A Toolkit for Family Involvement in Education

Oregon Department of Education

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Overview and Introduction

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Dear Oregonians:

When families are involved as partners in children's education, students experience greater educational success. Research has demonstrated that family involvement increases student achievement, improves attendance, improves student attitudes and behavior, and increases homework completion, graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment.

The key factors leading to these outcomes are when parents create a home environment that encourages learning, express realistic but high expectations, and become involved in their local school and in the community.

Back in 2003, I said family and community involvement was one of my priority initiatives. Today, the Oregon Department of Education is deeply engaged in this work, informed and guided by numerous partners and stakeholders, including the Governor's office, educational partners, administrative groups, government agencies, community organizations, businesses and others.

We are working on numerous projects to help support school districts' ability to effectively engage parents. The focus of our work is on two main areas: dissemination of best practices and policy development.

Part of the power of best practices is in sharing them with our schools and districts to make sure they have access to the most useful, complete and up-to-date information. This Family Involvement Toolkit has been created to support schools and districts in developing and refining innovative and effective family involvement programs. This toolkit contains best practices (programs, strategies, tools), activities, current research, and resources and templates—in short, all the tools a school or district will need to create an effective and meaningful family involvement program.

Policy is important because it is sets the ground rules for how we move forward and how we operate. We have engaged partners including PTA, OSBA, COSA, OEA, and others from all our communities in these discussions because we are committed to bringing in diverse viewpoints. The ODE, along with numerous stakeholders and community organizations, has developed a Family Involvement Policy Template. This template, which addresses the rights and responsibilities of schools and parents, was created to assist schools and districts in developing sustainable family involvement programs while meeting the No Child Left Behind parental involvement mandates. The policy template is easily adaptable to meet each school or district's diverse needs, and offers up sample activities and strategies to meet NCLB mandates. It is our strong desire that *every* school in Oregon has a meaningful family involvement policy.

The end result of all this work will be more families and communities involved in the day-to-day life of our students, and that is good news for everyone because it means we are all working together to make every student, every day, a success.

Sincerely,

Susan Castillo
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Introduction

Families' involvement in their children's learning directly and positively affects educational outcomes. To meet the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, schools became required to address family involvement in substantial ways. However, it is widely recognized that given the constraints of limited time, funding, staffing and resources, involving parents in their children's education in ways that are effective and meaningful remains a challenge to schools.

How to use this toolkit

The Oregon Department of Education has compiled the Family Involvement Toolkit to assist schools and districts in creating and supporting high quality family involvement programs. The collection of documents included in this toolkit was selected as representing the most effective and innovative best practices strategies; these documents are referenced in Chapter 16.

The ODE recognizes that schools and districts are in varying stages of family involvement development and implementation. As such, here are a few suggestions for using this toolkit:

- *All readers*: It is suggested that all schools and districts read Chapter 3, which outlines state and federal mandates and policies, and includes the recommended Oregon Department of Education Sample Parental Involvement Policy and important information on the Continuous Improvement Planning process.
- *Developing*: Schools and districts that are developing or refining family involvement programming are advised to review the entire toolkit. Successful family programs are developed according to thoughtful and coherent practices: an understanding of the nature of change and reform, purposeful program conceptualization, conducting a needs assessment, the selection of best practices strategies to address each school/district's unique needs, and intentional evaluation practices. The toolkit offers strategies and insight to guide readers through these multiple--and often complex--processes.
- *Refining*: Those with a deeper understanding of the context and challenges of family involvement at their sites may wish to review the research-based framework in Chapter 4, then move on to chapters 5-10, which address specific types of involvement challenges, barriers and strategies.
- *Maintaining*: Sites with comprehensive and successful family involvement programming may be most interested in Chapters 14 and 15, "Tools" and "Resources."

Oregon schools are serving an increasingly diverse population of students and families; throughout the toolkit strategies and activities that meet the diverse needs of *all* students and families are presented. Additionally, when implemented together as part of a system-wide family involvement program, the strategies presented in this toolkit meet federal NCLB requirements for parental involvement and state requirements for the Continuous Improvement Plan.

Oregon Department of Education, April 2006

Guiding Questions

These best practice questions have significant impact because they can guide planning and implementation of effective parent involvement. For whatever parent involvement activity or practice, ask the following questions. Use your answers to assess whether that activity or practice contributes to effective parent involvement.

1. How does this practice demonstrate the attitude that parents are owners of the schools? How does it improve the working relationships with teachers, administrators, policymakers and the community?

2. How does this practice yield new skills for parents that help improve schools and boost student achievement?

3. How does this practice provide opportunities for the effective involvement of all parents, especially those not typically at the decision-making table?

4. How does this practice bring about district level action that benefits all children?

5. How does this practice affect student performance directly or indirectly?

6. How does this practice affect the practice of teachers, principals or superintendent directly or indirectly?

7. How does this practice improve the process of inclusive decision-making directly or indirectly?

8. How does this practice build confidence and inspire hope in public education?

(Best Practices: Questions to Guide Planning and Implementation)

Research on the Role of Family Involvement in Student Achievement

Families' meaningful involved in children's education leads to positive academic outcomes.[1] Students whose families are actively involved demonstrate increased educational gains; they achieve higher grades, have better attendance, complete more homework, are better motivated, and are less likely to be cited for disciplinary action.[2] Students of involved families are more prepared for learning, are more likely to stay in school, and to attend post-secondary instruction at higher rates.

Students are not the only ones to experience the advantages of family involvement. Educators also accrue benefits when family involvement is strong.[3] School staff gain important allies as parents come to understand more about their schools and teaching and learning in general. As interaction between school staff and family members increases, schools become more aware of ways they can build on family strengths to support children's success. Schools with strong family involvement also experience fewer complaints from families about homework or the curriculum.[4]

Despite strong evidence that family involvement has significant benefits, many barriers to involvement exist for both the school and families. Teachers often lack the time and opportunity to work on family involvement. Staff misconceptions of families' abilities create barriers to strong family involvement. In some schools, staff may feel that parents with limited educational backgrounds are unable to promote their children's schooling. Research solidly disputes this belief: many low-income, poorly educated families support learning by frequently talking with their children about school, carefully monitoring activities, and clearly transmitting the belief that education is important.[5] Many families do not feel welcome in schools, especially those who speak a language other than English. Other parents have bad experiences in school and feel unsure about the value of their contribution. Some family involvement programs require families to conform to school practices, rather than training educators to accommodate the cultures of or to incorporate the views of parents. Finally, some families simply lack the resources, especially time, to be more actively involved. When schools are aware of the issues facing families, they can better design family involvement activities that address and overcome the challenges that hinder families' involvement.

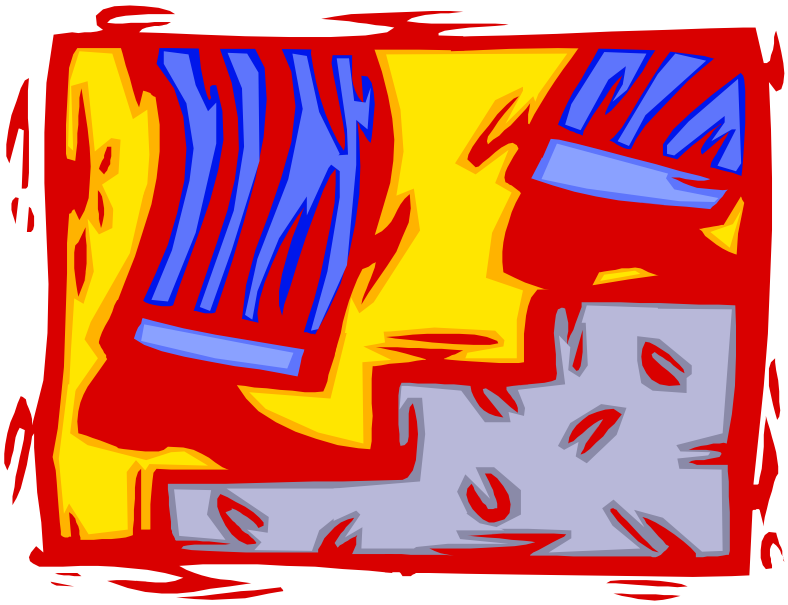
A cultural mismatch between the home and school environments can often hinder family involvement.

Inviting families into children's education requires systemically changing our approach to education. High performing districts understand the importance of actively engaging family and community members as key partners. In these districts, leadership communicates a vision for reform, listens for reactions, engages in conversations about family involvement programming, and then refines the plan. By disseminating and educating parents and community members about school quality indicators, districts foster open communication and stimulate public action. [6]

Research has identified several practices for successfully engaging families.[7] Through vigorous outreach efforts, effective schools and districts seek to engage *all* families regardless of race,

ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, migratory patterns and parental educational background. By providing several different avenues for families to become involved, schools are respectful of differences among families.[8] Schools that succeed in engaging families from diverse backgrounds focus on building trusting collaborative relationships among teachers, families, and community members. They deliberately target historically underrepresented parent groups and communities, recognizing and respecting diverse needs and embracing a philosophy of partnership built on shared power and authority.[9, 10] Successful family involvement efforts explicitly link family activities to student learning goals. Lastly, effective schools and districts have written policies that explicitly acknowledge the value and importance of parent and community involvement.

