MICHIGAN Department of Education

"Collaborating For Success" Parent Engagement Toolkit

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Welcome

Welcome to the new Parent Engagement Webpage and to the **"Collaborating for Success" Parent Engagement Toolkit**.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE), the State Board of Education and the Office of Field Services (OFS) are committed to increasing student achievement and supporting Michigan's districts by providing them with the best possible parent engagement resources. Extensive research conducted over the past forty years indicates that when parents are engaged in their children's education **academic achievement increases.**

The Office of Field Services, in collaboration with representatives from other MDE departments (including Early Childhood and the Office of Educational Improvement and Innovations), as well as intermediate school districts, local educational agencies, universities and parents established a Parent Engagement Review Committee in June 2011. The committee's primary role was to:

1. Improve student academic achievement by providing school teams with research based strategies and resources for overcoming barriers to parent engagement in schools.

2. Compile compelling summary and synthesis of research regarding the impact of parent engagement on student academic achievement.

3. Provide parents with a practical tool that informs them of the school system, and incorporates strategies and resources conducive to children's cognitive, academic, social and emotional growth.

Guided by a vision of empowerment and collaboration, the committee provided the Department of Education with a sustainable vision for parent engagement to guide its efforts.

Vision Statement

Engagement of all parents within Michigan schools is based on mutual respect and empowerment. Through full partnership, we can increase the achievement and success of every child.

The committee's work culminated in the development of the **"Collaborating For Success" Parent Engagement Toolkit**. This new resource was designed for all districts whether they are at the initial stages of developing a parent engagement plan or need additional resources to enhance their existing efforts. Equally, it was designed for parents to access key information to make their engagement with their children's school more productive, enjoyable and beneficial.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to promoting the academic success of Michigan's youth and for visiting the Parent Engagement Webpage. School teams, it is our hope that you will find these resources useful to enhance your efforts. Parents, we invite you to read and utilize the information to enable you to become more engaged in your child's educational experience.

We invite you to read and utilize the enclosed information, and welcome your suggestions and thoughts regarding this resource. You can reach us by email at: parentengagementtoolkit@michigan.gov

Parent Engagement Committee, 2011
Michigan Department of Education

Acknowledgements

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About The "Collaborating For Success" Parent Engagement Toolkit

The Toolkit was designed to be an easy to use "how to" guide to develop, maintain or sustain growth of school or district parent engagement work. The toolkit provides researched-based information, proven strategies and downloadable tools that can be customized to districts' needs. In addition, it includes extensive sources that are accessed with one quick click. The **"Collaborating For Success" Parent Engagement Toolkit** is only of many resources available to schools, districts and parents to continue to support academic achievement and success.

How The Toolkit is Organized:

The toolkit is designed in a simple to use webpage format. There are four sections:

SECTION I Why Parent Engagement is Important
Outlines the need for and benefits of engaging parents in their children's education.

SECTION II Legal Requirements
Provides an overview of the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) regarding parent engagement and how these apply to the compliance with federally funded school programs.

SECTION III Resources For Parents
Provides an easy to follow informational guide on Michigan's school system from pre-kindergarten to high school graduation.

SECTION IV Resources For Schools & Districts
Provides easy to follow guidelines that include proven strategies for engaging parents, strategies for overcoming barriers to parent engagement, and specific topics such as "how to work with translators and interpreters."

SECTION V Reference
Endnotes, Bibliography and Glossary of Terms

Each section topic includes: an Overview, Strategy(ies), Tools and/or Additional Information, and Resources (where appropriate). Embedded in each section are hyperlinks to other parts of the Toolkit, enabling the user to immediately reference a list of topics and subtopics.

The Resources for Schools & Districts includes links to Tools formatted in MS Word that can be downloaded for customization. However, **please ensure** that you are providing the appropriate citation for your adaptation.

Suggestions for improvement and/or topic areas that would be useful to address in future updates can be sent to: parentengagementtoolkit@michigan.gov

Why Parent Engagement Is Important

What Experts Say

Overview

Research over the last forty years provides educators and parents with a substantial body of evidence that parent involvement and engagement is associated with children's academic performance[1] and social competence[2]. Comprehensive surveys of this research document the following benefits for students, families and schools:[3]

Benefits

1. **Students achieve more**, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background or the parents' education level.
2. Students have **higher grades and test scores**, better attendance, and complete homework more consistently.
3. Students have **higher graduation rates** and greater enrollment rates in post-secondary education.
4. Educators hold **higher expectations of students** whose parents collaborate with the teacher.
5. Student achievement for disadvantaged children not only improves, but can also reach levels that are standard for middle-class children. In addition, the **children who are farthest behind make the greatest gains**.
6. Children from diverse cultural backgrounds perform better when parents and professionals collaborate to **bridge the gap between the culture at home and at the learning institution**.
7. Student behaviors such as **alcohol use, violence, and antisocial behavior decrease** as parent involvement increases.
8. Students will keep pace with academic performance if their parents participate in school events, develop a working relationship with educators, and keep up with what is happening with their child's school.
9. Junior and senior **high school students whose parents remain involved make better transitions**, maintain the quality of their work, and develop realistic plans for their future. Students whose parents are not involved, on the other hand, are more likely to drop out of school.

According to research, the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to[4]:

1. create a home environment that encourages learning,

2. communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for their children's achievement and future careers,

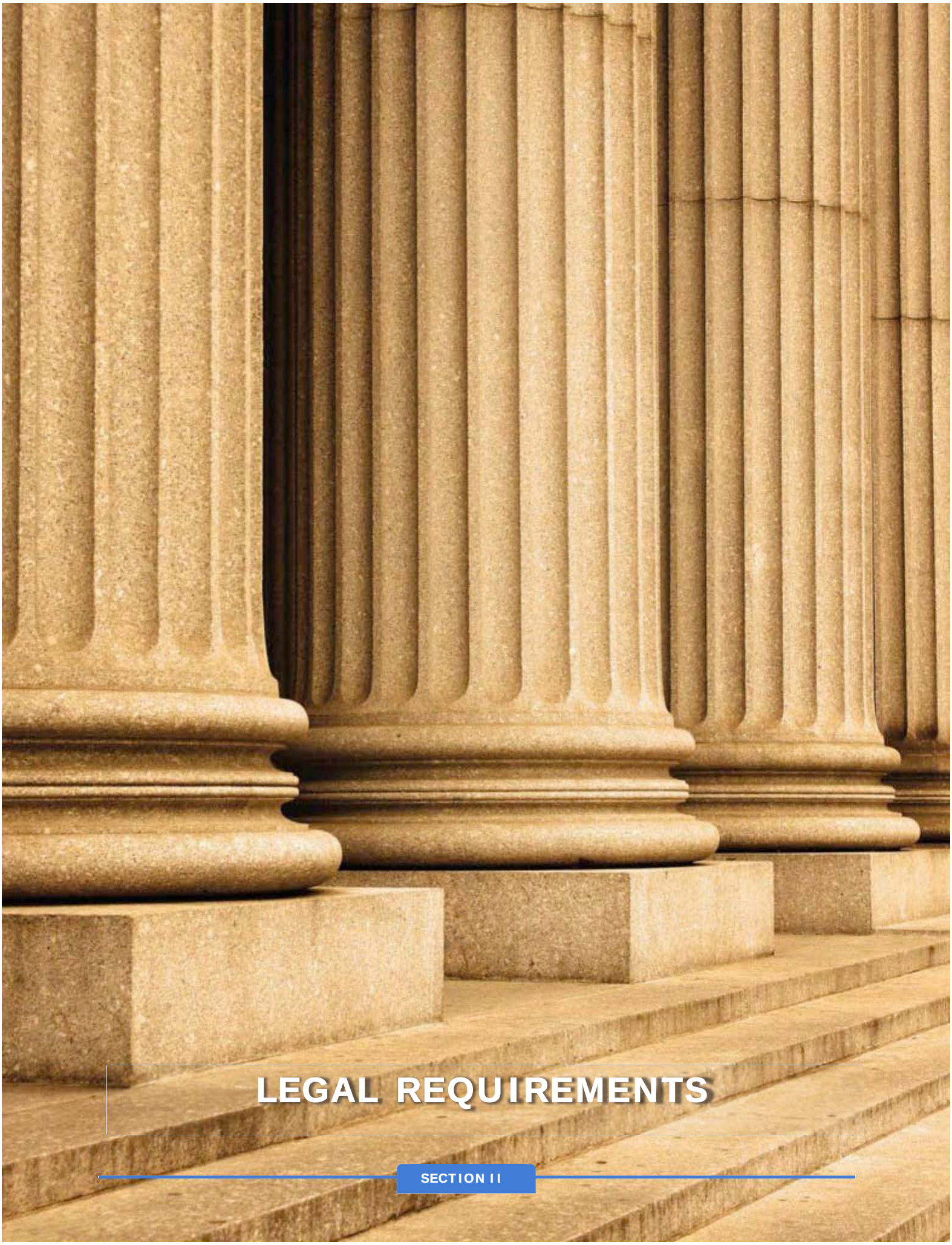
3. become involved in their children's education at school and in the community.

These three seemingly simple steps require dedication and commitment from all students, parents and school personnel. The resulting benefit of this investment in time and effort is well worth the future aspirations and success of every child.

Additional Information and Resources:

1. *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement.* (http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf)

2. Reframing Family Involvement in Education: Supporting Families to Support Educational Equity. (http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/reframing-family-involvement-in-education-supporting-families-to-support-educational-equity)



LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

SECTION II

Legal Requirements

Overview

In order to improve student achievement and close the achievement gaps, schools must implement scientific, research-based teaching strategies, instill a climate of cultural competence among teachers, and provide sustained and job-embedded professional development. School leaders must believe in the benefits of parental engagement and put forth a policy and plan that will lead to effective parent engagement in schools.

Several state laws mandate that schools involve parents in certain processes and procedures.

- The Michigan State Board of Education has recognized the importance of parent and family engagement and passed the *Family Involvement Policy* on May 15, 1997.
  Family Involvement Policy
  (http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/familyinvolvementpolicy_175376_7.pdf
- The Michigan House of Representatives also understands the value of parents and families and in 2001 urged schools to develop involvement contracts with parents of their students.

  House Bill 4630
  (http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2001-2002/publicact/htm/2001-PA-0029.htm)
- The Michigan Senate acknowledged the role of parents and families in education in 2004 and called upon schools to develop parent involvement plans designed to support student achievement. *Public Act 0107*
  (http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2003-2004/publicact/htm/2004-PA-0107.htm)

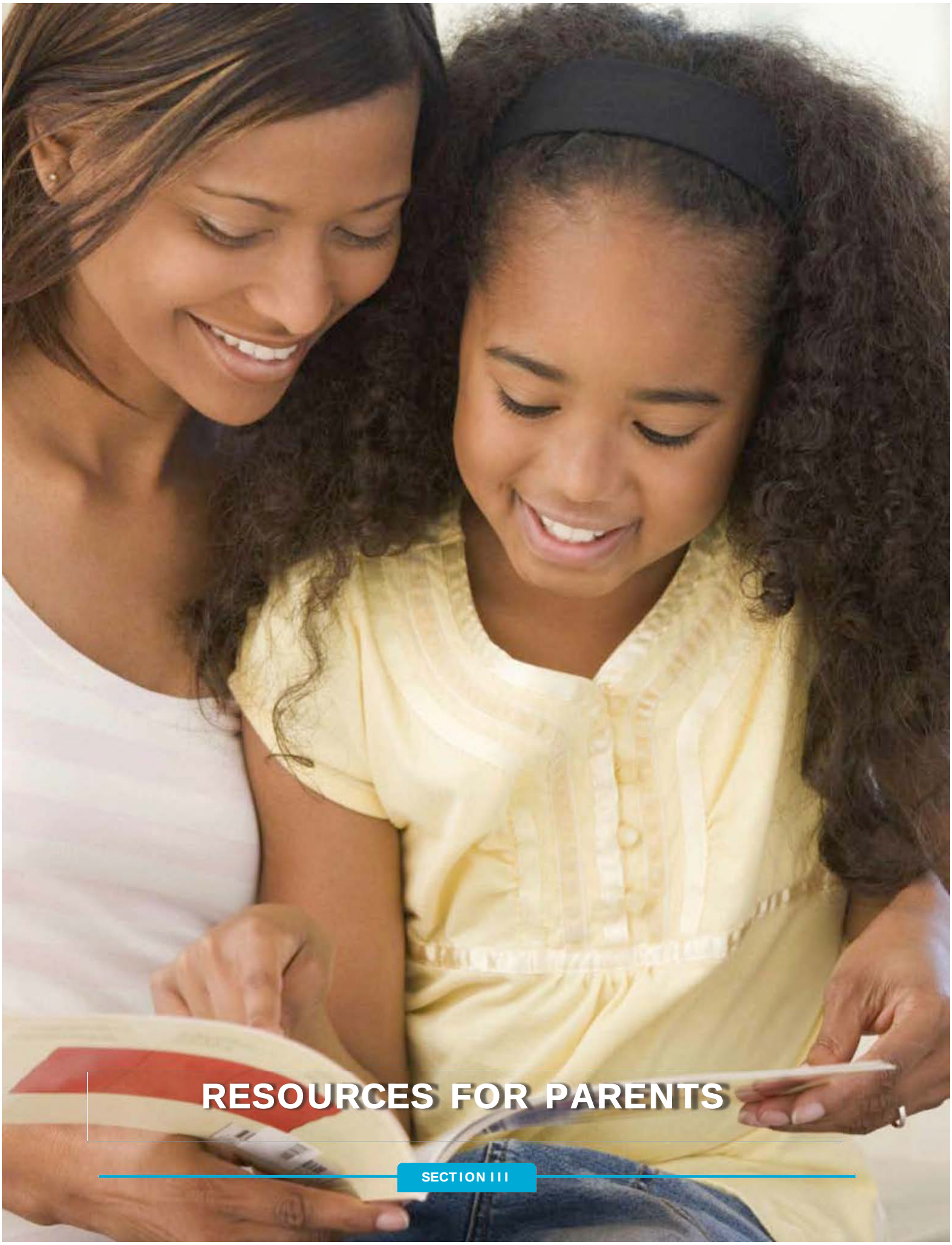
Federal legislation also governs parental involvement in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/No Child Left Behind (NCLB):

- Title I specifically addresses parent involvement in Section 1118. It outlines the actions required by state departments of education, districts, and schools in relation to parent involvement. Parents are able to participate in policy development at all levels to promote a collaborative approach to increasing student achievement.
- Section 1118 indicates that parents are to be included in the decision-making efforts of the schools and districts. These institutions must also ensure inclusion, enabling parents' access to information about their child's education to the "extent practicable, in a language that parents can understand."
- Title I, Part C, the Migrant Education Program, includes mandates regarding parent involvement as well. Part C requires that schools involve parents in their children's education, just as in Title I, Section 1118.

