is limited to no more than four hours per day, behavior and attention improves for a high number of children.<sup>53</sup>
  - Sixty-five percent (65%) of African American children and 53% of Mexican-American children watch three plus hours of T.V. per day, compared to 37% of White children. Seven-teen percent (17%) of African American children watch over 5 hours per day.<sup>54</sup>
- Children are not getting the needed hours of sleep on a daily basis. Children, who receive less than a full night's sleep (10-11 hours for 5-12 year olds) on a daily basis, show increased behavioral problems, such as hyperactivity and cognitive problems that impact their ability to learn in school.<sup>55</sup>
  - School activities to develop and maintain partnerships with families decline with each grade level, and drop dramatically at the transition to middle grades.<sup>56</sup> Teachers often think that low-income parents and single parents will not, can not, spend as much time helping their children at home as do middle-class parents with more education and leisure time.<sup>57</sup>
  - No state requires a separate course in parent involvement for teacher licensure. Only a handful of states require parent involvement preparation as part of a course.<sup>58</sup>
  - Both of the national associations that either accredit or set standards for teacher preparation programs, NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) and NASDTEC (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification), have recently added or strengthened indicators aimed at parent involvement.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Slaughter, D.T. & Kuehne, V.S. (1988). "Improving Black Education: Perspectives on Parent Involvement." *Urban League*, VII, 1-2 (Summer/Winter 1988). EJ 377 100.

<sup>46</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8."

<sup>47</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8."

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8."

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Fast Response Survey System, "Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8."

<sup>50</sup> A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement, edited by Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla, Center for Law and Education, Washington, D.C., 1994 (third printing, 1996)

<sup>51</sup> Bloom, 2001.

<sup>52</sup> Epstein, J.L. (1992) School and Family Partnerships.

<sup>53</sup> Center for Disease Control, Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey

<sup>54</sup> Center for Disease Control, Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey

<sup>55</sup> The National Sleep Foundation

<sup>56</sup> Williams, D.L. & Chavkin, N.F. (1989). Essential elements of strong parent involvement programs. *Educational Leadership*, 47, 18-20

<sup>57</sup> Parent Teacher Association

<sup>58</sup> National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs - National PTA.

<sup>59</sup> National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs - National PTA.

## 2004 EPIC-MRA Parent Involvement Survey

The following is information from a 2004 survey of over 1,000 parents and 1,000 teachers conducted by EPIC-MRA involving how well parents are engaged in their child's education.

### **Parent comments:**

- Ninety percent (90%) said they should be a part of the classroom education.
- Thirty-seven (37%) said they believe more communication between parents and teachers is the most effective way to encourage more parental involvement.
- Schools must work harder to expand their communication with parents because most of parents' school-related time is spent on helping their child with homework assignments (41%), attending sports-related activities (18%), and attending to other types of activities (11%).
- Eighty percent (80%) said they should be able to participate in planning the curriculum and policy for the school.
- Nineteen percent (19%) say schools need smaller classes to improve students' learning environment.
- Sixty-seven percent (67%) seek out information on parenting; however, 16% suggest that they are not receiving the information from their schools or teachers.

### **Teacher comments:**

- The average Michigan teacher works with 105 students and spends nearly two hours per week communicating with parents.
- Forty-one percent (41%) of teachers felt uncomfortable because of language barriers, and 23% because of cultural barriers.
- Eighty-two percent (82%) listen to parents and take their suggestions.
- Some parents work multiple jobs and/or work second and third-shift jobs, which places barriers for them to attend parent-teacher conferences.
- Better communication between parents and teachers will take a joint effort.

## **Telephone and Written Surveys Information conducted by MDE staff**

### **Parent Comments About School Involvement**

- We care about our children and want to be involved. Our children need all of us working together.
- The minute I come to school I don't feel wanted or valued. From attempting to get in locked doors that no one comes to open—to being searched for weapons—to halls that are dark and stale—to the school front office where no one ever smiles or greets me. It makes me feel like an unwelcome intruder who shouldn't have come.
- When you want information from me or want my involvement, please make a personal contact. I am more willing to become involved if someone calls or seeks me out individually. Personal contact goes much further than a one size fits all survey, letter, or newsletter mailed or sent home in a bag. Parent involvement is about relationships and not about how much paper is sent home.
- Schools don't know what to do with us. Many school staff talks down to us—they use big words instead of talking our language.
- A lot of activities are offered for parents; but they are always during my work hours, so I can't come. I know other parents who can't come because they don't have child care.
- I wish schools would value all of the things I do at home to support my child's education. Parent involvement is more than coming to a conference, an open house or buying candy.
- I can't tell you how many years I have written my name down to help at school and no one has ever called me. Do schools really want us to be involved?
- It would be so nice to hear from a teacher when my child is good. The school only contacts me when he is not. I dread hearing from the school and don't come to any school functions. I help him with homework and talk to him about being good; but the school doesn't seem to care about that. They want me to fix his behavior when I am not even there. Why can't the school look for the good in my son and share that with me?
- I can't read what you send home. Every note is in English; and when I find someone to read it for me, it is too late to come or do what is wanted.

### **Administrators & Teachers Comments**

- We need to recognize that all parents can't be involved in the same way. If we ask and listen, we could learn so much from parents about their children and how we can work together better. It means I will have to give up being an education expert a lot of the time.
- We must seriously assess our shortcomings with parent engagement. This means going beyond measuring success by the number of parents at conferences and the work done by a few parents. We have to listen to the families who aren't engaged, assess what we really believe about parents, and celebrate all of the things families do at home for school success. Parents deeply care about their children!
- If we talk about real parent involvement, we have to go beyond the things we have done for years like fund raisers and meetings for hundreds of parents. It involves personal contact, educational support at home, two-way communication between home and school, parents involved in school decision making, parents as volunteers working on student achievement, schools as parent resource sites, and schools as welcoming places.
- We have to reach out to those parents who aren't involved and LISTEN to them about what they need to become more involved. We need to ask them what schools can do to make parents feel like a partner in education. It means we will have to change.
- Parent involvement is an ATTITUDE; it is not a list of activities, materials or a curriculum. It is day-to-day interaction that respects parents and sees them as equal partners with the school and teachers.
- For parent involvement to work, it must be a district PRIORITY, not something that is "nice to do." Administration must budget time and resources to make it happen.