Family and community engagement is a critical factor in districts' successful closing of the achievement gap.[11] In these districts, practitioners work on breaking down the barriers that exist between the families and communities that often feel alienated by the school system. These districts share a belief that collaborations with families and the community foster increased learning opportunities.[12] Staff work with cultural minority parents and community members to help children cope with any differences in norms noted between the home and school. In culturally and linguistically diverse communities, effective communication between school staff and parents and community members is essential. By translating written communications and providing translators for conferences and meetings, these districts engage more families and community members.[13] Of final note, the strongest and most consistent predictors of parent involvement at school and at home are the specific school programs and teacher practices that foster and support parent involvement both at school and at home. [14]



Chapter 2

Getting Started: First Steps When Developing a Family Involvement Program

Developing a Family Involvement Program

Developing a successful family involvement program requires a deep understanding of each school's unique needs, knowledge of best practices, careful planning, staff and community buy-in, and a commitment to the change process. Schools and districts should take the following elements into consideration when developing, reforming and implementing family involvement programs. It is important to have an understanding of each site's family involvement needs, and a framework for defining actions taken to address these needs. Sites should consider developing a logic model and needs assessment prior to undertaking family involvement activities. Time and buy-in are critical to the success of any initiative. Successful programming necessitates buy in from all stakeholders (including parents the program is intended to serve), as well as adequate time for implementation. Planning for successful family involvement requires selecting programs, activities and strategies that are effective, targeted and appropriate to the site and participants. Lastly, effective programming require both formative (periodic and ongoing) and summative (final or year-end) evaluation.

This section highlights relevant insight into critical elements of change practices.

15 Understandings About School Change

When a school or community sets out to make significant changes in how it educates its children, there are no guarantees, no matter how desperately those involved may want them. What follows is a set of fifteen hard-won understandings to help schools and communities begin the task of rethinking their schools. The items represent *understandings about change,* not a rigid sequence of steps to follow.
Following these understandings won't ensure success, but it will make it more likely that genuine progress and ongoing improvement will become a reality.

Leadership is important, and must be nurtured.

A school, and the community that surrounds it, can't have too many leaders. It can have too many bosses, too many people telling others what to do and how, or too many people acting in unilateral and arbitrary ways. But not too many leaders--people with skill and judgment, energy and expertise, who are respected by others. Leadership must be identified in and come from every part of the school community. Early on, it is especially important that the superintendent and school board demonstrate leadership that helps change to occur. Over the long run, many leaders will be needed at all levels, and active encouragement and support needs to be extended to all who demonstrate leadership in the change work. In districts undergoing significant change, a deliberate decision to create diffuse or distributed leadership is particularly important so that the changes underway stand a better chance of succeeding when key positional leaders, such as superintendents or directors of instruction or principals, leave, as they surely will. For small schools, distributed leadership also plays a key role in promoting stability as the staff grows and changes over time. It also helps build and strengthen a culture of collaboration within the school.

Successful change needs to be both visionary and concrete.

Bold visions are necessary, both to inspire and to stretch everyone's thinking. At the same time, specific first steps are necessary to get things going and to provide early successes that will help build and sustain momentum among the groups and individuals involved. Successful new experiences provide powerful impetus for change.

Change needs to be both long term and systemic, and must involve all the key stakeholders from the start.

A new school is capable of significant change, and of being different, over the short run. It's much harder to sustain a changed school over the long term. It requires a plan which covers several years, which is broadly inclusive, which provides adequate resources to support the individuals engaged in the change, and which recognizes the need for attention to the entire system of schooling. The "system" includes those with legal authority over the operation of schools district administrators, school board members, the state department of education, for instance, and those who work in schools, such as teachers, principals, and support staff. It also includes groups such as local teacher unions and others in the community who have an interest in the schools. Most of all, it includes the parents and students the schools serve directly.
For change to be successful, every key group needs to be involved from an early point in the conversation. No one likes surprises, and no one likes to have big changes presented to them as a done deal. Creating and sustaining small schools will require changes in policy, practice, procedure, and routine from virtually everyone, so everyone should have opportunities to be involved early in the discussion and planning.

Change must be driven by local processes.

While serious change requires both "bottom-up" and "top-down" support, the process must be locally driven, for at least two key reasons. Doing so is respectful of and builds on local uniqueness. It also secures the consent of those involved locally and who, in the end, will do most of the work and be most affected by the changes.

A plan, with specific first steps and clear benchmarks, provides necessary direction and valuable indicators of progress.

The first steps need to be tied directly to the vision, small enough to be accomplished reasonably quickly, yet big enough to make a difference in the life of the school even though they are early steps. Benchmarks are important because deep change takes a long time, and people need to be able to see the progress they are, in fact, making. A plan with locally developed benchmarks also helps to reduce uncertainty and tension along the way.

Trust and teamwork are essential elements of change.

Change is deeply personal and often difficult for those involved, and requires trusting relationships. Serious change also requires collaboration, since virtually all aspects of a school community are affected. Creating a no-fault, problem-solving atmosphere will build trust; viewing every step the school takes as an opportunity for collaboration will build teamwork. Only when participants feel safe and free to acknowledge uncertainties and take risks can they move forward with confidence.

Be inclusive, and welcome newcomers.

In any change effort, newcomers will join the early group. Some will learn of the work and want to join in, some will replace folks who leave, still others will be doubters or hesitant members of the staff or school community who decide to be a part of the effort. They should be welcomed eagerly, since they bring new energy, fresh perspectives, and new skills to the group. They also need to learn the specific components of the changes underway, a brief history of the work, and the norms of the working groups to which they belong. Planning for newcomers from the beginning will make the process of change much smoother.

Certain structural changes need to precede other changes.

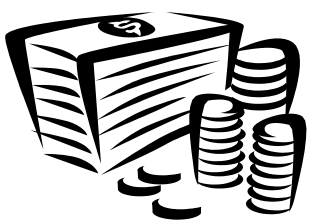
Structures and procedures which promote broad-based dialogue and participation among key stakeholders must be in place and working effectively to sustain other efforts. Plans can be made, benchmarks identified, progress celebrated. Difficulties are certain to emerge in any change effort, and conflict is inevitable. When structures are in place which allow for broad participation, difficulties can be addressed and conflicts aired and managed.

Providing multiple entry points for change makes good sense, both for schools and the people in them.

Schools have entered the change process from a number of directions: assessment, curriculum, planning backwards, technological innovation, personalization, parent programs, and so on. Once structures and processes are in place to foster inclusion and communication, schools can start where high energy exists. Individuals, too, can enter the process from a variety of places. Some teachers, for instance, learn by trying out new techniques in their classroom. For others, changing what they do in the classroom will be the last thing that happens; they need other ways into the process, helping to create a schoolwide system of portfolios, developing an effective parent program, providing background reading for other staff, which respect their styles and needs as well as move the school forward.

Focus and integration are keys to achieving deep change.

Schools are in some ways drowning in initiatives; it's not unusual for even a modest-size elementary school to have twenty to thirty initiatives underway at a time. The challenge is to determine, out of the universe of things it *might* do to improve student accomplishment, what the school *will* do, even when that means letting go of some other worthy endeavors. Many reforms have died because they have been too splintered or tried for too brief a time. While change is not linear, and while a number of change activities can and must go on simultaneously, providing sufficient long-term focus and choosing activities which complement one another in a direct way are essential to sustaining the effort. Recent research by the Chicago Consortium for School Research entitled *School Instructional Program Coherence: Benefits and Challenges* provides data to support the common-sense notion that instructional coherence pays off in improved student learning. (This article is available online at: http://www.smallschoolsproject.org/research/research_teachlearn.html)



Change is resource hungry.

Everyone involved must understand that change will require substantial human and capital resources, specifically time, support, expertise, dollars, and energy. On the one hand, schools and districts may never have quite enough resources to support change efforts fully. At the same time, it is unfair to expect that those most directly involved, particularly

teachers, can or should carry forward the reform largely on their own time. Resource needs must be identified and commitments made to provide those resources at the beginning of the effort. In many instances, substantial existing resources can and must be reallocated; often, additional resources must also be secured. In either case, the "cost" of not doing so, in terms of lost opportunity and, increasingly, lost children, is far greater.

Follow-up support is critical for changes in practice to take root.

Behavior change--whether it is changing a teaching method, a way of interacting with other teachers or parents, of working in meetings, of assessing student work--requires time and opportunities for practice, feedback, and analysis. One-time events with no follow-up are rarely useful in supporting change. Those in positions to support the change need to stay in close touch with everyone involved and provide resources as they are requested whenever possible.

Schools must take the lead in conducting action research, setting standards, and documenting performance.

Participating in action research makes it more likely that the school will remain in charge of its own destiny. It also promotes habits of inquiry, reflection, and caring among the staff, who in turn serve as models for students. At the same time, the school has a responsibility to make clear its standards for student accomplishment and what it intends to do to help students meet those standards. Sharing the standards widely, and documenting carefully the school's efforts to help students meet the standards, will serve the school well in the long run. Throughout the nation, states have established standards for student performance. Many of the most successful new schools have used the school's own language rather than the state's to describe what they expect of students, and what they are committed to ensure that students will accomplish. This act of reframing the standards seems to have a powerful effect on a school's commitment (rather than compliance) to the standards it holds for students.

Unexpected events can help a school move forward more quickly.

Things won't go according to plan. Sometimes, a real setback will occur, and plans will have to be adjusted. Just as often, an unexpected opportunity will present itself: a new superintendent, a change in regulations, a new staff member with some particular skills, an invitation to participate in a project with another school. School communities that both recognize the opportunity for what it is and have the courage to take advantage of it can make unanticipated leaps forward. Being able to recognize such opportunities is directly related to how clear a school is about its vision and what it needs to do to get there.

Embracing change as a central part of school life increases the likelihood of success.

One way of looking at change is as an event that occurs from time to time, something that a school "gears up" for every few years. Such a view is sometimes described as a "unfreeze-change-refreeze" procedure. Change is more usefully described as a continuing process that operates at many levels on an ongoing basis. This view recognizes change as a part of the school's culture, and as providing opportunities for continued growth. Thinking about, planning for, implementing, analyzing, and revising changes that lead to improved student accomplishment then become a central part of the school's responsibilities to students and parents.