- Title III addresses parental involvement in Section 3302(e). Title III specifically addresses participation of parents of English Language Learners (ELLs) in relation to language instruction programs and language acquisition.
- Section 3302(e) states that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must implement an effective means of outreach to "parents of children with limited English proficiency."
- The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Title X of ESEA/NCLB) mandates that schools provide education and training to parents/guardians of homeless children. Training should include information regarding their rights and educational opportunities and provide assistance in navigating the educational system. Title X also states that information will be provided in the parent/guardian's native language. Additionally, it requires schools to ensure that parents/guardians are provided with meaningful ways to engage in their child's education.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) also outlines parents' rights to be involved in their children's education. IDEA includes certain provisions to ensure that parents' are able to most effectively advocate for their child.

Additional Information & Resources

1. *No Child Left Behind: A Parent Guide* (http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/nclbguide/parentsguide.html)
2. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (http://www.ed.gov/esea)



RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

SECTION III

Resources For Parents

Thank you for supporting your children, the students of Michigan's education system. Your encouragement is essential in helping them to fulfill their academic and personal goals.

It has been proven that children whose parents and families are engaged in their education are more successful in school and have higher academic goals. This involvement not only includes participating in your child's school fundraiser or attending his or her performances and athletic events, but also means partnering with your child's school to support learning at home.

This section is designed to help parents build a strong family-school partnership and provides:

- information about the school system so you can better understand the educational process.
- explanation of your rights as a parent and your child's rights as a student.
- information about how to get involved in your child's education.
- resources on how to support your child at any age.
- additional resources on topics of interest to you.

We hope this information will encourage your partnership with your child's school and support you as you collaborate with them to ensure your child's continued academic success.

Parent Engagement Committee, 2011
Michigan Department of Education

The Basics

Overview

First things first: who is "a" parent and how do we define "parent" in our ever-changing social culture? As our society evolves, family structures are also changing and roles are being redefined. Therefore, it is important to be clear to whom we are referring and why.

Educational institutions whether schools, colleges or universities are bound by certain regulatory requirements to meet various standards or comply with funding regulations.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/No Child Left Behind (NCLB) includes a definition for "parent."

Legal Definition of "Parent"

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/ No Child Left Behind (NCLB) includes definitions for "parent" and "parental involvement."

> ''(31) PARENT.—The term 'parent' includes a legal guardian or other person standing in *loco parentis* (such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the child's welfare)."[5]

Parent Engagement Committee Definition

Parent: significant adult who cares about a child.

The Parent Engagement Committee acknowledges that the term "parent" can be restrictive and limiting. We recognize that all family members – parents; step-parents; parents' significant others; foster parents; siblings; grandparents; aunts, uncles, and other extended family; friends and neighbors; and others – often contribute in important ways to a child's education and development.[6]

Toolkit Definition of "Parent"

For the purpose of this document, we utilize the term **"parent"** to indicate any adult who plays a significant role in a student's life. This term may be used interchangeably with the word "family" or the phrase "parents and family" in reference to those who share responsibility for the well-being of a child.[7]

What Does It Mean To Be "Engaged Or Involved?"

The distinction between involvement and engagement is important. A definition of involve is "to enfold or envelope;" conversely, engage can be defined as "to come together and interlock." Thus, involvement implies doing to, whereas engagement implies doing with. Moreover, the term parent engagement indicates a shared and continuous responsibility for student achievement and learning that occurs across multiple settings.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) - Legal definition

> ''(32) PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT.—The term 'parental involvement' means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:
>
> ''(A) that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning.
>
> ''(B) that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school.
>
> ''(C) that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child.
>
> ''(D) the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in section 1118."[8]

Parent Engagement Committee - Definition

Parent Engagement: a collaborative partnership. While the term **"parent involvement"** is recognized by the committee, for the purposes of this document the phrase **"parent engagement"** will be used to indicate all activities that parents undertake to help their children succeed in school and life.[9]

Parent engagement is vital to student success and as one can see it has been recognized within state and federal legislation as well as in school and district policies. Therefore it is important to recognize that a partnership between schools and parents can contribute significantly to a child's education and academic success.

Parent involvement is a common term used to bring teachers and parents together in schools. Parents who are "involved" serve the school's agenda by doing what educators ask or expect parents to do. The focus of parent involvement is that the school/educator is driving the outcome.

Parent engagement also brings parents and schools together however the perspective and expectation is that parents are "partners" bringing their own knowledge "together" with schools, share decision making, determination of goals and outcomes.

Parent engagement is comprehensive in nature, with the school consistently interfacing with parents at many points, in many venues, over the course of the schooling years.

Parent engagement means that school personnel 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.

Parent engagement 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.

Additional Information & Resources

1. *ASCD Publication: Involvement or Engagement?* (http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may11/vol68/num08/Involvement-or-Engagement¢.aspx)

2. *Research Brief: Parent Engagement in Education* (http://cell.uindy.edu/)

3. *Beyond Random Acts: Family, School, and Community Engagement as an Integral Part of Education Reform* (http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/beyond-random-acts-family-school-and-community-engagement-as-an-integral-part-of-education-reform)

4. Michigan eLibrary: Parents Resources (http://mel.org)

SECTION III

How the Education System Works[10]

Besides your child's teacher, many other people are involved in your child's education. The more you know about what they do, the more you can help your child succeed.

TEACHERS	• Are the first people you should go to with a concern about your child. • Talk to teachers about your child; the more they know the more they can help.
PRINCIPALS	• Are responsible for supervising the whole school and helping teachers and staff do a better job. • Talk to the principal about issues that the teacher can't resolve.
PARA-PROFESSIONALS & SCHOOL-RELATED PERSONNEL	• Provide various types of assistance and support within and outside of the classrooms. • Other helpful school staff are secretaries, custodians, food service workers, bus drivers and security guards.
SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICE	• Oversees all schools in a district and is run by a superintendent. • Implements decisions made by the school board. • Contact this office if you have issues that the school can't resolve.
SCHOOL BOARD	• Decides how the local school district will operate and is run by elected or appointed school board members. • Makes decisions about facilities, money for schools, staff, programs, etc. • Contact the Board office if you have issues that the school, staff or school district office can't resolve.

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	• Supervises all school districts and is run by a state superintendent. • Implements state-level decisions such as standards, funding, policies, etc. • Contact the State Department of Education if you have issues that can't be resolved locally.
TEACHER'S UNION	• Represents members regarding salary, benefits, and working conditions such as class size, professional development, and school safety. • Provides information and programs to improve schools and advocates for high quality teachers, high standards, quality curriculum, etc.
PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCATION/ ORGANIZATION (PTA/PTO)	• Coalition of parents, teachers, and occasionally students that work together to improve the school and benefit students

Whenever you have questions about your child's education, even if you're not sure who to ask, speak with someone at his or her school. They can often direct you to the right person or department, or provide you with the information you're looking for. As you learn more about how schools work, you will be better able to navigate the system and help your child in his or her education.

Additional Information & Resources

1. For more information about your school district and school board visit your school's website and/or contact your child's school.

2. For more information about PTAs visit Michigan's Parent Teacher Association: Michigan PTA (http://www.michiganpta.org)

SECTION III

What Is My Child Learning?

Overview

"The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) is a state-led effort designed to improve educational outcomes for students by developing a set of consistent clear kindergarten through twelfth grade (K -12) academic standards in English language arts and mathematics."[11] The CCSSI has been adopted by more than 40 states (including Michigan), and is an effective measure for gauging your child's academic progress.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative defines the knowledge and skills students should gain within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. The standards:

- are aligned with college and work expectations.17
- are clear, understandable and consistent.
- include rigorous content and application of knowledge through higher order skills.
- build upon strengths and lessons of current state.
- are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society.
- are evidence-based.

Below is a brief outline of what your child will learn in each grade level based on the Common Core State Standards Initiative"[12]

Important Topics in Kindergarten

English Language Arts and Literacy

- Using knowledge of letters and letter-sound correspondences to figure out how to spell words as they sound
- Reading and understanding a story designed for early readers

Mathematics

- Counting to tell the number of objects (this will not be written work; ask the teacher for his or her observations of your child's progress in this area)
- Solving addition and subtraction word problems

Important Topics in 1st Grade

English Language Arts and Literacy

- Reading grade-level text with understanding and fluency
- Learning from, enjoying, and getting facts from books he or she reads and to which he or she listens

Mathematics

- Adding with a sum of 20 or less and subtracting from a number 20 or less (this will not be written work; ask the teacher for his or her observations of your child's progress in this area)
- Using understanding of place value to add and subtract
- Solving addition and subtraction word problems

Important Topics in 2nd Grade

English Language Arts and Literacy

- Reading grade-level books and stories with understanding and fluency
- Building a foundation of knowledge through reading and listening to books in history, social studies, science, and other subjects

Mathematics

- Using understanding of place value to add and subtract
- Solving more challenging addition and subtraction word problems
- Measuring lengths and solving word problems involving addition and subtraction of lengths

Important Topics in 3rd Grade

English Language Arts and Literacy

- Reading grade-level books, stories, poems, and articles fluently
- Writing and speaking well, following rules of punctuation and grammar

Mathematics

- Multiplication and division
- Fractions

Important Topics in 4th Grade

English Language Arts and Literacy

- Comprehending a range of grade-level stories, poems, and informational texts such as biographies, articles, or guidebooks about history, science, or the arts
- Building understanding of relationships between words and nuances in word

meanings — synonyms, antonyms, idioms — and using this knowledge to convey ideas precisely

Mathematics

- Doing arithmetic and solving word problems with multi-digit numbers
- Doing arithmetic and solving word problems with fractions

Important Topics in 5th Grade

English Language Arts and Literacy

- Reading closely and drawing evidence from grade-level fiction and nonfiction materials, including the ability to quote accurately from them when answering questions
- Adjusting communications to accomplish a particular purpose (e.g., providing more background information for audiences who do not know the topic well)

Mathematics

- Multiplying and dividing fractions and solving related word problems
- Decimals (concepts and arithmetic)
- Volume (concepts and problem-solving)

Important Topics in 6th Grade

English Language Arts and Literacy

- Reading closely and citing evidence from grade-level fiction and nonfiction to support an analysis of what the materials say
- Developing a rich vocabulary of complex and sophisticated words and using them to speak and write more precisely and coherently

Mathematics

- Analyzing and solving problems using concepts of ratios and working with variables and expressions
- Analyzing and solving word problems using equations

Important Topics in 7th Grade

English Language Arts and Literacy

- Reading closely and citing several sources of evidence from grade-level fiction and nonfiction works to support an analysis of what the material says
- Developing a rich vocabulary of complex and sophisticated words and using them to speak and write more precisely and coherently

Mathematics

- Analyzing proportional relationships
- Arithmetic with positive and negative numbers
- Solving equations quickly and accurately and writing equations to solve word problems

Important Topics in 8th Grade

English Language Arts and Literacy

- Reading closely and drawing evidence from grade-level fiction and nonfiction works that most strongly supports an analysis of the material
- Developing a rich vocabulary of complex and sophisticated words and using them to speak and write more precisely and coherently

Mathematics

- Linear equations with one and two variables
- Functions
- Congruence and similarity of geometric figures

Important Topics in High School English

- Focusing, reading deliberately and slowly, and rereading (when necessary) complex fiction and nonfiction materials
- Becoming skilled at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately
- Asserting and defending claims, conveying what he or she understands about what he or she has read and researched
- Speaking clearly and appropriately, listening at when discussing findings and evidence, and building on others' good ideas while expressing his or her own ideas persuasively
- Learning to see individual words as part of a network of other words: understanding words that have similar literal meanings but different connotations (Ex: bullheaded, willful, firm, persistent, resolute)

Strategies

The following are helpful ideas that you can use to apply your knowledge of CCSI standards to your child's educational achievement:[13]

1. **Build relationships with your child's teacher.**
   a. You can refer to this outline. It may help you better understand your child's curriculum and class assignments.
2. **Set high expectations for your child and help him or her reach them.**
   a. As a parent, you play an important role in your child's educational experience.
3. **Help your child learn more or seek help if needed in a subject area.**
   a. If your child needs additional help in a subject area or wants to learn more about a topic, contact his or her school for information about tutoring, clubs, or other resources.

4. **Use this information to develop questions to ask at parent-teacher conferences.**
   a. The National Parent Teacher Association offers this suggestion for a beneficial, interactive conference:
      - Is my child's work in this area satisfactory?
      - How could it be better?
      - Is my child on track?
      - How can I help him/her at home?

Learning about these academic standards will help you understand what your child should be learning at each grade-level.

Additional Information & Resources

Complete copies of PTA's *Parents' Guide to Student Success* are available in English and Spanish at PTA. Org. (http://pta.org/4446.htm)

SECTION III

How Do I Know My Child Is Learning?

Overview

Assessments in Michigan Schools

Standardized assessments are tests that Michigan schools use to measure proficiency in a subject area. Understanding the role of testing will help you to enable your child to succeed in school and to develop a better relationship between your family and your child's school.

What are standardized tests?

There are two types of standardized assessments, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced. Scores form norm-referenced tests tell you how your child compares to the other children who took the test that year. In contrast, criterion-referenced test scores tell you if your child has achieved certain benchmark levels of achievements.

TEST	GRADE	TIME OF YEAR
Michigan Educational Assessment Program **(MEAP)**	3 – 9	October
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)	4, 8, and 12	Specific schools are chosen for testing in April the year before the testing takes place. The dates and times vary by administration and the school is informed of these dates well in advance.
MEAP-Access This is an alternative version of the MEAP for students with particular disabilities.	3-8	October
MI-Access	3-8, 11	Fall: Grades 3-8 Spring: Grade 11
Michigan Merit Exam **(MME)** This test consists of the ACT Plus Writing® college entrance examination, WorkKeys® job skills assessments in reading, mathematics, and "locating information," and Michigan- developed assessments in mathematics, science, and social studies.	11	Spring
English Language Proficiency Test **(ELPA)** Used to evaluate K -12 students who are eligible for English Language Learner services.	K-12	Spring

What Do the Test Results Say about My Child's Progress?

Overview

Your child's school will provide you with his or her test results usually a few months after the test was taken. If you have questions about the scores or their meaning, contact your child's teacher or another school staff member.

Your child's test data may be used for providing information on:

- his or her academic progress.
- whether your student will advance to the next grade level at the end of the year.
- determining his or her placement in certain classes, such as gifted or resources classes.
- the school's educational effectiveness.

Strategy

To better understand the types of tests and data gathered from these assessments you may want to ask the teacher or principal:[14]

1. What tests will my child be given during the school year?
2. What is the difference between a test the teacher writes and a standardized test?
3. At what grade level will standardized tests be given? Is there a schedule available?
4. Will someone be available to explain the meaning of test results if I have questions?
5. Should I help my child prepare to take a test, and how would I do that?
6. If I wanted to work with my child on practice tests, where could I get copies of old tests or practice test materials?
7. How important are test scores in my child's grade? Do you consider other class projects, essays and participation too?
8. Do you review tests and test results with the children? Will my child have a chance to understand why an answer was wrong?
9. Is it possible for me to review test results with my child at home?
10. Do you keep a folder of my child's work with test results included?
11. Does the school require proficiency or "high stakes" testing in order to move from one grade level or to graduate?