(Small Schools Project)

Getting Started

Assembling the Team

The first step to improving parent, family, and community involvement in your school is to assemble a team composed of:

- Parents who represent any major groups at the school (i.e., parent-teacher association, English-language learners, representatives of majority ethnic groups),
- Federal programs staff (i.e.,Title I, Title IV, and Title VII),
- Community members and agencies,
- The principal,
- Teachers,
- Students (when appropriate), and
- District staff.

The team begins by assessing the current situation. Data can be collected by assigning tasks to the team. The best decisions are made when data about the school informs the process so that a comprehensive view is achieved. If your school has been involved in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program or another schoolwide reform program, this information may already be compiled and should be reviewed prior to launching an entirely new effort. Once the school has initiated an effort to look carefully at information gathered about the status of partnerships, priority areas can be identified, tasks assigned, and plans to evaluate progress can be put into place.

Collecting Data

Begin by studying past and existing school partnership efforts. Evaluate your school's progress thus far.

Next, review the characteristics of the families in your school community. Ask questions such as:

- Is this a school with a high percentage of single-parent homes?
- Is this a school with many English language learners?
- Is this a school with a high mobility rate?

- Are there many families where at least one parent is predominately in the home?

- Is there a high percentage of homes where violence, abuse, addiction, physical or mental illness is present?

- What educational goals do families have for their children?

As a group, review the school's achievement data and then translate it into a clear, easy-to-understand report. Disseminate this information to parents and community members asking them what the school is doing well, where improvements need to be made, and what contributions they feel they can make to help the students succeed.

Using Data to Make Decisions about Priorities

Once information has been gathered about the status of the school, it can be used to answer the following questions:

- What are our school's goals for improving our school, family, and community partnerships over the next three years?

- How can we effectively involve families and the community in the decision-making process?

- Do decision-makers have the appropriate research and training to make informed decisions?

- Do materials need to be translated?

- Do translators need to be provided at meetings?

- Does childcare need to be provided while parents attend meetings or volunteer at school?

- Should school personnel be making home visits? If so, how?

- Is student attendance a problem?

- What kind of support do teachers need?

- What are the achievement trends?

- How can outreach to families and the community link to the academic needs of the school?

- What do parents say about past successful events?

- What activities do parents feel would be most beneficial?

- How can we most effectively use community resources?

(Supporting Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Your School)

Looking at and into Family Involvement: The Process

Evolution of effective family involvement programming often begins with a logic model. Once the logic model has been discussed, the process moves to conducting a needs assessment.

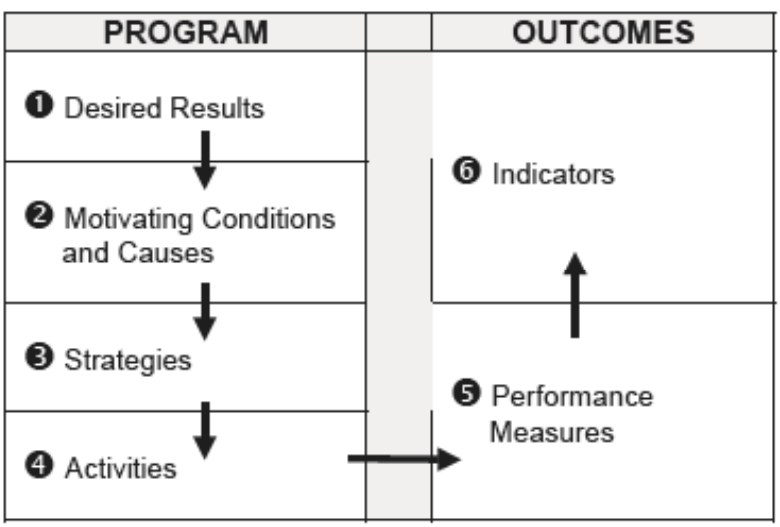
What is a Logic Model?

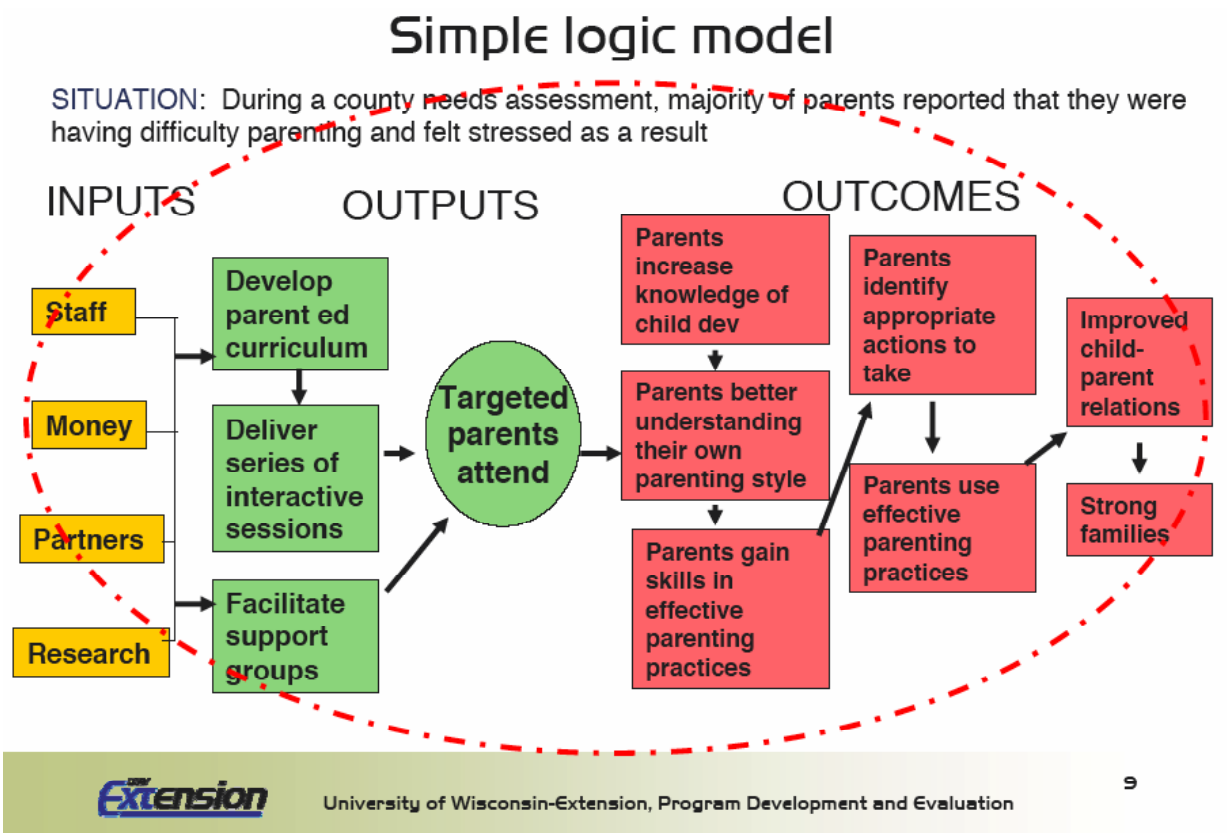
A logic model can be defined as a series of connections that link problems and/or needs you are addressing with the actions you will take to obtain your outcomes. The program activities should target those factors that you have identified as contributing to the problem. Logic models are frequently phrased in terms of "if-then" statements that address the logical result of an action.

Logic models convey very clear messages about the logic (i.e., theory) about why a program is proposed to work. Sharing logic models early in the process with program staff as well as community members is often a worthwhile activity. We have found that it helps to have a logic model diagram of how and why a program should work.

The following two diagrams demonstrate the logic model process. The first gives an overview of the process, and the second offers and example of a logic model developed around a particular issue.

Graphic overview of a logic model.





What is a Needs Assessment and Why Should We Do It?

A needs assessment is a systematic process of gathering information about the current conditions of a targeted area that underlie the "need" for an intervention.

A needs assessment allows you to:

- learn more about suspected needs and to uncover new needs.
- assess community resources that exist to ameliorate the problem.
- obtain baseline data that can be monitored for changes over time.
- gather support from stakeholders.

How Do You Conduct a Needs Assessment?

There are eight steps to conducting high quality needs assessments. Following these general steps can be useful if your group members decide to conduct the assessment process themselves or if they hire a professional. Use these steps as the road map.

1) Set up an assessment committee or work group of members from your group to collect the data. Be sure to include key stakeholders.

- Identify roles for each committee member (e.g., gathering data, developing survey questions, running focus groups, analyzing data, facilitating priority-setting session).

- Document how key stakeholders (e.g., providers, clients, youth, etc.) are involved in the assessment processes.

- Document how diverse and hard-to-reach populations are involved.

2) Examine what data are currently available. The data collection efforts should match the size of the area in which you are interested. If you are interested in learning about a single high school, national data will provide some context but will not be helpful in determining what the real needs are of the school.

3) Determine what data still need to be collected by your group. As you compile this information and begin thinking about a data collection plan, you may want to consider common needs assessment questions that are relevant to prevention initiatives:

- What are the major problems/issues in your targeted area?

- How important are these problems/issues to different sectors of the community (e.g., parents, youth, service providers, the faith community, policymakers, etc.)?

- How prevalent are these problems/issues among the targeted population?

- What community, individual, peer, family, and school risk factors in your area underlie or contribute to these problems?

- What factors in your community, families, or individuals protect people from these problems/issues?

- What resources already exist in the community that address the targeted problem?

- How ready is the community to embrace strategies and actions to address the identified problems/issues?

4) Determine the best methods to gather the data and develop a data collection plan. Get people's investment by explaining how the data will be used.

- Invite a person from a new organization who may be resourceful in obtaining data to join your group.

- Consider "who" is making the request for the data. Many times, more "informal" channels and extended relationships can be extremely valuable (e.g., the superintendent is the neighbor of the coalition chair).

- Offer to share your findings with the group/organization from which you are requesting information.

- Get "clout" on your team. People in influential roles can often get access to information that may be otherwise difficult to obtain.

5) Implement the data collection plan.

- Stay true to your data collection plan. If you must modify it, have a logical reason for doing so.

- Identify leaders in this process who are organized, good planners, and responsible. It may be necessary to "check in" with them to see how their tasks are progressing and if they need some additional assistance.

- Collect the data you will use and use the data you collect.

6) Analyze and interpret the data. The complexity (or simplicity) of this task will depend on how well you have formed your assessment questions and how much data you have to present.

- Archival data often have a long time lag, so they may not be as current as you would like. Therefore, don't place too much emphasis on this type of data unless they are corroborated by other sources of data.

- Similarly, when confronted by conflicting information between archival data and more subjective data (e.g., what people tell you in focus groups or on surveys), lean toward placing greater emphasis on what local people say. After all, they have recent information (personal observations and reports from others), they know the targeted area best, and in most cases, they have less reason to be biased.

- Interpretation of data can be tricky. Interpreting data can be difficult and is not an exact science. In going through this process of interpretation, spend a lot of time asking "why" questions, trying to determine why the data suggests certain patterns. Now is the time to

convene your partners and key stakeholders to help make sense of the data.

- The combination of data sources is necessary in order to get a complete picture of the problem or issue. One single data source is difficult to interpret in isolation. However, multiple sources of both subjective and objective data add greater clarity to the problem, increase accuracy in defining the problem, and instill confidence and common understanding among program stakeholders.

7) Use those priority factors to develop goals and objectives and to select programs and strategies to implement. The information you collect in the assessment processes and the risk factors you prioritize should provide a "road map", guiding you toward the choice of the most appropriate interventions.

(Getting to Outcomes 2004: Promoting Accountability Through Methods and Tools for Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation)

Next Steps: Selecting the Right Strategies and Activities for a Successful Family Involvement Program

Creating a successful family involvement program necessitates selecting programs, activities and strategies that are effective, targeted and appropriate to the site and participants. The following chapters of this toolkit contextualize family involvement around a research-based model, and address effective family programs and strategies.

Chapter 3

Federal and State Requirements and Policy

Federal Requirements: Overview of Parent Involvement Requirements in NCLB

Parental involvement is a critical requirement of NCLB. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, requires schools to involve parents and families in their children's education. The major NCLB parent involvement requirements for schools and districts occur in Title I, Title II, Part D, Title III, Title IV, and Title V, Part A.

"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). "Parental involvement" means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:

- That parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
- That parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
- 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; and
- The carrying out of other activities described in the law.

In carrying out the parental involvement requirements of this part, local educational agencies and schools, to the extent practicable, shall provide full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children, including providing information and school reports in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language such parents understand. The law requires that parents be involved in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of programs under this part, including the planning, review, and improvement of the school parental involvement policy and the joint development of the schoolwide program plan.

Title I—Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged

1. *Parent Involvement Policy for Schools and Districts*

- Every district and every school using Title I funds must develop jointly with parents of children participating in Title I programs a written parent involvement policy.

- Parents must agree to the policy, and the district must distribute the policy to parents and the community.

2. *District Parent Involvement Policy*

The parent involvement policy must detail ways the district will:

- Involve parents in developing district school improvement plans.

- Offer technical assistance and coordination to help schools plan parent involvement activities to improve student and school academic performance.

- Build school and parent capacities for strong parent involvement.

- Coordinate and integrate parent involvement strategies with other programs, such as Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, Parents as Teachers, Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters, and limited English proficiency programs.

- Annually evaluate with parents the effectiveness of the policy in academically improving district schools. The evaluation must include identification of barriers to parent involvement, especially barriers to parents who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or belong to a racial or ethnic minority.

- Districts must revise the policy if necessary.

- Districts may establish parent advisory councils to provide advice on parent involvement programs.

- They also may work with community-based organizations and businesses to develop parent involvement activities.

- Districts receiving more than $500,000 in Title I funds must use at least one percent of those funds for parent involvement activities.

- Parents of children served by Title I should help decide how funds are spent.

3. *School Obligations*

- Each school using Title I funds must write a parent involvement policy jointly developed with, agreed to, and distributed to Title I parents.

- The policy must be made available to the community and updated periodically.

The school also must:

- Conduct an annual meeting for Title I parents to inform them about the policy, their rights under Title I, and how they can be involved in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs in the school, including development of this policy.

- Provide parents with timely information about Title I school programs, school curriculum, assessments used by the school to measure student achievement, and proficiency levels students are expected to meet.

- Respond quickly to parent requests for opportunities to meet regularly and participate in decisions about the education of their children.

- If parents are dissatisfied with the school's Title I program plans, include parent comments in the report to the school district.

4. *School-Parent Compact*

The school-parent involvement policy must describe how the school will develop jointly with parents a school-parent compact for all children served by Title I. The compact must outline how students, parents, and staff will share responsibility for improved student achievement and how parents and the school will build and develop partnerships to achieve state expectations for student achievement.

The compact must describe:

- The school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive learning environment.

- Parents' responsibility for supporting children's learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching; volunteering at school; participating in decisions about their children's education, and positive use of time outside of school.

- The importance of ongoing parent-teacher communication, including elementary schools' plans to offer at least one annual parent-teacher conference to discuss the parent-teacher compact and all schools' plans to report children's progress frequently to parents and communicate how parents can contact staff, volunteer in their children's classrooms, and observe classroom activities.

5. *School and District Responsibilities for Building Capacity for Parent Involvement*

As part of efforts to improve student achievement, each school and district receiving Title I funds will implement the following practices to build school capacity for parent involvement:

- Help parents understand state and local assessment of their children's progress and how to monitor progress and work with educators.

- Provide parents with materials and training to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and use of technology.

- Educate teachers, administrators, and other school staff about the value of and methods of reaching out to parents as equal partners.

- Integrate parent involvement efforts with other school and community programs, including Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters, and Parents as Teachers Programs.

- Ensure that information about school and parent programs is in a format and language parents can understand.

The following practices may be implemented at school and district discretion:

- Involve parents in developing training for teachers, principals, and other educators.

- Use Title I funds to provide literacy training if all other funding is exhausted.

- Use Title I funds to pay expenses associated with parent involvement, including transportation, child care, and training fees.

- Train parents to help involve other parents.

- Arrange parent-educator meetings at various times in school or at other locations to maximize parent participation.

- Adopt model approaches to improving parent involvement.

- Establish a district parent advisory council.

- Involve community-based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities.

- Upon request, provide reasonable support for parent involvement activities.

- Schools and districts should provide full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, disabilities, and those who are migrants in languages they can understand.

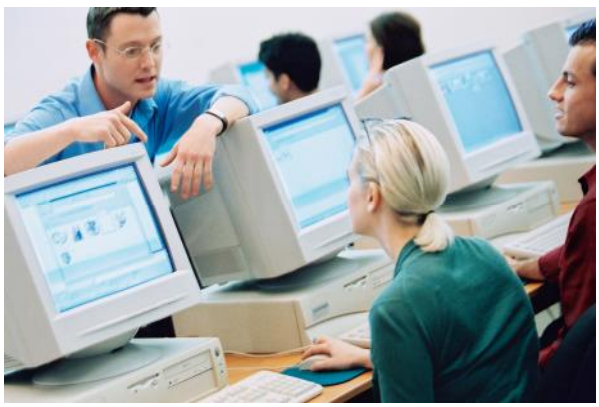
6. *Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs)*

Schools and districts must inform parents of the existence and purpose of parental information and resource centers to provide training, information, and support to parents and those who work with parents, districts, and schools. Oregon currently does not have a PIRC, but information on other states' PIRCs can be found at www.ed.gov.

Title II, Part D—Enhancing Education Through Technology

- School districts applying for Title II, Part D, funds must have in place a process for effective use of technology to promote parent involvement and increase home-school communication.

- The process must include efforts to regularly inform parents about technology used in the educational program.



Title III— Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students

- School districts using Title III funds must implement an effective means of outreach to parents of limited English proficient children.

- The outreach must inform parents how they can be involved in their children's education and be active participants in helping their children learn English and achieve academically.

- Outreach shall include holding, and sending notices of opportunities for, regularly scheduled meetings with parents of LEP children to formulate and respond to parent recommendations.

Title IV—21st Century Schools

1. *Part A: Safe and Drug-Free School Activities*

- Districts that receive safe and drug-free school funds must inform and involve parents in violence and drug abuse prevention programs and activities.

- Schools should make reasonable efforts to inform parents of the content of such programs or activities.

- If a parent submits a written request, the school must withdraw a student from the program or activity.

- The district must have "meaningful and ongoing" input from parents in developing drug and violence prevention activities and should work to promote the involvement of parents in these activities.

2. *Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers*

- A school district, private school, or community-based organization using Title IV funds to operate a 21st Century Community Learning Center should meaningfully involve parents in the development and administration of the center, for example, as members of the site council or advisory council that oversees center operation.

- Schools or community-based organizations using Title IV funds to operate a 21st Century Community Learning Center must inform parents of the services available for students and family members.

- The school or organization also must inform parents about the results of evaluations of the center.

Title V, Part A—Promoting Informed Parental Choice and Innovative Programs

- School districts receiving Title V funds under Part A, Innovative Programs, must systematically consult with parents of elementary and secondary students attending district schools on the spending of these funds and in planning, designing, and implementing innovative assistance programs.

(Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction)

State of Oregon Requirements for Family Involvement

Family involvement is important in the State of Oregon. To this end, the State has developed several requirements for family involvement.