Additional Information & Resources

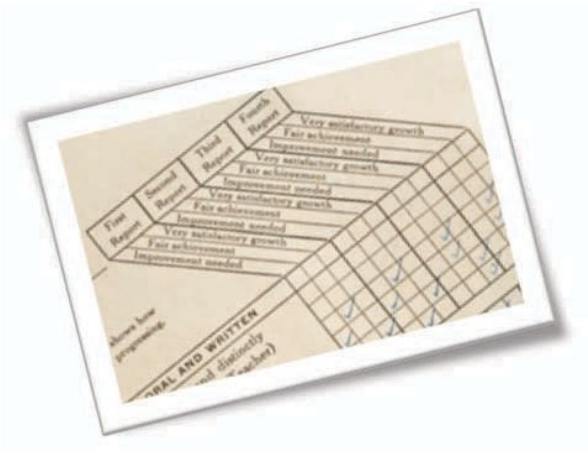
1. Michigan Department of Education, Division of Accountability Services (http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709---,00.htm)

How To Read A School Report Card[15]

Overview

Schools usually use a standard report card to illustrate students' academic progress. Learning about this system can help you better understand your child's educational strengths and weaknesses.

- Become familiar with the grading system in your district and in your child's grade. Many schools use a different report card for K-2 than they use for 3-5. Are letter grades used? A numerical score from 1-3? Other letters such as O, G, S, N?



- Make sure you understand the different competencies on the report card. Many use vague descriptors such as "Uses time constructively." If something is not clear to you, ask your child's teacher.
- As you look at your child's report card, RESIST THE IMPULSE to jump directly to an area with a lower score. Find an area with a good grade or score and focus on that first. "You did a great job in _____! You must be so proud of all your hard work."
- Once you've focused on the positive, talk about areas in which your child's grade was lower. "Tell me how things have been going in science lately." Start a safe, open dialogue with your child about the difficulty he or she might be having with the subject matter.
- Together, develop strategies to help in subject areas that are difficult for your child. Is there a textbook that needs to come home more frequently? Is there a website that can help with math fact drills? If you're not sure how to best help your child, call the teacher to set up a conference.
- Last, let your child know that he/she is more than just a report card. Remind him/her of all the things that make her special and important in your family. Too much of a focus on grades can only increase the amount of stress your child feels.

Additional Information and Resources

1. To read this information in Spanish, visit Colorin Colorado (http://www.colorincolorado.org/articulo/40303/)
2. *What the Report Card Really Means*. Scholastic. (http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/grades-report-cards/what-report-card-really-means)

What to Ask at a Parent-Teacher Conference

Effective parent involvement includes a range of actions from reading and talking with children and asking "What did you learn today?" to attending parent-teacher conferences and helping children and youth make good choices about what they do after school and in the summer.[16]

Overview

Take advantage of parent-teacher conferences during the school year. Think of some questions and concerns you may have and write them down before your meeting. Keep track of your child's schoolwork to help you with your questions. You are in a position to share important information, as well as ask questions. Remember, you can and should talk to your child's teacher throughout the year.

Questions to ask for students in all grades:

- Is my child performing at grade level?
- What are my child's strengths and weaknesses in reading, math, and science?
- How much time should my child spend on homework?
- Are my child's assignments completed accurately?
- Does the school have special programs to meet my child's needs?
- Does my child have special learning needs? Are there special classes my child should be in?
- Do you keep a folder of my child's work? If yes, could you review it with me?
- Does my child have close friends? How well does my child get along with the other students?
- What can we do at home to support classroom learning?
- What is the best way to keep in touch with you?

Additional questions for middle and high school students:

- How can I help my child to work independently and make the best use of time?
- How can I help my child prepare for high school?
- What can you tell me about peer pressure and how I can help my child handle difficult situations—drugs, alcohol, and sex?
- What courses should my child take to satisfy graduation requirements?
- Do you have a list of courses my child should take to be ready to enter college?
- If my child plans to attend college, how will the school help with the application process?
- If my child plans to attend college, how will the school help my child find out about financial aid?

SECTION III

Get Involved – It Matters!

Overview

Being involved in your children's education helps him/her do well in school and improves the quality of your child's school. Parents can be engaged at many different levels and simple activities like reading a book together, helping with homework and emphasizing the importance of school and academic success can and does make a difference!

Here are some suggestions on how to get started.[17]

- Take your child to school on the first day.
- Let your child know that school is important. Be sure to ask questions about homework and set up a quiet place for your child to work.
- Read everything that is sent home from school: report cards, homework assignments, school lunch plans, and vacation and bus schedules. Show your child that you are well informed.
- Get to know your child's teachers and school principal by attending school meetings and parent-teacher conferences.
- Ask for copies of school policies (e.g., attendance and discipline). If there is something you do not understand, ask questions.
- Volunteer to help with school activities. Attend sports events, assist with fundraisers, or volunteer to work in the school office.
- Visit your child's classroom when class is in session, not just at parent-teacher conferences. Set this up in advance with the school office and the teacher.
- Talk to other parents. If there is a parent organization, join it. If there is no parent organization at your school, think about starting one. Finding two or three other interested parents is a good start.
- Encourage your child to read at home. Visit local libraries or used book mobiles, school libraries, or book fairs to pick out books together. Pick out books to read together and talk about them.
- Being involved in a child's education is just as important for step-parents, grandparents, and other adults who care for a child. Invite people who care for your child to participate in school activities.
- Your actions, not just your words, make an impression that will last a lifetime.

Getting Connected At Home

Overview

Homework

Homework is a regular part of school, and you can help your child do it well. Teachers give homework for many good reasons—to practice and review class lessons, to get students ready for the next lessons, to teach them how to work on their own, and to teach them to use dictionaries, encyclopedias, libraries and the Internet.[18]

1. Set up a regular time and a quiet place for your child to work. Try to place it away from TVs, radios, or other loud noise.

2. Have your child get all of the materials needed for the work—pens, pencils, erasers, calculator, paper, books, and highlighters—all in one spot instead of searching for things.

3. Make a homework calendar. During the school day, have your child fill in all homework by the date that it is due. Many teachers have their classes do this anyway, and you can help your child plan assigned homework time.

4. If your child is having trouble with homework, talk to each teacher about the homework—it may be too hard, or there may be other problems in the classroom. The school may be able to offer tutoring or extra help.

5. Ask your child for any teacher comments on homework assignments.

6. If your child misses school, have a friend or classmate get homework assignments.

7. Remember, neatness does count. Don't let your child eat or drink while doing homework.

8. Suggest that your child do homework, then take a short break (snack, play outside, or watch some TV), then go back and recheck the work. It's easier to catch simple mistakes with fresh eyes.

9. Parents with low literacy: talk to teachers or school staff when you have questions. Also talk to them about getting English classes for yourself.

Technology

Television

American children watch an average of three to five hours of TV each day. Although TV can be fun and educational, it's important to know what your children are watching, to make sure it's not too much, and to make sure it doesn't stop them from doing schoolwork. Here are some ideas you may want to consider:[19]

- Find out how many hours a day your child watches TV.
- Monitor what your child is watching, and whenever possible, watch the programs with your child.
- Pick a TV show to watch as a family. What kind of conversations can you start from the TV show? For instance, you may ask, "Why are those people in the program so unkind to each other?"
- Plan other activities, such as crafts, reading, doing homework, and writing letters, instead of watching TV. Try to plan at least one different activity each week.
- Avoid using TV as a babysitter.
- Look for TV programs that will stimulate your child's interests and encourage reading (dramatizations of children's stories, wildlife adventures, history, and science).

- Avoid using television as a reward or punishment. It gives TV too much importance.Ill
- If your child has a TV set in the bedroom, you may not know what is being watched. If possible, keep the TV in a common area, like the living room or den.
- Turn off the TV during meals and study time. Make a rule that homework and chores must be finished before the TV can be turned on.
- Help your child understand the difference between make-believe and the real world in television programs.
- Do you need to review your own television watching habits? Remember: your child is watching what you watch and how much time you spend doing it.

Computers

Computers let students travel around the world without ever leaving their desks at school or home. They can make learning easier and more fun, and learning how to use them will give your child many advantages in the future.[20]

- Find out how computers are used at your child's school.
- How much time each day and week does your child get to use them?
- At school, can your child use the Internet—a worldwide computer network that can provide huge amounts of information on almost any topic? Are there safeguards or filters to prevent inappropriate use?

- Be sure your child's school gives equal computer time to girls and boys. While many women use computers, they are still outnumbered by men in computer jobs. Encourage your daughter to use the computer.Ill
- If you don't have a computer at home, find out if the local library or community center has computers your child can use to do homework and other school projects.Ill
- If your child has a learning disability, ask if the school offers special computer programs and/or support for children who have learning disabilities or different learning styles.
- Find out if your child's teachers have been trained to use computers and to use them in helping students learn.
- Ask about the kind of work that your child is doing on the computer. Does it sound challenging? Is your child excited about learning on the computer?
- Take a computer class or learn how to use the computer to assist your child at home. Does the school, local library, or computer center offer computer training for adults?

Additional Information & Resources

1. *Computers and Technology: Kids.gov*
   (http://www.kids.gov/teens/index.html)

2. *MeLKids Homework Helpers*
   (http://mel.org)

3. *MeLTeens Homework Help*
   (http://mel.org)

Staying Alert! –Changing Behaviors

"Preventing… risky behaviors involves many factors. One of them is the involvement of parents."[21]

Overview

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSC) or Title IV, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) became law in 2002 to support drug and violence prevention programs in schools. The SDFSC is also intended to support programs designed to prevent the illegal use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; and those that involve parents and communities.

Help Your Child Stay Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Free

What you say to your child about using alcohol or drugs makes a big difference. Believe it or not, children DO listen to their parents when they talk about these things—and children say that their parents are a huge influence in their decision not to use alcohol or drugs.

- Talk to your child about the real risks of using alcohol or drugs. If you are having a hard time getting started and need more information *Keeping Youth Drug Free* from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (1-800-729-6686 or https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA-3772/SMA-3772.pdf.)

- Be a good role model for your child: don't take part in any illegal, unhealthy or dangerous drug use practices.
- Make parenting a priority. Make rules for your child and enforce the rules. Children say that they want rules from their parents—it shows them that you care about what happens to them. Adapt the rules as needed as your child gets older and more independent.
  Help your child learn what to say if offered alcohol or drugs. It's easier to stand up to peer pressure with some practice saying no and being firm about it.
- Know who your child's friends are and get to know the friends' parents or caregivers, too.
- Watch for signs of stress in your child and help your child learn how to deal with stress. Teenagers say stress is one of the reasons they start using drugs.
- Educate yourself. Identify the different types of drugs, their slang names, the signs of use, and their short- and long-term consequences.
- Talk to your child's teacher, school counselor, and the school principal about recommended alcohol, tobacco, and drug programs and materials.

Additional Information & Resources

1. MI Parenting Awareness (http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,4612,7-132-2941_4871-65472--,00.html)
2. The Partnership at Drugfree.org – Support and Resources for Parents Dealing with Teen Drug and Alcohol Abuse (http://www.drugfree.org/)
3. Above the Influence (http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/)

Violence in Your Child's School

You've seen or read news reports about student violence in schools. Most schools are safe, but youth violence is on the rise. As a parent or caregiver, there are steps you can take to help keep your child safe at school.[22]

- Request a copy of the school handbook that contains school rules and regulations including anti-bullying policy(ies).
- Be sure you understand what the behavior rules are in your child's school, find out what the punishments are for breaking the rules, and review these with your child. For example, what is your school's definition of a weapon and what happens if a child is caught with a weapon in school?

- Find out if your child's school keeps track of:[17]
  - students who skip school or miss classes.
  - complaints by children of being bullied on school ground bathrooms or on the way to and from school.
  - disrespectful behavior toward the teachers.
  - increasing rates of stealing and vandalism of school property.
  - small groups of students who always seem to be angry or cut off from other students.
- Don't worry alone. Talk with other parents. Organize a parent group with the goal of creating a safe school. Talk to your school principal and offer help.
- Talk to your children regularly. Ask them if they are worried about their safety. They will often have valuable ideas and suggestions.
- Find out who is supposed to be at your child's school for supervision before and after hours. This is important to know if your child is going to school early or staying there late.
- Is there a security system at your child's school? How are visitors handled? How are doors to the outside controlled?
- Talk to your children about being aware of strangers on school grounds or in school hallways.
- Find out if staff members in other organizations in your community, such as libraries, community centers, places of worship, and recreation centers, are also concerned about violence. What programs do they offer that you could adapt to improve school safety?

- Ask other parents who are worried about safety in schools to contact you, or make an announcement at a community or school board meeting.
- Talk to your child about how to handle anger and problems with others. Talk with your child's teacher, school counselor, or school principal about ways to make this part of classroom lessons.

Additional Information & Resources

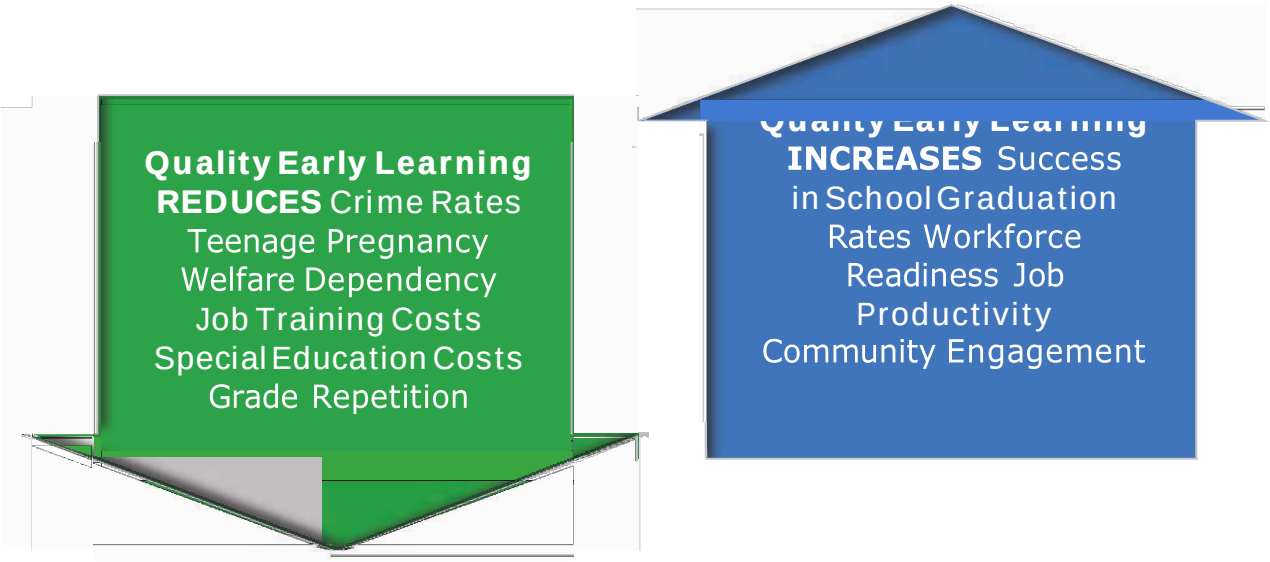
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
   (http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/)
2. National Crime Prevention Council – School Safety
   (https://www.ncpc.org/programs/be-safe-and-sound-in-school/)
3. Stop Bullying
   (http://www.stopbullying.gov/)

Early Learning

Overview

Parents are a child's first and most influential teacher. As a parent, you have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to help your child navigate his or her first learning experiences. Recent research shows that children are born ready to learn. In fact, they develop 85 percent of their intellect, personality, and skills by age five.[23]

Early learning influences long term success.[24]



Strategies

Many parents help their children learn to read, which helps children have a more successful school experience. For more information, order *Helping Your Child Learn to Read* by the U.S. Department of Education, at 1-800-USA-LEARN.[25]

- Start young. At just a few months, an infant can sit with you, look at pictures, and hear your voice. Point to and name familiar objects at home.
- Vary the tone of your voice, sing nursery rhymes, bounce your knee, and make funny faces. Use other special effects to stimulate your baby's interests.
- Allow your child to touch and hold sturdy cardboard books.
- When reading to your baby, be brief, but read as often as you can.
- When reading to your child, follow the words with your finger so that your child learns to follow from left to right.
- In early reading, the rhyme is a way for children to enjoy the repetition of the sound of language.