ORS 329.125 Policy on Parental and Community Participation

The Legislative Assembly recognizes that students in public elementary and secondary schools can best reach the levels of performance expected under the provisions of this chapter with parental and community participation in the education process. It is, therefore, recommended but not required that:

(1) School districts provide opportunities for parents or guardians to be involved in establishing and implementing educational goals and to participate in decision-making at the school site;

(2) Employers recognize the need for parents or guardians and members of the community to participate in the education process not only for their own children but for the educational system;

(3) Employers be encouraged to extend appropriate leave to parents or guardians to allow greater participation in that process during school hours;

(4) School districts enter into partnerships with business, labor and other groups to provide workplace-based professional development opportunities for their educational staff; and

(5) School districts enter into partnerships with recreation groups, faith-based organizations, social service and health care agencies, businesses, child care providers and other groups that support children and families to create community learning centers for students, parents and members of the surrounding community. [Formerly 326.775; 1995 c.660 §14; 2001 c.759 §2]

ORS 329.095 School District Self-evaluations; Local District Improvement Plans; Department's Technical Assistance

(1) The State Board of Education shall require school districts and schools to conduct self-evaluations and update their local district improvement plans on a biennial basis. The self-evaluation process shall involve the public in the setting of local goals. The school districts shall ensure that representatives from the demographic groups of their school population are invited to participate in the development of local district improvement plans to achieve the goals.

(2) As part of setting local goals, school districts are encouraged to undertake a communications process that involves parents, students, teachers, school employees and community representatives to explain and discuss the local goals and their relationship to programs under this chapter.

(3) At the request of the school district, Department of Education staff shall provide ongoing technical assistance in the development and implementation of the local district improvement plan.

(4) The local district improvement plan shall include district efforts to achieve local efficiencies and efforts to make better use of resources. Efficiencies may include, but are not limited to, use of magnet schools, energy programs, public and private partnerships, staffing and other economies.

(5) All school districts shall, as part of their local district improvement plan, develop programs and policies to achieve a safe, educational environment.

(6) Local district improvement plans shall include the district's and school's short-term and long-term plans for staff development.

(7) Local district and school goals and district and school improvement plans shall be made available to the public.

(8) The self-evaluations shall include a review of demographics, student performance, student access to and utilization of educational opportunities and staff characteristics. However, failure to complete the self-evaluation process shall not constitute grounds for withholding of state moneys. [Formerly 326.760; 1995 c.660 §11]

Parent Involvement Policy Q & A

District Level Policy

1) Are the criteria for the written parent involvement policy for all schools or just those receiving Title I funding?

Schools receiving Title I funds, both targeted assistance and schoolwide programs, must have a school-level parent involvement policy (school-parent compact). Schools not receiving Title IA funds are not required to have a written parent involvement policy. Oregon state law recommends all schools to have a parent involvement policy. Districts receiving Title I funds must have a Title I component in their district parent involvement policy.

2) What if you are not serving ELL or Migrant students, do you have to include those areas in the parent involvement policy?

If the district currently is not serving ELL or Migrant students but receives Title I funds, it should have language in its policy that includes the ELL and migrant parent involvement components, so that the district will be prepared if those students later enroll.

3) What is to be evaluated as part of the parent involvement policy? What are acceptable forms of evaluation?

The law states that the district must conduct, with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the District Title I Parent Involvement Policy with regard to improving the academic quality of the schools serviced, including identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in activities authorized by law, particularly by parents who:

- are economically disadvantaged,
- have disabilities,
- have limited English proficiency,
- have limited literacy,
- are of any racial or ethnic minority background, or
- are parents of migratory children.

Districts must develop an evaluation process that meets the above guidelines. One suggestion is to develop a rubric that allows for gauging the degree to which the academic quality of the schools served has improved and ways in which parents' participation is increasing. Other sources of

evaluation may come through district surveys and focus groups. This evaluation must consider all the various aspects of the District Title I Parent Involvement Policy.

4) What are the "musts" with regard to the requirements of the district Title I parent involvement policy?

Musts:

…be developed with and agreed upon by parents of students participating in Title I programs.

…demonstrate a coordination and integration of Title I parent involvement strategies with those of other educational programs.

…describe how the district will provide the coordination, technical assistance and other support necessary to assist participating schools in planning and implementing effective parent involvement activities.

…describe how the content and effectiveness of the district parent involvement policy will be evaluated annually in consultation with parents. The district must use these findings to design strategies for more effective parent involvement and to revise, if necessary, the district Title I parent involvement policy.

…commit the district to build schools' and parents' capacity for strong parent involvement.

…describe how parents: (a) jointly develop the Title I program plan with the district, (b) review implementation of the plan, and (c) suggest improvements to the plan.

…describe how the district will involve parents in the activities of the schools served.

…involve parents in decisions regarding how the Title I funds allotted for parent involvement activities shall be used.

…ensure that all information related to school and parent programs, meetings and other activities is sent to parents in a format and, to the extent possible, in a language that parents can understand.

…describe how the effectiveness of parent involvement actions and activities by district schools receiving Title I funds will be reviewed.

…describe how, with the assistance of parents, the district will educate teachers, pupil services, personnel, principals, and other staff in:

- The value and utility of contributions of parents,
- How to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners,

- Implementing and coordinating parent programs, and
- Building ties between parents and the school.

…provide such other reasonable support for parent involvement activities as parents may request.

…describe how assistance to parents, as appropriate, will be provided.

School Level Policy

5) What are the requirements of the school level policy?

All schools receiving Title I funds are required by law to adopt a policy on parent involvement and to jointly agree upon a school-parent compact. To date, state law recommends but does not require non-Title schools to have a parent involvement policy. The Oregon Department of Education has developed a sample policy – meeting Title requirements -- that all schools can use and adapt to meet each school's unique needs.

6) How does this policy need to be developed?

The policy and compact should be jointly developed and agreed upon by parents, staff and administration.

7) Does the school-parent compact have to be signed by parents?

No. However, schools may ask parents to sign the compact as documentation that it was shared. The law only requires that the compact be shared, at a minimum, once during the year at a parent/teacher conference. In addition, the school may wish to modify the compact on a case by case basis to meet the needs and circumstances of individual parents and students.

(Colorado Parent Involvement Toolkit, Oregon Department of Education)

Oregon Department of Education Family Involvement Policy

Working with practitioners and partners, the ODE developed a family involvement policy intended for use for schools and districts. This policy meets the requirement for Title 1A, and is adjustable to meet the needs of other federal Title and state programs as well. The policy is being piloted by numerous Oregon schools beginning in spring of 2006. It is the goal of Superintendent Castillo that all schools adopt a meaningful family involvement policy to meet the needs of every student and family.

Sample Parental Involvement Policy*

**This template of a Parental Involvement Policy is provided for schools and districts to use in developing effective parental involvement policy. This policy, which was developed by a group of statewide educational leaders, meets the requirement for Title 1A, and is adjustable to meet the needs of other federal Title and state programs as well. It is anticipated that sites will engage in a process, to include parent members, in adopting all elements of this policy. Some activities may need to be revised to address individual school needs. It should be noted that Title IA schools have additional requirements, which are stated herein. It should also be noted that NCLB federal monitoring requires that this policy, when adopted by both the district and schools within the district, will differ according to the diverse activities conducted at each level.*

PART I. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS:

The **name of school/district** agrees to implement the following statutory requirements:

- The school/district will conduct programs, activities and procedures for the involvement of parents and guardians. These programs, activities and procedures will be planned and operated with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children with outreach to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, are migratory, or are of any racial, cultural or ethnic minority background.

- The school/district will be governed by the following statutory definition of parental involvement, and will carry out programs, activities and procedures in accordance with this definition:

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 of the ESEA).*

● The school/district ensures that the required parental involvement policies meet the requirements of the Parental Involvement section of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and that each Title 1, Part A school has developed a school-parent compact consistent with the NCLB requirements.

● The school/district will incorporate this parental involvement policy into the district's Continuous Improvement Plan that is submitted to the Oregon Department of Education.

● In carrying out the Title I, Part A parental involvement requirements, to the extent practicable, the school/district will provide full opportunities for the meaningful participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children.

● To the extent practicable, the school/district will provide information and school reports that are required by NCLB in an understandable and uniform format and, including alternative formats upon request, and in a language parents can understand.

● If the district's Continuous Improvement Plan is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, the district will submit any parent comments with the plan to the Oregon Department of Education.

● Title 1, Part A schools will involve the parents of children served in Title I, Part A schools in decisions about how the 1 percent of Title I, Part A funds reserved for parental involvement is spent, and will ensure that not less than 95 percent of the one percent reserved goes directly to the schools.

PART II. HOW THE SCHOOL/DISTRICT WILL IMPLEMENT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY COMPONENTS

1. The __**name of school/district**_____ will take the following actions to involve parents in the joint development of its parental involvement plan:

   (List actions)

   Actions could include:

   – *Include parent representation from the onset of the development*
   – *Hold a series of accessible meetings with parents and guardians to develop and review the parental involvement policy*

- *Take parent involvement policy draft to various parent/community groups that reflect the diversity of the community for feedback, with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, are migratory, or are of any racial, cultural or ethnic minority background.*

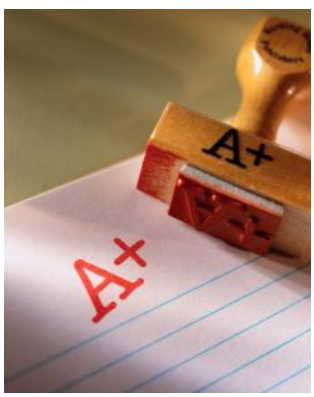
2. The **name of school/district** will take the following actions to involve parents in the process of school review and improvement:

   (List actions)

   Actions could include:

   - *Parents will be involved in reviewing and updating Title I Targeted Assistance program plans*
   - *Parents will be involved in the development of Title I Schoolwide plans*
   - *Parents will be involved in the annual review and update of Title I Schoolwide plans*
   - *Parents will be involved in the development of School Improvement plans*
   - *Actively recruit parents with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, are migratory, or are of any racial, cultural or ethnic minority background*
   - *Provide assistance and training to parents to prepare them for meaningful participation*
   - *Establish a parent advisory council, including ELL and migratory parents, to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement in Title IA program, Title IC and Title III program*
   - *ELL and migratory parents will be included in decision-making related to the needs of their children and the use of Title IC and/or Title III funds.*

3. The **name of school/district** will provide the following necessary coordination, technical assistance, and other support to assist in planning and implementing effective parental involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance:



   (List actions)

   Actions could include:

   - *Designate a parent involvement coordinator*
   - *Create a Parent Advisory Council to provide advice on all matters related to parent involvement in programs supported by Title IA, Title IC and Title III funds*
   - *Pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with parental involvement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions*
   - *Develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses, including faith-based organizations, in parental involvement activities*
   - *Develop protocols for appropriate roles for community based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities*
   - *Adopt a model for approaches to improve parent involvement at the school level*
   - *Allocate resources to parent involvement activities, beyond minimum requirements*
   - *Designate other support for parent and teacher development and training*
   - *Designate a Parent Involvement Coordinator*
   - *Involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of that training.*

4. The **name of school/district** will coordinate and integrate effective parental involvement strategies and program. Programs offered at this school include [*Insert programs, such as: Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, Parents As Teachers, Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters, and family literacy programs and state-operated preschool programs*], by:

   (List actions)
   Actions could include:

   - *Require quarterly meetings of staff involved in these programs*
   - *Coordinate written materials to parents regarding these programs*
   - *Coordinate or share parent involvement activities.*

5. The **name of school/district** will take the following actions to conduct, with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of this parental involvement policy in improving the quality of the school's/district's educational program. The evaluation will include identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in parental involvement activities (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, are migratory, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background). The school/district will use the findings of the evaluation about its parental involvement policy and activities to design strategies for more effective parental involvement, and to revise, if necessary (and with the involvement of parents) its parental involvement policies.

   (List actions)

   Actions could include:

   - *Describe how the evaluation will be conducted*
   - *Identify who will be responsible for conducting the evaluation*
   - *Explain what role parents will play in evaluation efforts*
   - *Evaluate the content and effectiveness of the parent involvement policy*
   - *Identify the barriers that interfere with participation in the activities provided for parents paying close attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, homeless, disabled, have limited English ability, with limited literacy, are migratory, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background*
   - *Design more effective strategies for parent involvement based on the results obtained by the evaluation.*

Part III HOW THE SCHOOL/DISTRICT WILL BUILD CAPACITY FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The **name of school/district** will build the school's, district's and parent's capacity for strong parental involvement. This will ensure effective involvement of parents and support a partnership among the school, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement, through the following activities described below:

1. The school/district will provide assistance to parents in understanding topics such as:

   - Oregon's academic content standards

- Oregon's student academic achievement standards
- Oregon and local academic assessments including alternate assessments
- The requirements of applicable federal Title programs
- How to monitor their child's progress, and
- How to work with educators.

The activities to assist parents are described below:

(List actions)

Actions could include:

- *Describe staff professional development, workshops, conferences, or classes, both in-state and out-of-state*
- *Describe any equipment or other materials that may be necessary to ensure success*
- *Describe any media, reports, letters, meetings, or workshops to assist parents in understanding these topics*
- *Describe if these activities will take place each year, twice per year, convenient times for families.*

2. The school/district will provide materials and training to help parents work with their children to improve their children's academic achievement, such as literacy training, and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement, by:

   (List actions)

   Actions could include:

   - *Provide necessary literacy training for parents from Title I, Part A funds, if the school has exhausted all other reasonably available sources of funding for that training;*
   - *Develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses, including faith-based organizations, in parental involvement activities.*

3. The school/district will, with the assistance of its parents, educate its teachers, pupil services personnel, principals and other staff, in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to implement and coordinate parent programs and build ties between parents and schools, by:

   (List actions)

   Actions could include:

   - *Involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of that training*
   - *Provide training for parents to enhance the involvement of other parents*
   - *Describe professional development opportunities, activities and resources to accomplish this*
   - *Include professional development opportunities in the school's professional development plan.*

4. The school/district will, to the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate parental involvement programs and activities with Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters, the Parents as Teachers Program, and public preschool and other programs, and conduct other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children, by:

(List actions)

Actions could include:

- *Require quarterly meetings of staff involved in these programs*
- *Coordinate written materials to parents regarding these programs*
- *Coordinate or sharing parent involvement activities.*

5. The school/district will take the following actions to ensure that information related to the school and parent- programs, meetings, and other activities, is sent to the parents of participating children in an understandable and uniform format, including alternative formats upon request, and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand:

(List actions)

Actions could include:

- *Translated printed materials, use of phone trees, providing information on local radio stations, bilingual newspapers, libraries*
- *Written materials in understandable language*
- *Availability of translators for parents who are hearing impaired*
- *Parent centers*
- *Parent involvement bulletin boards located where parents pick up their children*
- *To maximize parental involvement and participation in their children's education, arrange school meetings at a variety of times, or conducting in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, with parents who are unable to attend those conferences at school.*

* * * * *

ADOPTION OF THE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY

This Parental Involvement Policy has been developed jointly with, and agreed on by, parents of children of **name of school/district** as evidenced by (*provide evidence)*.

(For Title schools, add *"Parents of children participating in Title IA and/or Title IC and/or Title III were included in the development of this policy"* and provide evidence.)

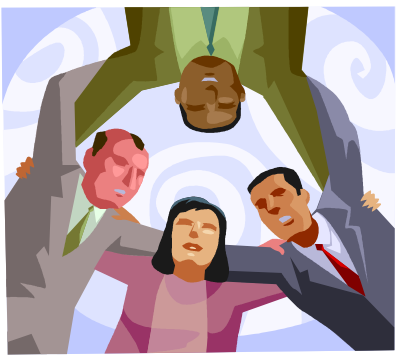
This policy was adopted by the **name of school/district** on **mm/dd/yy** and will be in effect for the period of _____. The school/district will distribute this policy to all parents on or before _____.

_____
(Signature of Authorized Official)

_____
(Date)

Continuous Improvement Planning (CIP)

The Oregon Department of Education created Continuous Improvement Planning (CIP) in an effort to facilitate coordination of district planning and to streamline communication between state and local education agencies. CIP provides an avenue for districts to engage in an inclusive and comprehensive planning process as opposed to multiple disconnected planning processes. The result of this planning should be an integrated and systemic effort by the district to address the needs of all students as delineated in the Oregon Education Performance Standards. Family and community engagement comprises one of the six CIP standards. This standard requires the district to effectively engage families and community groups to remove barriers to learning in an effort to meet the intellectual, social, career and developmental needs of all students. The following indicators must be addressed on each district's CIP document:



- *Families and communities are active partners*: Families and communities are active partners in the educational process and school improvement planning and work together with schools and districts to promote programs and services for all students.

- *Effective communication strategies*: Schools utilize multiple communication strategies and contexts to disseminate information to all stakeholders and communicate regularly with families about individual student progress.

- *Families are welcome in the school and their support and assistance are sought*: Schools create welcoming environments for parents and their support and assistance are actively sought.

- *Authentic relationships with communities, businesses and higher education*: School and district staff members engage in authentic relationships with communities, businesses and institutions of higher education to strengthening the education program and improve student performance.

- *Community resources strengthen schools, families and student learning*: School/district utilizes community resources to strengthen school programs, families, and student learning.

- *Parenting and family skills are promoted and supported*: School/district promotes and supports effective parenting and family skills.

Chapter 4

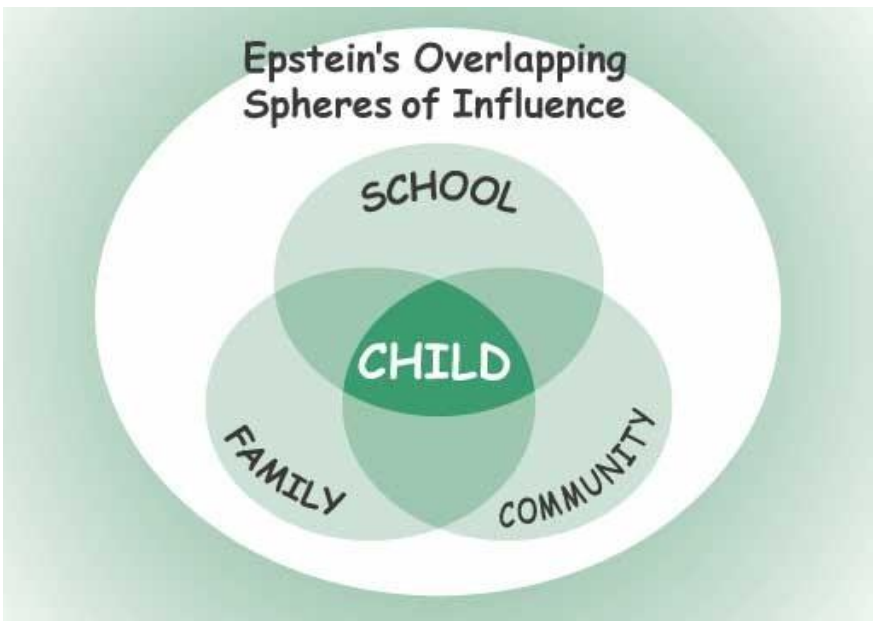
The Context for Family Involvement

The Context for Family Involvement

Parents are their child's first teachers. In fostering meaningful opportunities for parents and schools to work together to support children's academic and social achievement, schools must understand the context for family involvement.