Additional Information & Resources

1. Michigan Office of Great Start
   (http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-63533---,00.html)

2. Reading Resources from USED
   (http://www2.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/edpicks.jhtml)

3. PBS Parents – Early Learning
   (http://www2.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/edpicks.jhtml)

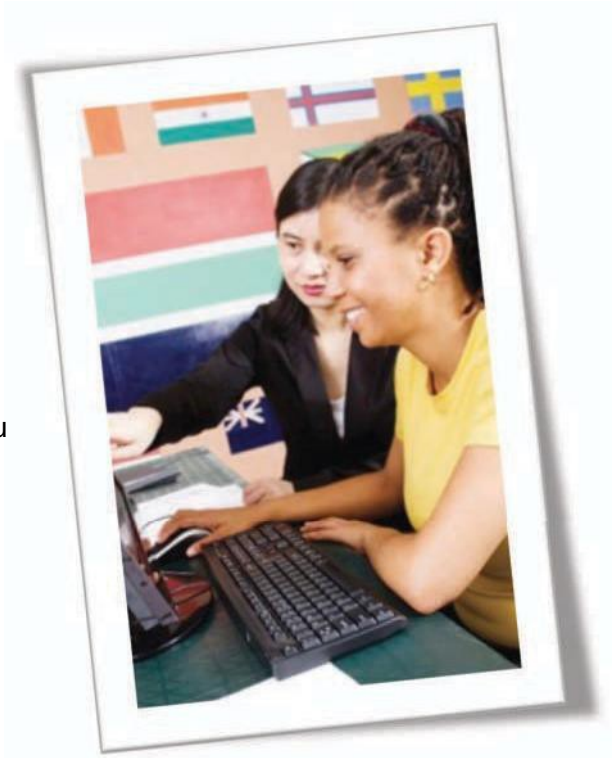
4. Library of Michigan's Early Literacy Resources
   (http://www.michigan.gov/
   libraryofmichigan/0,2351,7-160-18668_34169_79083---,00.html)

5. Michigan eLibrary Kids Gateway See Homework Helpers, Storytime or Games & Activities (http://mel.org/kids)

6. Reading Resources from USED
   (https://www2.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/edpicks.jhtml)

7. Michigan Reads! Statewide Early Literacy program. See For Parents & Caregivers Links. (http://www.michigan.gov/
   libraryofmichigan/0,2351,7-160-18668_83061---,00.html)

Older Children[26]



1. Encourage reading for the fun of it as a free-time activity, and keep books in your home.
2. Talk with and listen to your children. Language is like a four-legged stool: speaking, listening, reading, and writing are its parts, and each supports the other.
3. Read with your children every chance you get—even if it's just part of a newspaper article at the breakfast table - and turn off the TV when you do it.
4. Set the example: be sure your children see you reading and understand that you read for enjoyment and to get needed information.
5. Monitor your children's schoolwork and applaud their efforts.

Middle and High School

According to research, parent engagement greatly decreases as students move from elementary to middle school to high school. However, research has shown that parents hold a significant influence over their adolescent student's school performance. Parent engagement throughout middle and high school can contribute to increased academic success.

At the middle school level, it is especially important for parents to:[27]

- discuss school activities.
- monitor out-of-school activities.
- contact school staff.
- volunteer and attend parent-teacher conferences and other school events.

At the high school level, it is especially important for parents to:[28]

- guide their student toward postsecondary education.
- make sure they read and do their homework.
- stress the value of education.

Additional information & Resources

1. The Parent's Guide to Middle School
   (http://www.education.com/grade/middle-school/)

2. The Parent's Guide to High School
   (http://www.education.com/grade/high-school/)

3. A Parent's Guide to the Teen Brain
   (https://www.education.com/magazine/article/Middle_School_Brain_Development/)

4. Michigan eLibrary Gateway
   (http://mel.org)

SECTION III

Students With Disabilities

Overview

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is a federal law that ensures certain services to children with disabilities throughout the United States. IDEA controls how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

Parent involvement is one of the founding principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Parents have the right to participate in all decisions regarding the education of their child with a disability.

These include the right to:[17]

- Participate in meetings related to the evaluation, identification, and educational placement of their child.
- Participate in meetings related to the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to their child.
- FAPE is the right of every American child to receive a free public education that meets his or her unique needs.
- Be a part of the team that develops, reviews, and revises the Individualized Education Program for their child. If neither parent can attend the IEP meeting, the school must use other methods to ensure their participation, such as phone calls.
- An IEP is the document that defines a child's special education program. It includes the disability under which the child qualifies for special education services, the services that the school will provide, his or her yearly goals and objectives, and any accommodations that will be made to assist his or her learning.

- Be members of any group that makes placement decisions for their child. If neither parent can attend the meeting where placement is decided, the school must use other methods to ensure their participation, such as phone calls.

There are fourteen categories of disabilities defined under IDEA. These include:

1. Autism
2. Deaf-Blindness
3. Deafness
4. Developmental Delay
5. Emotional Disturbance
6. Hearing Impairment
7. Intellectual Disability
8. Multiple Disabilities
9. Orthopedic Impairment
10. Other Health Impairment
11. Specific Learning Disability
12. Speech or Language Impairment
13. Traumatic Brain Injury
14. Visual Impairment including Blindness

For a student to fully meet the definition of a "child with a disability" and qualify for special education and related services, his or her educational performance must be adversely affected due to the disability.

Additional Information & Resources

1. Center for Parent Information and Resources
   (www.parentcenterhub.org)

2. Michigan Department of Education, Special Education and Early Intervention Services
   (http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_6598---,00.html)

3. Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative
   (http://miblsi.cenmi.org)

Michigan Merit Curriculum High School Graduation Requirements

Overview

Understanding Michigan's graduation requirements will enable you to help your child obtain a high school diploma and ultimately succeed academically. The Michigan Merit Curriculum seeks to ensure that Michigan's high school graduates have the necessary skills to succeed either in postsecondary education or in the workplace.

Components: Sixteen mandatory credits, which are aligned with recommended college and work-ready curriculum:

- Four credits in English language arts.
- Four credits in math, including Geometry and Algebra I and II. At least one math course must be taken during the student's senior year.
- Three credits in science, with the use of labs, including biology and chemistry or physics.
- Three credits in social sciences, including U.S. History and Geography, World History and Geography, one half credit in Civics, and one half credit in Economics.
- One credit in Visual, Performing and Applied Arts.
- One credit in Physical Education and Health.
- All high school students must also participate in an online course or learning experience.
- Effective for the class of 2016, the credit requirement will increase to 18 credits, to include two credits in world languages. Students may receive credit if they have had a similar learning experience in grades K-12.

- Awarding credit is based on proficiency in expectations, not seat time, and can be earned prior to a student entering high school or by testing out.
- Credit may be earned through one or more of the following: alternative course work, humanities course sequences, career and technical education, industrial technology courses, or vocational education.
- Credit can be earned through advanced studies such as accelerated course placement, advanced placement, dual enrollment, an international baccalaureate program or early college/middle college program.
- The Department of Education develops subject area content expectations and subject area assessments to evaluate whether students have met those expectations.
- Option for a student's parent to request a personal curriculum for the student which is developed with the high school counselor or other designee selected by the high school principal. The personal curriculum is for that small percentage of students who seek to exceed the requirements of the MMC or for students with disabilities who need special accommodation and modifications.
- Beginning with students entering 8th grade in 2006 (Class of 2011), schools must give 7th grade students the opportunity to create an educational development plan based on a career pathways program or similar career exploration program. All students must create a plan before entering high school.
- Although this is unlikely to affect your child, the superintendent of public instruction may designate up to 15 specialty high schools that are exempt from certain requirements of the Michigan Merit High School Graduation Requirements. These specialty schools are eligible for exemptions if the school:
    - Incorporates a significant reading and writing component throughout its curriculum.
    - Uses a specialized, innovative and rigorous curriculum in areas such as performing arts, world language, and extensive use of internships or other learning innovations.
    - Demonstrates the following: mean scores from ACT math and science exams that exceed by 10% the district average; an 85% graduation rate; and enrollment of 75% of graduates into a postsecondary institution.[29]

Meet with your child's guidance counselor to ensure that he or she is taking the appropriate classes and is on track for graduation. If your child plans to attend college, ask if these classes will prepare him/her to apply for and succeed in college.

Personal Curriculum

Overview

The personal curriculum (PC) can be requested by the parent, legal guardian, or emancipated student. It allows the board of a school district or public school academy to award a high school diploma if the student completes the PC, including as many of the content expectations of the Michigan Merit Curriculum as possible.

According to state law, a PC's may be developed in order to:

- go beyond the academic credit requirements by adding more math, science, English language arts, or world languages credit.
- modify the mathematics requirement.
- modify, if necessary, the credit requirements of a student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- modify credit requirements for a student who transfers from out of state or from a non-public school and is unable to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements.

When is a Personal Curriculum Modification Appropriate?

A personal curriculum may be appropriate for a student who has demonstrated one or more of the following:

- The ability or desire to access advanced or specialized content that cannot be met through electives (e.g., district lacks the resources to provide the course/content, or schedule does not allow student to access district offering).
- The ability to succeed in accelerated or advanced math, science, English language arts, or world languages.
- The academic need to modify the Algebra II credit requirement.

For a student with an IEP:

- A documented need requires modifications because the student's disability affects access to and/or demonstration of proficiency in the curriculum.
- Lack of progress on the MMC despite documented interventions, supports, and accommodations.

For a transfer student:

- Transferring from out of state or from a nonpublic school after successful completion of the equivalent of two years of high school credit.[30]

Additional Information & Resources

1. MDE K-12 Curriculum (http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-43092_67383_67387---,00.html)

SECTION III

Virtual Learning Opportunities

Overview

In 2006, Michigan became the first state to require an online course or learning experience for high school graduation.

Students in Michigan have two choices for virtual learning experiences:

- Michigan Virtual School
- Michigan Connections Academy

Michigan Virtual School (MVS)

Overview

- Provided more than 16,000 course enrollments through approximately 500 schools during the 2008-09 school year.
- Offers more than 150 courses, including 19 Advanced Placement (AP) courses and seven different foreign languages. Classes are also available in the core areas of math, English, science and social studies, with an emphasis on meeting the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements. Most courses are at the high school level, but over 50 are available for middle school students.
- Has trained more than 400 teachers as online instructors. These instructors are certified, highly-qualified teachers.
- Enables middle and high school students in Michigan to take courses they otherwise would not be able to access.
- Operated by *Michigan Virtual University*, a private, not-for-profit Michigan corporation.
- Cooperates with individual schools and districts to award course credit and diplomas.
- Students eligible to take classes at MVS include gifted and talented students, special needs students, students who need to “make up” credit, public and non-public school students, and home-schooled students.

Michigan Connections Academy

Overview

- Instruction from state-certified teachers who are recognized as highly qualified under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind.
- Support from trained counselors, principals, and administrative staff.
- Clubs and activities that foster social development and academic growth.
- A tuition-free, K–12 online public school, also known as a cyber charter school, that students attend from home.
- Authorized by Ferris State University Charter Schools Office and operated

- by Michigan Connections Academy, a nonprofit corporation, through a contract with CA of Michigan, LLC.
- Students from kindergarten through age 20 are eligible to take classes at Michigan Connections Academy.
- Instruction from state-certified teachers who are recognized as highly qualified under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind.

Additional Information & Resources

1. Michigan Virtual School
   (http://www.mivhs.org/)

2. Michigan Connections Academy
   (https://www.connectionsacademy.com/michigan-virtual-school)

Applying to College[31]

Overview

As a parent or a child's primary caregiver, you may wonder whether education after high school is necessary or a good fit for your child. Or maybe you want to know how to help your child go to college. If you are like many parents or caregivers, you might have concerns about whether your child should pursue education beyond high school. That's natural. But confront your concerns head on, and they will seem much more manageable.

"But how can I consider sending him to college during an economic downturn that might cost me my job?"

It's natural to have concerns about the future when so much about our economy is uncertain. However, it might help you to know that federal aid programs may take a major change in your circumstances — like divorce, loss of your job or a major illness — into account. Encourage your child to get a good education, regardless of your financial situation. If you do lose your job, make an appointment with the Financial Aid Administrator at your child's school. Explain your circumstances. Additional assistance may be available.

"But I need her to help around the house."

It's possible she can pursue her education without leaving home. And in the long run, helping her get an education may be an even bigger help to the family.

"But I need him to get a job and contribute to the family income."

Some kids pay their own way through college, reducing the family's income needs. And with more education, he will be able to get a better-paying job in the future, helping him contribute more to the family in the long run.

"But I didn't go, and neither did anyone else in the family."

Our economy has changed quickly in just the past few decades. Job requirements or expectations for your generation may not be the same as they are for your child's generation. Today, many of the best jobs require additional education beyond high school.

"But I will miss her if she's not at home."

Again, it's possible she can continue her education by attending a nearby school while still living at home. If she does attend an out-of-town school, there are lots of ways to stay in touch, like letters, e-mails and phone calls. And there will be a lot of opportunities to see her, like winter and summer breaks, and even parents' weekends.

"But we just don't have the money."

Many of the students featured on this site come from families with very limited incomes. But they found ways to go. You might be surprised at how many financial aid resources are available. Cost might be a hurdle, but it's not a roadblock. Check out How to Deal with the Cost for more information.

"But he doesn't need more education for the jobs available around here."

It might seem that way, but some jobs may have more educational requirements than you realize. And you may not be aware of all the opportunities. Also, it's possible your child may not live in one place all his life. Job markets can change rapidly, so the career flexibility more education can provide will be a valuable asset.

"But she has a child of her own to care for."