Urie Bronfenbrenner, co-founder of Head Start, theorized that multiple, overlapping contexts, and the interactions between those contexts, account for children's development. Looking at student achievement through this lens, it is the interactions between the child, the child's school (teachers, students, staff, etc.), family and community that affect the child's academic development. Changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers.

Thus, it is useful that when developing family involvement programming, schools consider the multiple contexts ("spheres of influence" below) contributing to children's educational growth.



Research from the field shows that strong parent, family, and community involvement doesn't just happen and isn't limited to certain types of schools. Some may have underlying issues of suspicion or other conflicts that can affect the relationships between home, community, and school. Many schools have gone to the expense and effort of planning a series of events for parents and community members and have only two or three people attend. When this happens, school staff become disillusioned and begin to wonder if school partnerships are even worth the effort.

People come into the school community with a variety of prior experiences with schools, conflicting pressures, and expectations.

What is the best way to improve parent, family, and community involvement? Are there some strategies that work better than others? Can educators find ways to make the process easy?

A Research-based Family Involvement Framework: Epstein's Six Types of Family Involvement

Based on years of research, Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University has developed a framework for defining six different types of parent involvement. This framework assists educators in developing school-family partnership programs, and it addresses the multiple contexts that influence children's development.

Each type of involvement includes many different practices of partnership. Each type has particular challenges that must be met in order to involve all families, and each type requires redefinitions of some basic principles of involvement. Finally, each type leads to different results for students, families, and teachers.

Having a comprehensive approach to partnerships between schools, families, and communities allows schools to build on their strengths. A comprehensive approach fosters positive attitudes about the school and about families and community members because it respects the varying capacities of the school population as a whole.

Although all schools may use the framework of six types of involvement as a guide, each school must choose practices that will help achieve important goals and meet the needs of its students and families. (Specific information about each type of involvement, as well as barriers and strategies to effectively overcome barriers, is included in subsequent chapters of this toolkit.)

- TYPE 1--PARENTING: Assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.

- TYPE 2--COMMUNICATING: Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.

- TYPE 3--VOLUNTEERING: Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.

- TYPE 4--LEARNING AT HOME: Involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities and decisions.

- TYPE 5--DECISION MAKING: Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, and other parent organizations.

- TYPE 6--COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY: Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.

Schools may want to consider some additional findings from research and from work that Epstein and her colleagues:

- Schools with more affluent populations, on average, experience more family involvement.

- Schools with higher percentages of students on free and reduced-price lunches face more challenges to building positive partnerships.

- If the school does not actively seek the attendance of single parents, fathers, working couples, and families whose first language isn't English, they're unlikely to participate in events and volunteer activities.

- Contacts with families tend to be about problems students are having in schools.

- Parents and families care about their children. They just vary in their current capacity to be strong partners with schools.

- Teachers and administrators want to improve the outcomes for students, though they vary in their current capacity to reach out to families and the community.

(Supporting Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Your School, National Network of Partnership Schools.)

The chart below outlines the findings from family involvement research.

Recommendations and Implications from the Research Findings (Henderson, and Mapp,2002)

Recommendation	Possible Actions to Take
1. Recognize that all parents, regardless of income, education level, or cultural background are involved in their children's learning and want their children to do well in school.	▪ Examine assumptions about parents, assume that with support and training, they can help their students achieve. ▪ Avoid blaming parents and look for ways to learn from them
2. Create programs that will support families to guide their children's learning, from preschool through high school.	▪ Adopt features from programs that are linked to gains in children's learning (e.g. home visits, lending libraries, classes for parents). ▪ At all levels, work with families to support children in making transitions.
3. Work with families to make connections with outside organizations and groups.	▪ Develop families' political knowledge and skills; help them understand how schools and organization work. ▪ Develop families' beliefs that they can and do make a difference in their child's life.
4. Develop the capacity of school staff to work with families and community members.	▪ Increase opportunities for professional development on how to connect families and community members.
5. Link family and community engagement efforts to student learning.	▪ Develop or adopt programs to engage parents in working with their children to develop specific skills (e.g. TIPS, Family Math, Family Science, Family Reading, etc.).
6. Focus efforts to engage families and community members in developing trusting and respectful relationships.	▪ Respect cultural and class differences (i.e. learn about various communities and their perceptions of school). ▪ Adopt simple but effective practices of teacher outreach to families (e.g. personal contact)

7. Embrace a philosophy of partnership and be willing to share power with families. Make sure that parents, school staff and community members understand that the responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise.	▪ Adopt a philosophy that family and community engagement is a key component of your whole school reform plan. ▪ Find creative ways to involve families and communities in planning, establishing policy and making decisions.
8. Build strong connections between schools 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 groups and agencies that can offer services to families through a family resource center. ▪ Collaborate with community-organizing groups that want to improve the school. ▪ Coordinate efforts to reach families with community organizations, including religious groups.
9. Design and conduct research that is more rigorous and focused, and that uses more culturally sensitive and empowering definitions of parent involvement.	▪ Use the available resources of universities, or other institutions of higher education to assist in the design, implementation and evaluation of local programs. ▪ Explore how practices to engage families can enhance reform measures to improve and close the achievement gap. ▪ Investigate a greater variety of forms of family and community engagement. ▪ Investigate how families attempt to influence schools and become more involved.

(Colorado Department of Education)

Barriers to Families' Involvement in Schooling

Parents often encounter barriers to their involvement in their child's schooling. Many parents don't have the knowledge or resources to overcome these barriers. Effective family involvement programs take these barriers into consideration.

Potential Barriers	**Possible Solutions**
Lack of time	•Plan events around parents' schedules •Partner with organizations that provide services to parents (e.g. churches) and offer programs jointly
Economic constraints	•Provide snacks/meal, transportation tokens, raffle gift cards at big events, offer incentives
Lack of transportation	•Offer transportation •Provide transportation tokens
Lack of childcare	•Provide on-site childcare
Language-communication barriers	•Communicate with parents via multiple methods (print, phone calls home, via Spanish radio program, information at other agencies serving parents, home visits) •Develop communication materials that are not print-reliant or that utilize larger text, simpler language, and graphics
Diverse linguistic and cultural practices	•Train staff in the diverse cultural practices of school's families •Develop key "cultural interpreter" parents to advise staff of effective ways to engage families in culturally relevant ways •Conduct meetings away from the school (home, church, community center)
Conflicting work schedules	•Survey parents' scheduling needs and plan events around their work schedules •Offer home visits
Reminders of parents' own negative school experiences	•Create welcoming environment •Post a sign reading "Welcome. We are glad you have come to visit. Please check in at the school office" in families' native languages •Encourage office staff to respond warmly to phone calls and school visitors

	•Encourage school staff to acknowledge and greet families with smiles •Provide frequent and positive opportunities for parents to come to school •Communicate with families about their child's successes at school, not solely when child is in trouble or not doing well •Build on what parents are already doing with their children • Provide opportunities for families and school staff to interact informally
Anxiety about child's performance	•Encourage and support home involvement, empowering parents with tools to support home activities effectively •Encourage parents to participate in school-related activities •Address parents' expectations of their child's education •Provide opportunities for families and school staff to interact informally
Lack of family buy in to programming	•Ensure that parents and families are brought into the decision-making process regarding family involvement programs and offerings •Increase informal communication practices via multiple methods (print, phone calls home, via Spanish radio program, information at other agencies serving parents, home visits) •Ensure that school staff have a shared vision for family involvement •Examine school practices that may inadvertently discourage involvement from some families •Ensure that a trusted school staff member can act as contact person for families if they encounter a problem, and advise families of the best way to make contact

Ensuring a Deeper Understanding of Culturally Diverse Families

Culturally and linguistically diverse families often appear to be less involved in their child's education than are white, middle and upper class families. This is particularly troubling because it is these same students who are at greatest risk of academic underachievement and dropout. With the exception of some groups (e.g. Asian overall, but not specific subgroups, such as Hmong or Pacific Islander), these students' achievement scores and graduation rates lag behind those of their white middle class peers'. While school staff may have the misconception that culturally and linguistically diverse families are disinterested, uninvolved or uncaring about their child's education, it is important to recognize that these parents care greatly about their child's education.

Research suggests that children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve parents, yet minority parent involvement is decreasing.

It is important for school staff to understand that there may exist a disconnect or cultural gap between the home and school cultures that discourages involvement of diverse parents. Because school staff are often from middle class backgrounds, the school's culture, values, expectations and practices may not fit with all families' experiences. The following are considerations for schools serving culturally diverse families:

Elements of the school system may unintentionally discourage school involvement from linguistically and culturally diverse families.

- In many cultures, the child's academic education is seen solely as the school's responsibility. Parents need to be given explicit and understandable tools to become involved in their child's schooling in meaningful ways.

- Parents note they do not feel welcomed at their child's school. This sentiment is more common as children move from elementary to middle and high school.

- Communication practices differ across cultures. For example, formality and respect are a key element to initial communication experiences. In many cultures it is uncommon to call adults by their first name, or to immediately leap into formal meetings without initial communication about family or one's well-being.

- Ensure that communication practices meet the needs of all parents:

    - Know your families and what their needs are and share that information with all staff.

    - Ensure that communications are via multiple methods (print, phone calls home, via Spanish radio program, information at other agencies serving parents, home visits).

- Provide translators for school events and parent-teacher meetings.

- Develop a telephone tree with same-language parents to share information.

- Provide workshops and trainings for families that teach them about school culture, expectations and practices (e.g. attendance practices, homework support, grading and discipline policies).

- Create relationships based on trust and caring by soliciting information from diverse families and responding to their unique needs in meaningful ways.

- Create continuity in family involvement programming with district and outside agencies.

● Develop family training programs--e.g. reading readiness, homework support, college preparation—ensuring that these address the barriers common to linguistically and culturally diverse families.