Being a parent can make getting an education more difficult. But thousands of parents have done it, and your child can too. Many schools provide services, such as on-campus daycare, for students with children. And with more education, she will be a much better provider for her child in the long run.

"But his grades aren't good enough."

A child whose grades haven't been the best can still go. If he still has a year or more before high school graduation, it's not too late to work on raising that GPA. Get involved at his school, offer your help and support and make your expectations clear to him. If he will be graduating soon, consider community colleges, which can have more open admission policies. Trade and technical schools are other good options.

"But she has special needs."

Children with special needs, whether from a medical, mental, emotional or learning disability, can continue their education beyond high school. Many mainstream postsecondary schools provide assistance and services for students with special needs. There are also some postsecondary schools devoted exclusively to special needs students. The Higher Education section of DisabilityInfo.gov is an online resource that lists programs for the learning disabled and special needs communities.

"But he has been in jail."

Serving time in jail or prison doesn't automatically disqualify him from receiving federal student aid. Once he's released, he can apply for all types of federal student aid. Even if he is currently incarcerated, he still has some limited eligibility. For more information about how incarceration affects his eligibility for federal aid download the Frequently Asked Questions about Federal Student Aid for Incarcerated Individuals Fact Sheet.

"But she isn't ready to be independent."

Almost every parent or guardian feels this way at some time. Many are surprised at how a little independence can help kids show more responsibility. In general, college helps students gradually ease into adult independence. And if she goes to a local school, she can continue to live at home until you both feel she is ready to be more independent.

Strategies: Planning for College and Career[32]

At the beginning of high school, sit down with your child's teachers, counselor, or other advisor to discuss what it will take for your child to graduate; your child's goals; and his or her plans after high school. Create a plan together to help your child reach these goals, and review it every year to make sure he or she is on track. This plan should include:

- **An appropriate course sequence to meet your child's goals.** For example, if your child wants to study biosciences in college, he or she will likely need additional or advanced math and science courses in high school to be prepared for college-level coursework.
- **The most appropriate extracurricular activities for your child.** For example, if your child is interested in journalism or photography, encourage him or her to sign up for the school newspaper or yearbook. These activities will help your child expand his or her learning outside of school and may help foster new hobbies or interests.
- **Ways you can help your child prepare for college or a career.** For example, if your child is interested in a particular field, look to see if internships exist to build his or her work experience in that subject area. Look for college fairs to attend, and encourage your child to visit colleges in which he or she might be interested.

Finding ways to pay for college or advanced training. College can be expensive, but there are lots of ways to get financial help, such as scholarships, grants, work study programs, and student loans. You just need to make the time for you and your child to do the research. You can start by helping your child fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) during his or her senior year. Visit FAFSA at www.fafsa.ed.gov for help and more information on FAFSA and financial aid.

Additional Information & Resources

1. Michigan College Access Portal
   (https://www.michigancap.org/)
2. College Goal Sunday
   (http://www.micollegegoal.org/)
3. Michigan Department of Education, Financial Aid
   (http://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid)
4. U.S. Department of Education, Spanish resources
   (http://www2.ed.gov/espanol/bienvenidos/es/college.html)
5. MeL Teens College Bound eResources
   (https://www.mel.org/)

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS

SECTION IV

Resources for Schools & Districts

The Parent Engagement Committee thanks you for your ongoing commitment to promoting the success of Michigan's youth. Research demonstrates that **engaging parents and family** in their child's education significantly improves academic achievement and aspirations.

Perhaps you have witnessed some of these benefits in your school:

- literacy improvements of a kindergarten student whose grandfather reads to him daily.
- the development of sound decision-making skills in an eighth grader with a caring mother who encourages responsible independence.
- the continuation to post-secondary education of a high school junior whose older cousin assists with college and scholarship applications.

The benefits can be further improved when you, as educators and school professionals, collaborate with parents to maximize their ability to support their child's education.

This Toolkit is intended to support that partnership and continue to maximize your record of educational achievement. In this section you will find strategies for:

- developing your parent engagement plan.
- enhancing and sustaining your current efforts.
- addressing specific barriers to parent engagement.
- best practices and tools you can download, customize and utilize to support your work.
- links to an extensive list of resources.

We hope you find this information helpful as you supplement your school's existing parent engagement efforts and promote student achievement through parent-school collaboration.

Parent Engagement Committee, 2011
Michigan Department of Education

The Basics

Overview

First things first: who is "a" parent and how do we define "parent" in our ever-changing social culture? As our society evolves, family structures are also changing and roles are being redefined. Therefore, it is important to be clear to whom we are referring and why.

Educational institutions whether schools, colleges or universities are bound by certain regulatory requirements to meet various standards or comply with funding regulations.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/No Child Left Behind (NCLB) includes a definition for "parent".

Legal Definition of "Parent"

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/ No Child Left Behind (NCLB) includes definitions for "parent" and "parental involvement."

> ''(31) PARENT.—The term 'parent' includes a legal guardian or other person standing in loco parentis (such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the child's welfare)."[33]

Parent Engagement Committee Definition

Parent: significant adult who cares about a child. The Parent Engagement Committee acknowledges that the term "parent" can be restrictive and limiting. We recognize that all family members – parents; stepparents; parents' significant others; foster parents; siblings; grandparents; aunts, uncles, and other extended family; friends and neighbors; and others – often contribute in important ways to a child's education and development.[34]

Parent: significant adult who cares about a child.

Toolkit Definition of "Parent"

For the purpose of this document, we utilize the term **"parent"** to indicate any adult who plays a significant role in a student's life. This term may be used interchangeably with the word "family" or the phrase "parents and family" in reference to those who share responsibility for the well-being of a child.[35]

What Does It Mean To Be "Engaged Or Involved?"

The distinction between involvement and engagement is important. A definition of involve is "to enfold or envelope;" conversely, engage can be defined as "to come together and interlock." Thus, involvement implies doing to, whereas engagement implies doing with. Moreover, the term parent engagement indicates a shared and continuous responsibility for student achievement and learning that occurs across multiple settings.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) - Legal definition

> ''(32) PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT.—The term 'parental involvement' means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:
>
> ''(A) that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning.
>
> ''(B) that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school.
>
> ''(C) that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child.
>
> ''(D) the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in section 1118."[36]

Parent Engagement Committee - Definition

Parent Engagement: a collaborative partnership. While the term **"parent involvement,"** is recognized by the committee, for the purposes of this document the phrase **"parent engagement"** will be used to indicate all activities that parents undertake to help their children succeed in school and life.[37]

Parent engagement is vital to student success and as one can see it has been recognized within state and federal legislation as well as in school and district policies. Therefore it is important to recognize that a partnership between schools and parents can contribute significantly to a child's education and academic success.

Parent Involvement is a common term used to bring teachers and parents together in schools. Parents who are "involved" serve the school's agenda by doing what educators ask or expect parents to do. The focus of parent involvement is that the school/educator is driving the outcome.

Parent Engagement also brings parents and schools together however the perspective and expectation is that parents are "partners" bringing their own knowledge "together" with schools, share decision making, determination of goals and outcomes.

Parent engagement is comprehensive in nature, with the school consistently interfacing with parents at many points, in many venues, over the course of the schooling years.

Parent engagement means that school personnel 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.

Parent engagement 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.

Additional Information & Resources:

1. *ASCD Involvement or Engagement?*
   (http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/summer11/vol68/num10/Involvement-or-Engagement%C2%A2.aspx)

2. *Research Brief: Parent Engagement in Education*
   (http://cell.uindy.edu/)

3. *Beyond Random Acts: Family, School, and Community Engagement as an Integral Part of Education Reform*
   (http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/beyond-random-acts-family-school-and-community-engagement-as-an-integral-part-of-education-reform)

Traditional and Non-traditional Parent Participation[38]

Parents are more involved in supporting their child's learning at home. It is critical for school personnel to recognize the value of any and all efforts by parents to be engaged in their child's education.[39] The following chart outlines strategies and activities that are traditionally happening in schools and homes. The non-traditional column identifies engagement practices that strengthen relationships that lead to collaboration and partnership.

Examples of traditional participation could be asking for donations, fundraising activities, managing a sporting event. Examples of non-traditional participation would be recruiting parents to serve on decision-making committees, attending school board meeting and parents making presentation or participating in a committee to review changes in a specific subject's curriculum.

TRADITIONAL PARTICIPATION	NON-TRADITIONAL PARTICIPATION
Assists families with parenting and childrearing skills and with creating home conditions to support learning.	Develops reciprocal understanding of schools and families.
Communicates with families about school programs and student progress with two-way communications.	Situates cultural strengths of family and community within the school curriculum.
Includes recruiting efforts to involve families as volunteers and audiences.	Provides parental education that includes family literacy and understanding school community.
Involves families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities.	Instills parental empowerment through parent-initiated efforts at the school and community level.
Includes families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through councils and organizations.	Implements culturally and linguistically appropriate practices in all aspects of communication.
Collaborates and coordinates with the work and community-based agencies, colleges and other groups to strengthen school programs.	

SECTION IV

Developing Your Program

Part I

Overview

Developing a parent engagement policy or plan does not have to be a complex activity. There are many ways and tools to accomplish the task. However the plan you ultimately develop should be a true reflection of your school's/district's commitment to collaborate with all parents and families to increase the academic achievement and success of all children.

In developing your school's or district's plan consider these six critical steps:

1. **Evaluate your current status**. Evaluate where you are today relative to your parent engagement efforts, programs and activities. How well are we doing? By getting a sense of where you are today and where you would like to be in the future, will help you to develop a vision for parent engagement.

2. **Develop a statement of purpose**. The statement of purpose articulates your school's commitment to and a vision for parent engagement.

3. **Formulate Goals and Strategies.** The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) recommends that schools and districts base their decisions on scientifically-based research and address the NCLB/ESEA requirements. Your goals and strategies should include activities that meet the specific needs of your school and parent community.

   In addition when formulating goals and strategies ensure that you are taking your school improvement process into consideration so that both plan whether separated or combined clearly outline comprehensive goals and strategies for parent engagement.

4. **Action Steps/responsibilities**. Establish a year-long schedule for how the plan will be accomplished, with action steps, timelines and people responsible.

5. **Review your performance**. At the end of the year it is important to obtain feedback regarding the parent engagement plan both from an internal and external perspective – parents and community.

6. **Evaluate your parent engagement plan**. Examine your student achievement results to determine if and how the parent engagement plan positively impacted student achievement.

Strategy

One possible strategy is to begin by conducting a self-assessment that would provide information from various levels and departments of your school or district. Consider the following:

Where Are We Regarding:	How Do We Start?	How Do We Use The Information We Obtain?
1. Communication to and from parents 2. Parents as learning partners 3. Parent Volunteering levels of participation 4. Schools being resources for parents 5. Parents as partners in decision making 6. Policies and process to formally involve parents 7. Parents perspectives about us in all these areas 8. Students perspectives about us in all these areas	1. Conduct comprehensive staff assessment/survey 2. Conduct parent only survey 3. Conduct a student only survey 4. Conduct focus groups that include staff, student and parents	1. Understand where you are 2. Establish priorities to begin your plan development process 3. Guide district to achieve goals

Additional Information & Resources

Sample Self-Assessment Surveys

1. Assessing Existing Parent Involvement – A checklist for different levels of involvement (http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Parent_Involvement_Part_1_12-16-04_111426_7.pdf)

Developing Your Program

Part II – Tips for Educators and School Staff

Overview

There are many ways to develop your program as indicated in the previous section. However, if your school and/or district currently has a parent engagement plan, take a look at the following recommendations and suggested actions steps that could potentially assist you to enhance your plan and/or activities.[40]

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION STEPS
Recognize that all parents, regardless of income, education level, or cultural background, are involved in their students' learning and want them to do well in school.	• Examine assumptions your assumptions about families. Assume that with support and training, they can help their students achieve. • Avoid blaming parents and look for ways to learn from them. Recognize that parents are a valuable resource for information about their child's unique needs and abilities.
Embrace a philosophy of partnerships and be willing to share power with families. Make sure that parents, your colleagues, and community members understand that the responsibility for the students' educational development is a collaborative enterprise.	• Recognize family and community engagement as a key component of your school improvement plan. • Find creative and workable ways to involve families and the community in planning, establishing policy and making decisions.
Develop the capacity of school staff to work with families and community members.	• Help all staff recognize the advantages of school, family and community connections. • Host professional development trainings on parent engagement. These trainings should address the advantages of school, family, and community connections as well as how to work with diverse families.
Work with families to build their social and political connections. Encourage parents to communicate with each other to increase their awareness and understanding of the education process, school issues, and their student's needs.	• Create parent education classes to improve families' political knowledge and skills. Address a variety of topics, specifically education policy. • Illustrate to families that they can and do make a difference in their child's life.

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION STEPS
Link family and community engagement efforts to your students' learning. Parent engagement is most effective when it has the direct goal of improving student achievement. When planning family and community involvement activities, begin with the academic improvements your students need.	▪ Implement family learning/homework programs that engage parents in working with their children to develop specific academic skills. ▪ Give families information about how your school works – schedule, rules, syllabus, curriculum, etc. Make sure that this information is provided to families who are new to the school system. • When evaluating your parent engagement events and programs, compare your students' achievement data with parent involvement rates. Use this information to make any necessary improvements.
Build strong connections between your classroom, school and community organizations.	• Work with community organizations to offer programs that encourage reading, writing and studying during evenings, weekends and summer. • Open the school to community agencies that can offer services to families through a family resource center. ▪ Collaborate with community organizations and action groups to reach families.
Develop trusting and respectful relationships with families and community members. Acknowledge all contributions by parents to their child's education as meaningful and valuable.	▪ Respect cultural and class differences within the school community. Begin by learning about the various cultures/communities and their perceptions of school. ▪ Adopt effective practices of outreach to families, such as personal contact and home visits. ▪ Connect new families with experienced parents from your class as well as with community resources.

SECTION IV

Strategies for Strong Parent and Family Engagement

Part I – Understanding Different Cultures

Overview

What is culture?[41]

- Culture is "not necessarily an ethnic label but …an internal value system."
- "One definition of culture emphasizes its arts, artifacts, traditional dress, culinary practices, rituals and ceremonies and norms of social interaction. It is focused on material elements and observable patterns of behavior and customs."
- "Another approach to defining culture focuses on the ideas, beliefs, and knowledge of groups "
- A third definition incorporates both, recognizing that they are intrinsically related. It emphasizes the ideas, beliefs, knowledge, and ways of acquiring knowledge and passing it on.

Culture… an internal value system.

Why This Matters for Schools

It is important to recognize, understand, and respect students' unique cultures:

> "Students do not enter school as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge. Rather, they bring with them rich and varied language and cultural experiences. All too often, these experiences remain unrecognized or undervalued as dominant mainstream discourses suppress students' cultural capital."[42]

Successful learning depends greatly on our ability to accept, listen to, and embrace cultural diversity. This will enable us to celebrate our unique strengths and contributions to our school community composed of families, children and youth, educators and administrators.

> "Culture encompasses everything around us; it is a part of every environment. Often we forget that children and youth bring their very own culture from home into school, and as a result they may struggle with trying to make it all fit."[43]

When learning about different cultural groups, it is important to note that the perspective from which individuals of different cultures conduct themselves has an impact on their behavior within and outside of social groups. For example the

concepts of individual-focused vs group/community focused has an impact on how students and/or parents may behave within and toward a school or district.

While individualistic (individual-focused) cultures stress self-reliance and personal achievement, collectivistic (family/group) cultures focus more on developing and sustaining a stable, mutually dependent group. These key differences help form the ideas of people's rights and responsibilities, what roles they may take within societies, ways of communicating, and ideas of how to raise and educate children.[44]

Many mainstream parents consider social and economic independence a goal for their children. Conversely, collectivist cultures encourage their children to participate as responsible, contributing members of the family unit. Self-worth and self-esteem are not determined solely by individual achievements, but rather are derived from the self-sacrificing acts that create social links and bonds.

Below is a chart that compares and contrasts individual-focused vs family/group focused cultures:

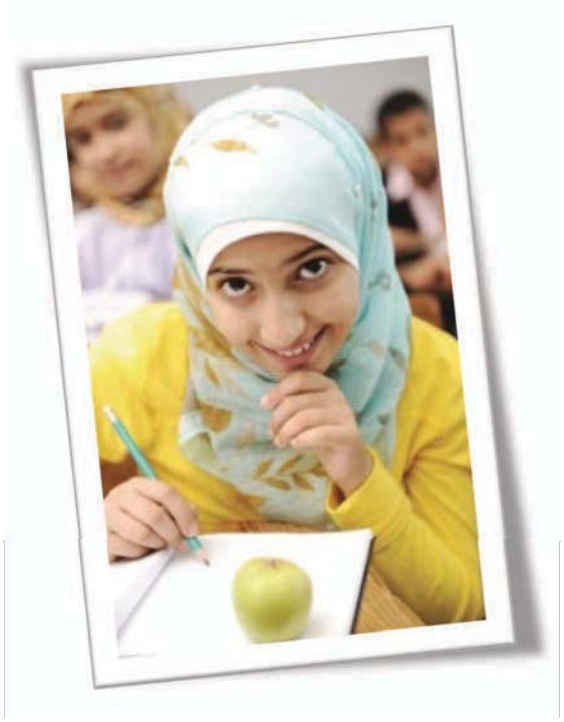
Individual Focus and Family/Group Focus[45]

Individual (Representative of prevailing U.S. culture)	Family/Group (Representative of many immigrant cultures)
Fostering independence and individual achievement	Fostering interdependence and group success
Promoting self-expression, individual thinking, and personal choice	Promoting adherence to norms, respect for authority/ elders, group consensus
Associated with egalitarian relationships and flexibility in roles (e.g., upward mobility)	Associated with stable, hierarchical roles (dependent on gender, family background, age)
Understanding the physical world as knowable apart from its meaning for human life	Understanding the physical world in the context of its meaning for human life
Associated with private property, individual ownership	Associated with shared property, group ownership

Strategies – Understanding different cultures

Avoid "one size fits all mentality.[17] [17]

Cultural frameworks, such as the individualist and collectivist framework developed by the Bridging Cultures project, are not intended as one-size-fits-all guide to improving cultural interactions.



Use as a learning tool to stimulate thinking.

Instead, this framework should be used to "stimulate thinking about how to meet the challenges of education in …a society made up of people from many different cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds."

Consider the "Whys".

In your interactions with students and parents, utilize the cultural framework to consider the cultural influences that might be inspiring their actions. Likewise, use the framework to find culturally appropriate ways to approach and respond to your school's students and families.

Cultural Tensions[46]

The individualism and collectivism framework can be used to illustrate the conflicts faced by children, specifically children of immigrant families, as they struggle between the values and expectations of their native or home culture and those of "mainstream" society. These conflicts can interrupt the child's education process as well as hinder communication between the child's school and family.

Parents and teachers (the latter representing the mainstream culture) may observe the same behaviors in children but interpret them differently, because they are viewing them through very different cultural lenses. When the individualistic teacher says the child is "able to work well independently," the collectivist parent may hear the teacher saying the child is too separated from the group." When the collectivist parent asks more than once about his child's social development, the individualistic teacher may hear the parent saying "I don't really care whether she does well in school."[47]

These tensions can lead to common home-school conflicts, in which the beliefs associated with individualism and collectivism clash:[48]

INDIVIDUAL	FAMILY/GROUP
• Child as individual	• Child as part of the group
• Independence	• Helpfulness
• Praise (for positive esteem)	• Criticize (for normative behavior)
• Cognitive skills	• Social skills
• Oral expression	• Listening to authority
• Parents' role is to teach	• Teacher's role is to educate
• Personal property	• Sharing

Strategy:

Learn about their culture and their views on parent involvement.[49]

Action Steps:

1. Establish a rapport and comfort level with your diverse and ethnic parents
2. Ask them to please describe what schools are like in the country from which they came.
3. What are the big differences between schools in the country from which you came and schools in Michigan?
4. How do parents help the teachers? What is their role in helping a child learn? How can the schools help your children be successful? What do you want or expect from the schools?
5. What kind of information do you want from the teacher? The school? What would help you?
6. What is the best way to give you this information? To whom should we give the information?
7. What do you do to help your child do well in school? What would you like to do? How can parents and teachers work together to help the child do well in school?
8. What would help the teacher/school better understand your child and your family?
9. What can the teacher/school do to help you feel more comfortable contacting us? Working with your child at home? Coming to school?

Additional Information & Resources

1. *Reaching Out to Diverse Populations: What can Schools do to Foster Family-School Connections?* (http://cretscmhd.psych.ucla.edu/announcements/research%20and%20reports/rb5-diverse.pdf)
2. National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME). (http://nameorg.org/)
3. The Equity Alliance at ASU (http://www.equityallianceatasu.org/)

Strategies for Strong Parent and Family Engagement

Part II - Overcoming The Barriers

Overview

Parent engagement perspectives have shifted from surface participation by parents (classroom party volunteer, field trip chaperone, etc.) to a more family engagement perspective (parents involved with the design, implementation and evaluation of programs). This shift has uncovered challenges and barriers encountered by many schools as they attempt to increase the level and type of parental engagement.

Effort to increase the level of parent engagement challenges schools to comply and complement the United States Department of Education (USDE) legislative requirements and guidance regarding parent engagement.17

The following section provides a look at possible barriers and offers a variety of proven strategies as possible solutions to address such issues and challenges.

Communication Barriers

Reason for Contact

Barrier: Many parents express frustration regarding the reason their child's school contacts them, noting that they mainly receive negative communication. While they appreciate being notified of their child's disciplinary referrals, academic problems, etc., these parents desire positive interaction as well.[50]

Strategy: Positive culturally-sensitive communication.

Action Step: Contact parents with good news about their child, but consider cultural implications first.

TIP: A teacher's positive expression about a child speaking up in class may be confusing to a family whose culture encourages respect for authority; they may feel the child is being disrespectful by speaking out. Conversely, a family with a cultural emphasis on interdependence and group success might appreciate learning how their child is contributing to the class's overall success, rather than hearing about his or her individual achievements. Continue notifying parents of any problems their child is having at school.[51]

TIP: A 2008 survey of high-school parents noted that 61% of parents would like prompt notification if their child is having academic problems, skipping school, or cutting classes.[52]

Method of Communication

Barrier: In a study of Latino parents, many expressed frustration that their child's school does not communicate with them. Some parents noted that they receive regular mailings or flyers sent home with their child, but they discount this as communication because it is so impersonal. Moreover, the papers are generally in English and take much time and effort to translate. The Latino parents reported that they would prefer direct contact from their child's school.[53] Likewise, a study of American Indian parent involvement in education discovered a desire for more personal communications – one parent noted "they more or less just send a flyer home and expect you to be there."[54]

Strategy: Direct Contact

Action Step: Teachers and school administrators should contact parents directly, through phone calls, emails, and home visits.[55] Attending local events can also help illustrate that school staff is truly engaged and interested in the community. This can foster a spirit of reciprocity and encourage parent involvement in the school.[56]

Strategy: Parent Ambassadors

Action Step: Encourage experienced or comfortable parents to invite other families to school events and to share information on how to work with the school, teachers, and the education system.[57]

Lack of English Proficiency

Barrier: Poor English skills can often inhibit communications when working with the parents of immigrant, migrant, and refugee students. Often, the student speaks better English than his or her parent and serves as a translator between school staff and the family; however, this limits the confidentiality of parent-teacher interactions and belittles the parent.[58]

Strategy: Translation Services[59]

Action Step:

1. Allow the school to become a clearinghouse for community organizations and materials that serve bilingual cliental.

2. Provide translation services at all school meetings, Parent-teacher conferences, and other parent engagement opportunities.
3. Provide a translated version of handouts, newsletters, and other information in the parents' native language.

Strategy: Access to ESL Classes

Action Step: Connect parents with ESL/Adult Education classes in the community or host these courses at the school as a part of other events. If possible, offer school transportation and childcare to further enable parents' attendance.[60]

Strategy: Bilingual School Staff

Action Steps:

1. Hire bilingual school staff at all levels: administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, etc.
2. Provide opportunities for educators, administrators and other school staff to learn or enhance their knowledge of the languages spoken in the community. Learning even a few phrases in a family's native language will demonstrate respect and contribute to an improved relationship with better communication.

Low Literacy Level in Native Language

Barrier: Parents may not be fully literate in their native language, further contributing to communication difficulties.

Strategy: Audio Transcriptions

Action Step: Schools should also provide parents with audio translations of important information. This information can be made accessible via a telephone hotline, the school's website, or regular emails.[61]

Strategy: Active Outreach

Action Step: Engage parents through direct, personal contact such as phone calls and home visits. This can be especially successful when done with culturally appropriate strategies and bilingual, bicultural staff who can eliminate barriers.[62]

Strategy: Multi-lingual telephone homework line

Action Step: Provide a multi-lingual telephone line for non-English speaking or ESL parents to actively assist their child with difficult homework questions and engage in their child's learning

process. This phone line can be utilized to provide information about school procedures and standards through recorded messages in the languages of the local community.[63]

Lack of Technology

Barrier: Teachers and school staff may assume parents have access to internet and email, but this is not always the case. In one study of American Indian families, their ability to monitor their child's progress through the school's online system and email his or her teacher was greatly limited as few parents had Internet access. Some parents did not even have telephones, further highlighting the need for alternative methods of school-parent communication.[65]

Strategy: Personal Contact

Action Step: In the same study, the parents emphasized that regardless of their technological limitations, they prefer to have face-to-face contact with their child's teacher. Other reports echo the value of interpersonal communication with parents in promoting family involvement and suggest home visits as a method for establishing relationships.

District's Use of Technology

Barrier: It is still important to recognize the prominent role that technology plays in our society today. In fact, according to research from "Speak Up 2007," an annual national research project facilitated by Project Tomorrow that polls students, parents and school leaders, 91% of parents surveyed now regularly use technology to email their child's teacher. Moreover, 58% of parents say they believe technology accelerates learning opportunities for children.

Strategy: Education Technology and Social Media

Action Step: Offer interactive, informative, and easy-to-use features on the school district's website. These might include contact information for teachers and staff, an up-to-date and complete calendar, a regularly updated grade tracking application, and a forum for interaction between parents. Use the district website to seek parent input on major school decisions and investments, such as curriculum changes or construction projects. Providing parents with web-based information will enable them to instantly and easily learn more about their child's education.

Logistical Barriers

Unable to Attend Meetings

Barrier: Parents often have numerous other obligations that conflict with school programs or meetings, including work, family and community events.

Strategy: Meeting Time

Action Step: Vary the time and day of school events to minimize scheduling conflicts for all parents and encourage staff to be flexible and persistent in seeking parent involvement. For example, host multiple sessions of parent-teacher conferences that include after school and evening hours as well as a weekend session. Contact parents who are still unable to attend to schedule personal meetings or conference by phone or email.[66]

Strategy: Offer Transportation and Child Care Services

Action Step: Provide parents with a method of transportation to get to the event, and provide childcare services to ensure that the parents' other children are taken care of and won't be disruptive. These simple accommodations can significantly increase parent participation in events such as parent-teacher conferences, committee meetings, and educational workshops.[67]

Strategy: Host Meetings at Community Sites

Action Step: Parents who are new to the American education system may view the school as an authority or find it intimidating. To involve these families, host meetings in the community – where they are already comfortable – at locations such as public libraries, recreation centers, and parks.[68]

Lack of Resources and Understanding to Provide Home Learning Opportunities

Barrier: Some families may lack the resources, such as books or calculators, to provide home learning opportunities for their children. Other parents who had a poor educational experience may believe they are inadequately prepared to help their child learn.

Strategy: Take Home Learning Packs

Action Step: Schools should help parents build a home environment that supports learning by providing them with the educational

resources their children will need to actively learn and complete homework assignments. School staff can also provide parents with information, in the appropriate language, on the importance of providing a quiet space and regular time for their children to complete homework and the value of reading to their children.[69]

Additional Information & Resources

1. *Connecting Your K-12 Communities: An Imperative for District, School and Student Success*
2. *Parents Don't Do Nothing: Re-conceptualizing Parental Null Actions as Agency* (http://www.adi.org/journal/fw10/SchneeBoseFall2010.pdf)
3. One Dream, Two Realities. Perspectives of Parents on America's High Schools (https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED503358)

Strategies for Strong Parent and Family Engagement

Part III – Connecting with Parents, Dismantling Perceptions

"Parents, especially parents of students in low-performing schools, know their involvement is important. Eighty percent of all parents, and 85% of parents of students in low-performing schools, say parents should be involved as advocates for their children when it comes to picking courses and teachers."[70]

Perceptions

Challenging Educational Experiences:

Parents who have had few or no successful education experiences are often intimidated by the school system and might believe they have little or nothing to contribute to their child's education.

Strategy: Parent Empowerment

Action Step: Provide parents with a sense of empowerment and encourage them to view the school and the U.S. education system in a positive light. It is important to actively listen to parents' questions and concerns and to invite their suggestions on important school decisions. Furthermore, involving parents in planning school social events can help ensure these activities accurately reflect the many cultures of the community.[71]

Parental Education Level:

The education system often uses specific terminology, concepts, and techniques with which parents may be unfamiliar. This inhibits their ability to understand and engage in their child's education.

Strategy: Understandable Procedures and Communication

Action Step:

1. Avoid using technical terminology, including acronyms when communicating with parents.
2. Help parents understand the terms that cannot be avoided, like those related to education policy, assessments, and specific procedures. While acronyms such as ESEA, MEAP, and IEP are easily understood by school staff, many parents are unfamiliar with these terms. When working with families, be sure to always define full terms as well as their significance.

Strategy: Parent Education Programs

Action Steps:

1. Survey parents about their interest in learning more about your school, education policy, child development, parenting, etc. Develop parent education programs based on their requests to help families fully engage in their child's education.

2. Concentrate on both academic topics (understanding report cards and assessment tools, attending Parent-teacher conferences, helping with homework, etc.) and family-related topics (child development and discipline, family services available in the community, etc.)[72]

Strategy: Parent Education Center

Action Step: Develop a parent information center at the school with resources on academic and school-related topics as well as parenting and family issues.

Parent & Teacher Roles:

In many countries and cultures, it is accepted that the teacher's responsibility is to educate a student while he or she is at school; the parent is then responsible for education at home. Therefore, it is common for immigrants to show their respect for schools and educators by keeping their distance. Unfortunately, this is often interpreted as a lack of interest or willingness to engage in their child's educational experience.[73]

Strategy: Meaningful Participation

Action Step: Educators and school staff should continually reiterate the importance of having "parents as partners" in the education process of youth. Parent engagement programs that emphasize the development of and trusting relationships between school staff and families will be most effective in creating and sustaining family connections with the school. Schools can best engage families by "working actively to invite and welcome parent involvement, and by developing programs that support and enhance parents' efficacy for involvement in children's schooling."[74]

Strategy: Parent Volunteer Programs

Action Step:

1. Provide parents with opportunities to help in the classroom. They can help children with academic tasks, including reading; for ELL parents, this will help improve their own

English skills. Additionally, time spent in the school and classroom can help parents gain a better understanding of the American education system.

2. Having parents in the classroom will reinforce the concept of respect for adults in the students. The parents will also be able to gain a better understanding of the teacher's role as well as learn about the U.S. educational system.[75]

Traditional Parent Involvement Policies:

Schools serving diverse or low-income populations have been criticized for having a deficit view of parents and communities. Critics suggest that this perspective leads educators to view diverse students and families as problematic and lacking resources to provide home educational experiences. School personnel with this belief often assume that lack of parental participation is due to lack of parental interest. Schools are also criticized for focusing only on what parents can do to support the school or to support quantifiable academic achievement.[76]

Strategy: Non-Traditional Parent Involvement

Action Step: Modify school policies and practices in order to effectively engage diverse parents and recognize cultural and linguistic differences.[77]

Purpose of Education:

All parents value academic growth, especially in literacy. However, less-educated parents may not provide home experiences that promote text-based literacy. While they may read to their children, they may not ask response questions like more individualistic parents do.[78]

Strategy: Collaborative Teaching

Action Step: Teachers and parents work together to set academic goals for the child. Strategies to achieve these goals include both school curriculum and home reading activities. The teacher may offer the parent a range of ways to participate in these educational goals.[79]

Lack of Cultural Awareness in School:

In several studies, parents reported feeling uncomfortable or unwelcome in their child's school due to a lack of cultural awareness and diversity.[80]

Strategy: Create a Welcoming Environment

Action Steps:

1. Ensure that the school is welcoming and family-friendly as well as clearly navigable with signs in multiple languages.
2. Decorate hallways with works of art, posters of national and international leaders and heroes, and flags of countries represented in the community.
3. Train all school staff to welcome and converse with family visitors.[81]

Strategy: Promote Cultural Understanding

Action Steps:

1. Provide staff with professional development workshops to learn about the cultural richness in the school community.
2. Attend cultural events in the community. Parents enjoy seeing their children's teachers and administrators outside of the school setting.
3. Invite parents to lead in focus groups about cultural issues in the community and school.
4. Ask families to visit classrooms to share their culture and traditions and give children an opportunity to share their home language and culture with other students.[82]

Additional Information & Resources

1. "Partnering with Parents and Families to Support Immigrant and Refugee Children at School." (http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2009/06/partnering-with-parents-and-families-to-support-immigrant-and-re.html)
2. "Latino Parents' Motivations for Involvement in Their Children's Schooling: An Exploratory Study" (http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/657653)
3. "Promoting ELL Parent Involvement: Challenges in Contested Times." (http://eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED506652.pdf)

Parent Engagement in Middle and High School

Overview

Parent engagement often decreases as students' progress through school. Parent engagement significantly decreases from elementary to middle school and further declines as the child moves through school. Parents of elementary school students are more engaged in school activities than parents of older students. A 2003 report found that only 59% of ninth and tenth grade parents attended a scheduled parent-teacher conference, compared to 90% of parents with students in grades K-5.

However, research has shown that parents maintain a significant and positive influence on student achievement. When families and schools work together, students' academic development increases.[83]

The School's Role in Middle and High School

Two-way Communication

Families are more likely to engage in both traditional and non-traditional engagement activities when they are personally contacted by school staff. Educators and administrators should use multiple methods of communication and provide appropriate translation services when necessary. Principals and other school administrators play a key role in engaging parents during the middle and high school years. They should help create a positive school climate and engage in personal outreach to send the message that parents are welcome. In fact, all school personnel – including teachers, paraprofessionals, and other support staff – should be trained to welcome visitors and answer any questions they may have.

Defined Roles

As the student progresses through school, parent roles become less defined and more difficult for parents to understand. What was considered effective parent involvement at the elementary level is not necessarily appropriate in middle and high school. School staff, both teachers and administrators, should receive adequate training in promoting family engagement and provide parents with meaningful ways to be involved in their child's education.[84]

Focused Programs

Educators and school staff should inform parents about the importance of family involvement throughout children's education and support learning opportunities both at school and in the home. Research has found that to be effective, parent engagement should be focused on improving student achievement and designed to engage families and students in developing specific knowledge and skills.[85]

Easy Access

Provide parents with regular opportunities to meet with teachers and counselors to help their student plan his or her academic program. Also offer information about academic options, graduation requirements, test schedules, and postsecondary education options and how to plan for them.[86]

Promoting Adolescent Development

During middle and high school, adolescents are experiencing new levels of responsibility and independence. School staff should be trained to help parents learn how to support their child in this experience and promote sound decision making.[87]

Planning Ahead – College and Career Assistance

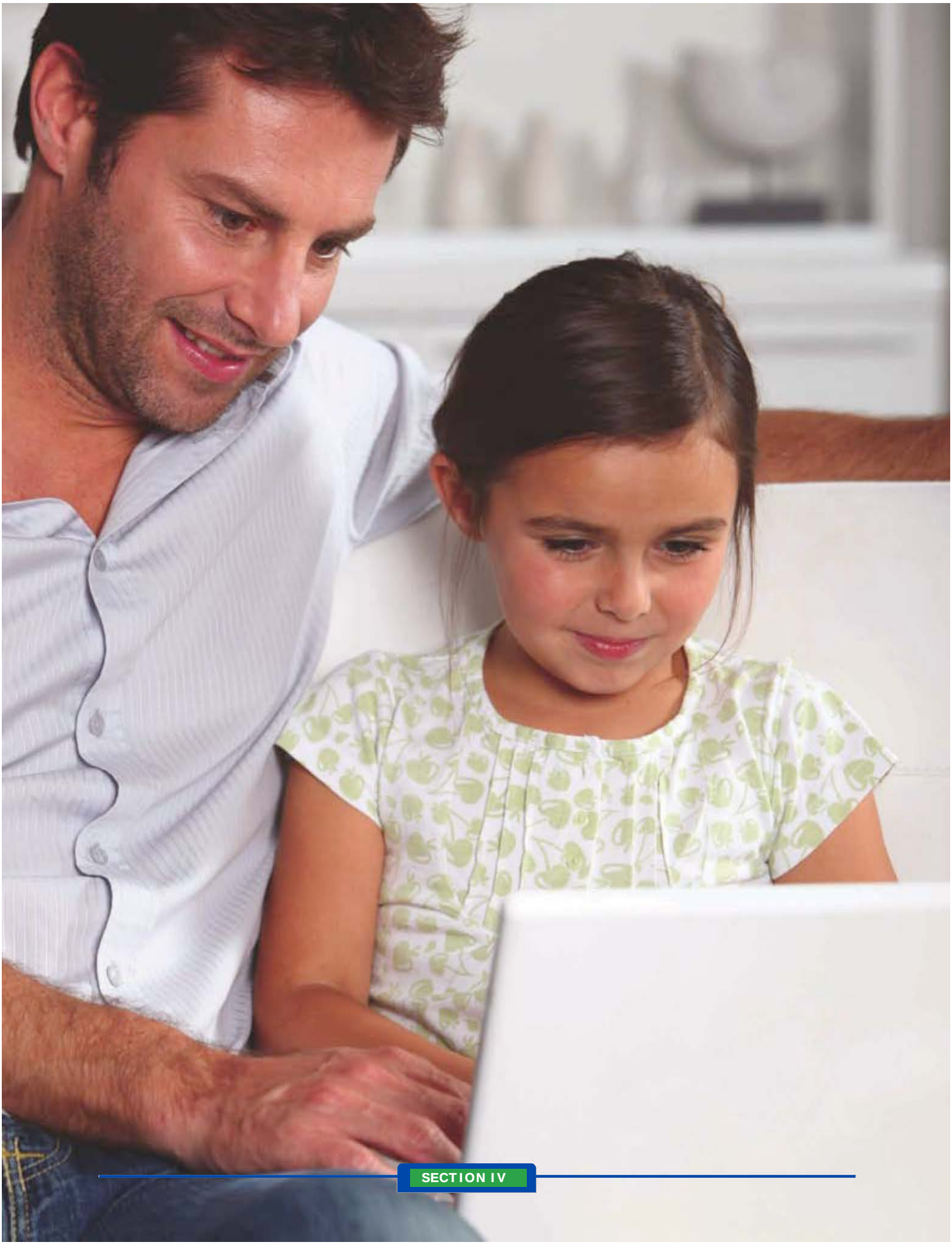
"Fifty-two percent of all parents want schools to better educate parents at the start of high school about the requirements for graduation and getting into college."[88] Without the proper guidance, students may miss out on post-secondary opportunities. Schools should help parents guide their child in making college and career decisions. School staff, including teachers and counselors, should be able to answer questions about course scheduling, college applications and financial aid, as well as offer resources for more information.

Job Shadow and Mentoring Programs

It is especially important for high schools collaborate with parents and the community to support students with career exploration programs such as job shadowing. A parent or community member might work in a career that interests a student. Connecting those individuals and providing the students with an opportunity to consider several post-graduation and higher education options will help him or her to make the most fitting decision.

Additional Information & Resources

1. Parent Involvement In Middle School: A Meta-Analytic Assessment of the Strategies that Promote Achievement (http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/dev453740.pdf)
2. Parent Involvement Essential to Student's Successful Middle School Transition to High School (http://www.eduguide.org/article/parent-involvement-essential-to-successful-middle-school-transition-to-high)
3. The Future of High School Success: The Importance of Parent Involvement Programs (http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/HSJ/Hickman.html)



SECTION IV

Increasing Father Engagement

"Father involvement in schools is associated with the higher likelihood of a student getting mostly A's. This was true for fathers in biological parent families, for stepfathers, and for fathers heading single-parent families."[89]

Overview

Why it's Important

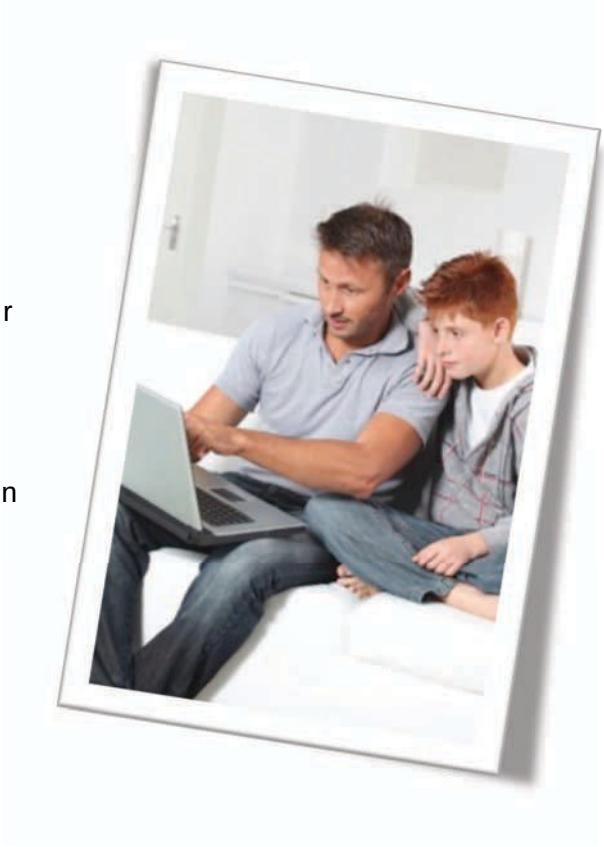
A 2009 study conducted by the National PTA and the National Center for Fathering found significant increases in father involvement compared to a 1999 report – more fathers are engaging with their children at school as well as interacting with teachers, administrators and other parents.

However, many fathers demonstrated a lack of involvement:

- 39% never read to their child.
- 32% never visit their child's classroom.
- 54% never volunteer at their child's school
- 74% never have lunch with their child at school.[90]

Yet, when fathers are involved in school their children:

- learn more and perform better in school.
- exhibit healthier behavior.
- have fewer discipline problems.
- are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities.
- enjoy school more.[91]



Strategies to Increase Engagement

Strategy: "Define "Father"

Action Step: When working to increase male involvement at your school, maintain a broad definition of "father." Understand that your students' male role models could include fathers and stepfathers as well as grandfathers, uncles, older brothers, family friends – or any other significant men in their lives. Be sure to issue open invitations to school events and to encourage all male role models to engage in the education of these youth.[92]

Strategy: Plan Ahead

Action Step: The National Network of Partnership Schools encourages the development of One-Year Action Plans for Partnership to outline activities that address "two academic goals, one behavioral goal for student success and one overarching goal for a welcoming school climate of partnerships." Using this model to plan goal-oriented father involvement activities will help your school build and sustain relationships with the significant male role models in your students' lives.[93]

Strategy: Start a Dad's Club

Action Step: A "Dad's Club" can promote consistent male engagement in your school. They may engage in fundraising, enhancing the school grounds, promoting parent/community involvement events, or any other activity your student's fathers are interested in helping with. These volunteer organizations usually fare best as an extension of the school's Parent-Teacher Association/Organization.

Strategy: Community Resources

Action Step: Seek out organizations that already have a high level of male involvement, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions clubs; religious institutions; and community centers. Distribute information about ways for fathers to be involved at the school and in their child's education or even host events at their meeting place to involve men who may feel intimidated by or uncomfortable visiting the school.

Strategy: Non-Traditional Father Involvement

Action Step: It is also important for fathers to be involved in their child's education at home. School staff should provide them with resources, such as those below, regarding literacy development, math skills, and homework strategies.

Additional Information & Resources

1. Promoting healthy father-child relationships (http://www.mnfathers.org)
2. Great Dad.com (http://www.greatdad.com)
3. National Compadres Network (http://www.nationalcompadresnetwork.com/)

Working with Interpreters and Translators[95]

Overview

When working with parents and families, school personnel may need to communicate with parents who speak a language different than their own. Interpretation or translation services are an effective way to bridge this communication barrier.

Types of Interpretation

Simultaneous Verbatim Interpreting

- An interpreter translates the message as it is conveyed but still preserves the style, tone, and word choice of the original speaker. The interpreter does not speak at precisely the same instant as the speaker, but a few seconds later.

Consecutive Verbatim Interpreting

- An interpreter interprets the message after the speaker has completed his/her thought. The speaker may pause at the end of a statement, or the interpreter might ask that the speaker pause if the message is long and complex. Because this is a form of verbatim interpreting, the interpreter translates everything the speaker says.
- Consecutive verbatim requires more time than simultaneous interpreting, because each statement must be interpreted before the dialogue can continue.
- There is also a loss of spontaneity since conversation is so frequently interrupted. This can be minimized, however, if everyone is familiar with the need to pause and with the speaker's use of signals, such as raising his/her hand to indicate a need to pause and an affirmative head nod to indicate that the speaker may continue.

Summary Interpreting

- This is a non-verbatim method – the interpreter summarizes the words of the speaker by paraphrasing and condensing the original message. The interpreter may listen for a while and then relay a condensed version of what has been said.
- In the summary method, in contrast to the simultaneous and consecutive verbatim methods, the intervals at which the interpreter speaks cannot be described with precision. The interpreter may choose to summarize at frequent intervals, may wait until the speaker finishes a thought, or until the end of a certain proceeding.
- Following the definition of summary interpretation, the interpreter is forced to omit information at his/her discretion. Thus, the interpreter should be very aware of the interests of the audience to best decide what information is significant. The audience should also be informed that they are receiving a summary of the original information.

Basic Principles of Interpretation

Prior to the meeting or conference:

- Establish a relationship with the interpreter and ensure that he/she understands the purpose and goals of your event.
- Give the interpreter an opportunity to ask questions about the topic to be discussed.
- Help the interpreter understand education terminology, such as school and district rules, state and federal laws, and the related vocabulary.
- Ensure that you have the appropriate cultural knowledge to interact with your audience. Ask your interpreter if there is anything you should be aware of, especially in relation to non-verbal and body language.
- Clarify what interpreting style and process you intend to use. Also establish non-verbal time signals, especially if a pause is needed in order to translate information.

During the meeting or conference:

- Have the interpreter include school personnel's job titles during introductions so families understand who they are meeting – the principal, their child's teacher, etc.
- Encourage the interpreter to promote a feeling of warmth, trust, confidence, and professionalism with the school personnel and with the client.
- Ensure that families understand the translation process - that they will receive a complete interpretation of everything that is said.

After the meeting or conference:

- Have the interpreter make any clarifications and clear up any confusion that may have occurred during the meeting or event.

Additional Information & Resources

1. American Translators Association (http://www.atanet.org/)
2. Translation, Getting it Right – A guide to buying translations (http://www.atanet.org/publications/getting_it_right.php)

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"Collaborating For Success" Parent Engagement Toolkit Glossary of Terms

Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI): State-led initiative to improve student achievement by creating consistent, or common, Kindergarten through Twelfth grade academic standards in English language arts and mathematics.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – The policy that governs education in the United States, as reauthorized in 2001. It is intended to raise student achievement and close achievement gaps.

Fluency – flowing, or completed with ease

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA): The federal law that ensures certain services to children with disabilities throughout the United States. IDEA controls how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

Proficiency – skill or expertise

Standardized Assessments – Tests to measure students' proficiency in a subject area. These tests are administered and scored in a consistent manner so reliable data can be obtained.

Title I (Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged) – Provides funding to schools as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to support and increase the academic achievement of disadvantaged students.

Title I, Part C (Migrant Education Program) - Provides funding to schools as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to support the education of migrant students.

Title III (Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students) - Provides funding to schools as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to support the education of English Language Learners.

Title X (The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act) - Provides funding to schools as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)/No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to support the education of homeless students.

Additional Resources for Parents

Elementary School (and Earlier)

Understanding your Young Child's Stages of Development
Information on child development for parents of one to five year olds.
http://www.cwla.org/

Story Blocks – Literacy Development
Collection of 30-60 second videos for parents, caregivers, and library staff designed to model songs, rhymes, and finger-plays appropriate for early childhood. Each video clip includes tips to increase caregivers' understanding of child development and pre-literacy needs.
http://www.storyblocks.org/

Reading Tip Sheets
Reading tip sheets, available in multiple languages, for parents of babies, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarteners, first graders, second graders, and third graders.
http://www.colorincolorado.org/guides/readingtips/

Reading Rockets
Teaching kids to read and helping those who struggle.
http://www.readingrockets.org/audience/parents/

Middle School

The Parent's Guide to Middle School
Information on topics relevant to parents of middle schoolers, including adolescent brain development, online safety, encouraging positive body image, bullying and more.
http://www.education.com/grade/middle-school/

10 Tips for Middle School Parents
Tips on how to stay involved in your middle school child's education.
http://www.schoolfamily.com/school-family-articles/article/801-10-tips-for-middle-school-parents

Scholastic Parent Guide: Starting Middle School
Articles for parents about the transition to middle school.
http://www.scholastic.com/parents/life-and-learning/what-to-know/ages-11-13

PBS Parents - Middle School Resources
Links to resources about middle school, including online articles, websites, and books.
http://www.pbs.org/parents/itsmylife/resources/middleschool.html

A Middle School Parent's College Prep Guide
Information about planning for college in middle school.
http://www.greatschools.org/college-prep/planning/594-middle-school-parents-college-prep-guide.gs

Helpful Websites for Parents of Middle School Students
Links to websites for parents of middle schoolers, about topics including literacy and general education.
https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/learning/grade-by-grade/middle-school-learning

Tip Sheet for Middle School Parents
Brief outline with information about middle school students and tips on how to support their academic development at home.
http://www.doe.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/ndedoenvgov/content/Family_Engagement/Parent_Resources/Tips-Middle-School-English.pdf

High School

The Parent's Guide to High School
Information on topics relevant to parents of high schoolers, including college, dating, and what to expect in high school.
http://www.education.com/grade/high-school/

Parent's Guide to the Michigan Merit Curriculum
Short guide to the Michigan Merit Curriculum that highlights key points parents may be interested in.
https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_30334_49879---,00.html

Resources for Parents: The High School Years
A variety of books intended to help parents successfully guide their children through high school.
https://www.familyeducation.com/school/parenting-books/resources-parents-high-school-years

PBS Parents – High School Resources
Links to resources about high school, including online articles and books.
http://www.pbs.org/parents/itsmylife/resources/highschool.html

Great Books about High School
Fiction and non-fiction books about high school intended to address middle school students concerns and fears about the transition.
http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/school/highschool/print_books.html

Communicating with your Teenager
Short tip sheet with information about respectfully communicating with teenagers.
http://www.cwla.org/

A Guide for African American Parents: How to Help your Child Prepare for College and Career
Information about the college planning, application, and financial aid process, specifically for African American students and parents.
http://edtrust.org/resource/a-guide-for-african-american-parents-how-to-help-your-child-prepare-for-college-and-career/

A Guide for Hispanic Parents: How to Help your Child Prepare for College and Career
Information about the college planning, application, and financial aid process, specifically for Hispanic students and parents.
https://edtrust.org/resource/a-guide-for-hispanic-parents-how-to-help-your-child-prepare-for-college-and-career/

Hacia Adelante: Pathways to College. A Guide for Families in Texas
Comprehensive guide for parents, including basic information on college and a planning for college workbook.
http://www.idra.org/images/stories/eng_pub.pdf
Also available in Spanish: http://www.idra.org/images/stories/spa_pub.pdf

Parent Involvement = Student Achievement
http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-5233-23090--,00.html

Family and Community Involvement
https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-74638-101854--,00.html

Parent Involvement Research
https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-5233-23090--,00.html

College Applications and Financial Aid

The Michigan College Access Portal (MichiganCAP):
http://www.micollegeaccess.org/ College.gov, developed by the U.S. Department of Education, is intended to be a resource for students, parents, and educators about planning, preparing and paying for postsecondary education.
https://studentaid.ed.gov/redirects/college-gov
In Spanish:
https://studentaid.ed.gov/redirects/college-gov

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used to determine the amount of money a family is expected to contribute to their child's postsecondary education. To complete the FAFSA, visit: www.fafsa.gov

The U.S. Department of Education's publishes an annual report regarding federal student aid and provides information on how to apply for grants, loans, and work study programs.
Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid: https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/

The U.S. Department of Education has compiled this list of Spanish resources about college and financial aid.
College Resources in Spanish:
http://www2.ed.gov/espanol/bienvenidos/es/college.html

Central Comprehensive Center
https://west.edtrust.org/resource/a-guide-for-hispanic-parents-how-to-help-your-child-prepare-for-college-and-career/

Declaration of rights for parents of English Language Learners under no child left behind
http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/decofparentrights.doc
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=194

Spanish Resources

Glossary of Education Terms
Produced by the California Department of Education. Some terms may be specific to California, but this glossary could be help you navigate and understand the education system.
English to Spanish https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ai/assessmentglossary.asp Spanish to English http://www.cde.ca.gov

Que Ningún Niño Se Quede Atrás: Una guía para los padres
No Child Left Behind Parent Guide in Spanish – U.S. Department of Education
Information about ESEA/NCLB for parents, regarding students' and parents' rights, specific federal programs and other resources.
http://www2.ed.gov/espanol/parents/academic/involve/nclbguide/index.html

Guia para Tareas Para Padres que Quieren Ayudar a que sus Hijos Tengan Éxito
A Guide to Homework for Parents Who Want to Help their Children Succeed
Printable brochure with information about state academic standards and homework, and provides tips for parents to help their child succeed in school.
https://edtrust.org/our-resources/publications/

Como Mejorar la Educación de sus Hijos – Guía Para Padres Latinos
How to Improve Your Child's Education – Guide for Latino Parents
Article about the benefits of education with advice for parents on how to help their child succeed academically.
http://www.edtrust.org

Mejorando su escuela: una guía para padres y comunidades sobre la ley "Que ningún niño se quede atrás"
Improving your School: A Guide for Parents and Communities about ESEA/NCLB
Brief explanation and summary of ESEA/NCLB. Includes information on why it's important and how the law is applied.
https://edtrust.org/press-release/the-education-trust-announces-new-web-resources-forlatino-parents-community-leaders-and-advocates/

Tip Sheet for Middle School Parents
Outlines ways parents of middle school students can support their children.
http://www.ed-alliance.org/

Reading Tip Sheets
Reading tip sheets, available in Spanish, for parents of babies, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarteners, first graders, second graders, and third graders.
http://www.colorincolorado.org/guides/readingtips/

Preguntas que hacen los padres sobre las escuelas
Spanish version of research-based tips for parents that provide both practical guidance and valuable information about a range of topics, including: preparing your child for school; knowing what to expect from your child's kindergarten teacher; monitoring school work; working with schools and teachers effectively; helping your child with reading and homework; and ensuring that your child's school is safe and drug-free.
http://www2.ed.gov/espanol/parents/academic/help/preguntas/index.html

La Selección de una Escuela para Su Hijo
Information on how to choose a school for your child. Includes parent tips and guidelines for selecting a school that is right for your child.
http://www2.ed.gov/espanol/parents/schools/choose/index.html

Cómo ayudar a su hijo a tener éxito en la escuela
Resources to help your child succeed in school. Includes home activities, guidelines for working with teachers and schools, and tips for helping your child with test-taking.
http://www2.ed.gov/espanol/parents/academic/escuela/index.html

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development Process *Downloadable IEP Forms, available in Spanish.* https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_36168-236252--,00.html

Parents Academic Help Partnership
Provides access to many U.S. Department of Education resources and information available to assist parents. Links to information in English and Spanish.
www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/partnership.html

Información para familias y miembros de la comunidad
Simple steps to increase family and community engagement and promote student achievement.
www2.ed.gov

Hacia Adelante: Pathways to College. Una Guía para Familias Latinas
Comprehensive guide for parents, including basic information on college and a planning for college workbook.
http://www.idra.org/images/stories/spa_pub.pdf

General Websites and Organizations

Colorín Colorado
Un sitio bilingüe para familias y maestros para ayudar a los niños a leer.
A bilingual site for families and educators of English language learners.
http://www.colorincolorado.org/?langswitch=es

PBS Padres
Online resource about child development from birth through early education.
http://www.pbs.org/parents/about/spanish/

Recursos en español del Departamento de Educación de los EE.UU.
Links to Spanish language resources from the U.S. Department of Education about a variety of topics, including Special Education/IDEA, Adult Education, University Education, and ESEA/NCLB.
http://www2.ed.gov/espanol/bienvenidos/es/index.html

Community Organizations

Latin Americans United for Progress – Holland, MI
Goal: empower Latinos to be full participants in the life of the larger community. Offers Adult Education and Youth Development programs and other supportive services.
http://laup.org/

Hispanic Agencies & Organizations – Michigan Department of Civil Rights
Information on several Hispanic agencies in Grand Rapids, Lansing, Flint, and Saginaw.
https://www.michigan.gov//mdcr

National Organizations

PTA Nacional
Mission: "To make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children."
http://www.pta.org/about/content.cfm?ItemNumber=944&navItemNumber=552

Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund
MALDEF is the nation's leading Latino legal civil rights organization.
http://www.maldef.org

Arabic Resources

Quick Tips – *From the National Literacy Trust, a UK based organization, that promotes literacy development.*

Sharing Songs and Rhymes
(2017_07_05_free_ELY_resource_-_songsarabic.pdf)

Say hello to your new baby
(2017_07_05_free_ELY_resource_-_helloarabic.pdf)

Making the most of television
(2017_07_05_free_ELY_resource_-_tvarabic.pdf)

Talking with your baby in your own language
(http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/baby)

Sharing books with your baby
(2017_07_05_free_ELY_resource_-_booksarabic.pdf)

Talk to your baby in your own language
(2017_07_05_free_ELY_resource_-_talkinghomelangarabic.pdf)

Playing with your baby
(2017_07_05_free_ELY_resource_-_playarabic.pdf)

Resources from New York City Schools

Questions to ask at parent-teacher conferences
(https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/get-involved/parent-teacher-conferences)

The Benefits of Literacy
(http://schools.nyc.gov/default.htm)

Tips for Reading with Children – *From the Minnesota Humanities Center*
(https://www.bpl.bc.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/kids/Arabic_0.pdf)

Summer Learning Tips – *From the California Department of Education*
http://www.cde.ca.gov/

Internet Safety for Kids – *From the British Columbia Ministry of Education*
http://www.bpl.bc.ca/

A Guide to Your Children's Schools – *From the Illinois State Board of Education*
https://www.isbe.net/Documents/PGuide-english.pdf#search=Guide%20to%20Your%20Children%E2%80%99s%20Schools

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development Process
https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_36168-236252--,00.html

Community Organizations

The Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)
A Dearborn, MI based, non-profit agency that provides health and human services, employment services, youth programs, educational and cultural programs and civic engagement, and social entrepreneurship services to empower individuals families and communities. http://www.accesscommunity.org

Arab American and Chaldean Council (ACC)
Non-profit organization serving Middle Eastern and mainstream communities in Southeast Michigan. http://www.myacc.org/