Increasing Involvement of Low-Income Families

Research indicates that low-income parents are less likely to be involved in their child's education than are middle and upper-class parents. This difference in involvement practices affects school-based, not home-based, involvement practices. Again, it is important for school staff to understand that low-income parents often encounter barriers to their participation in school involvement activities:

It is important for school staff to understand that low-income parents value education, want their children to succeed, and desire increased involvement in their child's education.

● Low-income families may experience higher degrees of familial stress, and may need school support to address those concerns (e.g. access to healthcare, social service coordination, etc.).

● Ensure that communication practices meet the needs of all parents:

- Know your families and what their needs are and share that information with all staff.

- Ensure that communications are via multiple methods (print, phone calls home, telephone trees, information at other agencies serving parents, home visits).

● School staff should not assume that low-income parents do not have much to offer to the education of their children, thereby alienating parents from school activities.

○ Focus on the families' strengths such as parents' knowledge of their child and their interest in increasing involvement in school activities.

○ Ensure that assignments sent home include directions parents can understand.

○ Develop family training programs--e.g. reading readiness, homework support, college preparation—ensuring that these address the barriers common to low-income families.

○ Involve families in the development and evaluation of programs and services designed to meet their needs .

Other Aspects to Consider in Developing Family Involvement Programming

Importance of Culturally Sensitive Programs and Staff

Culturally adapted, or culturally sensitive, programs have been found to increase recruitment and retention, but not outcomes, compared with generic multicultural versions of evidence-based programs. Therefore, training staff to be culturally competent or hiring culturally competent staff from the outset is important. Issues of culture should be addressed in each step of the program development process.

Characteristics and Tasks of an Effective Family Involvement Coordinator

A family involvement coordinator interacts with families, community members, outside agencies and organizations, and school and district staff. The ability to engage with these groups successfully and productively requires a unique skill set. Below is a list of characteristics typical of successful family involvement coordinators.

Social emotional competencies

- Relational
- Self-motivated
- Self-manager
- Adaptable
- Innovative and creative thinker

Skills and abilities

- Leadership

- Conflict management
- Problem-solving
- Collaboration and cooperation
- Ability to communicate effectively
- Understanding of how schools and community organizations function and establishment of positive and productive relationships in both fields
- Understanding of diverse needs of families (linguistic, economic, migratory, transitional, etc.)
- Develops personal relationships with families and students
- Understanding of effective practices

Essential tasks of a family involvement coordinator

- Creates a welcoming school atmosphere for families, beginning at the front office
- Organizes and creates workshops, volunteer and leadership opportunities for families
- Provides outreach and linkage between families, schools and community agencies
- Provides professional development to school staff
- Participates in data collection and program evaluation

The Role of Leadership

Instructional Leaders

Leadership plays a critical role in implementing successful programming. Instructional leaders should follow these guidelines:

- *Provide a vision*: Most people, teachers included, do not start a journey without knowing where they are going. The principal must provide a clear vision of how students and teachers will benefit from a new approach to reading. The principal must also be able to describe the journey so that teachers will know what to expect along the way. For example, the principal could describe how teachers will increase their own learning and acquire new skills. The principal could stress that teachers will make a greater impact on many students' reading lives because they are better able to diagnose reading problems and arrive at solutions.

● *Set priorities*: Because schools have so many demands placed upon them, they must establish clear priorities. The prioritization process, which involves many tough choices among competing interests, is critical for determining how funds are used and how time is spent.

● *Create ownership*: Most organizations run more productively when their members feel that they have some control over the organization's processes. A school can run more efficiently when staff and stakeholders help in decision making. An effective instructional leader will not only consult these groups about decisions but also give them the power to make certain decisions. People who have been given the responsibility to make decisions regarding items such as instructional reading programs are more likely to support those programs during implementation. School staff should have input into the professional development they need—above and beyond what is already laid out for them by the district or state.

● *Remove barriers*: Barriers come in many forms, and setting priorities will help remove some of them. However, the instructional leader must be prepared to serve as a facilitator, someone who makes the school staff's job easier by removing burdens, finding resources, or providing support. Principals can encourage frequent communications among the teacher, families, paraprofessionals, and others involved in a child's education. A principal could also help the teacher think of ways that parents can help and be involved.

● *Model the behavior you want*: School staff often look to their principal for clues about how to react to new situations, such as implementing a new comprehensive reading program. Therefore, principals must set examples for their teachers to follow, enthusiastically welcoming positive change and the promise that a new initiative holds for teachers and students. For instance, as they encourage teachers to embrace a professional-development plan, instructional leaders should complete the same training.

(Carnine and Palfreman)

Parents as Leaders: Challenges and Strategies

Parents lack awareness and skills to effectively be involved (e.g. a parent can be difficult to work with or may be blocking decision-making by the group).

● Train parents to develop the skills necessary to run an effective parent involvement program. Some possible training topics include: budgeting, facilitation, communication, conflict resolution, leadership, understanding how school districts run, etc.

● Train staff and parents to help everyone work together more smoothly. Often teachers and parents don't know what to expect from themselves and each other. Training, in-house or outside the school, can help lower that barrier and increase the potential for working together to benefit the students.

Teachers or principal lack awareness and skills to effectively get families involved

- Train staff and parents to help everyone work together more smoothly. Often teachers and parents don't know what to expect from themselves and each other. Training, in-house or outside the school, can help lower that barrier and increase the potential for working together to benefit the students.

- Principals can invite two-way communication by involving parents in the evaluation of the school. A principal can distribute a parent survey (translated if applicable) to find out how parents feel the school is doing in meeting the school's priorities.

Few or no parent leaders

- Train parents to develop the skills necessary to run an effective parent involvement program. Some possible training topics include: budgeting, facilitation, communication, conflict resolution, leadership, understanding how school districts run, etc.

- Create an atmosphere within the parent group (i.e. at meetings) in which parents feel comfortable to make decisions, develop leadership skills, raise issues and address them. Facilitation, conflict resolution and leadership training may be necessary to achieve this.

Lack of diversity in parent group or among parent leaders

- Identify parents' skills and interests (formally or informally) and create involvement opportunities around those interests. Parents who speak languages other than English could be asked to attend meetings to provide translation for the other parents.

(Parent Involvement in San Francisco's Public Elementary Schools: Sharing Stories of Effective Family Involvement.)

A Supportive and Welcoming School Culture

Engaging parents in their children's education begins at the school door. For most parents, this is the first place of contact between schools and family members. A positive and welcoming school culture is a critical element of successful family involvement. Families may not become involved if the school culture does not make families feel welcomed, respected, trusted, heard, and needed. Research suggests the school culture plays a role in the extent to which parents and families are involved in their children's education.

Critical elements of family-friendly school culture include:

- Caring and welcoming staff
    - Staff develop caring relationships with children and families.
    - Office staff greet family members and acknowledge their needs.
    - The principal plays a critical role in establishing, building and developing school culture. The principal sets the tone of the school, and is crucial in determining what is incorporated into the culture of the school.
    - There is school staff available to speak to non-English-speaking parents in their native language. If this is not possible, recruit parent volunteers to support communication efforts.
    - When staff make phone calls home (e.g. for student illness, attendance, etc), they use the conversation as a springboard to connect to families and their concerns.
    - Staff acknowledge parents when children are being dropped off and picked up. This can be a time for informal conversation and connection.
    - When the principal attends an event and welcomes culturally diverse parents, they feel valued and respected.
    - Make an effort to learn about children and families. For example, when student and family names are difficult to pronounce, ask for help in pronunciation.
- Understanding of the norms and values of culturally diverse children and families
    - Educate staff about the school's diverse cultural groups.
    - Recognize that every parent, regardless of culture or language, wants to support their child's education.
    - Ask parents what their needs are, and then address them on a systemic level.
    - Realize that communication norms vary by culture. For example, in meetings staff often will jump directly to the task at hand. But in many cultures, a few minutes of small talk can lay the groundwork for deeper conversation and participation.
    - Offer parents strategies and skills to become involved in school and schooling—volunteering, learning at home, homework support, leadership and decision-making, planning for college, etc.

- Create a welcoming environment
    - Ensure that the front of the building is clean and inviting.
    - Create a sign that welcomes parents in their native language.
    - Post student work prominently near the front of the school.
    - Create opportunities for parents to visit school that celebrate students' activities and achievements.
    - Ensure that the written communication sent to parents is in a language and format they can understand. Some parents may find the language and tone of "formal" communication intimidating.
    - Develop communication strategies that are meaningful and effective for all parents. These may vary across ethnic and cultural groups.
    - Ensure that parents have access teachers and are able to communicate with teachers regarding their child's progress and achievement.

How to Use the Subsequent Chapters

Each of the following six chapters addresses one type of family involvement. Each chapter details the nature of the type of involvement, discusses barriers to the type of involvement, and then proposes effective strategies and activities. These strategies are offered as examples of effective practice, and must be adapted to the unique needs of each school site.

Chapter 5

Type One of Family Involvement : Parenting

Type One of Family Involvement: Parenting

Parenting programs are an important element of effective family involvement practices. Schools with successful family involvement programs provide training and support to parents to foster children's healthy social/emotional and intellectual development. Families whose basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter are not being met have a more difficult time helping their children to do well in school. Schools and community agencies can work together to provide support so that parents can focus on their children's needs.

Elements of effective parenting training programs include sessions that:

- Are offered 1-2 hours at night and on a weekly basis,
- Are offered free of charge,
- Address behaviors and skills parents can use,
- Offer opportunity for parents to learn and practice new behaviors, and
- Are used as a springboard to invite parent participation in other aspects of schooling.

Additional elements that foster greater participation include:

- Childcare,
- Food/snacks,
- Incentives (door prizes, books, gift certificates), and
- Sessions offered in partnership with community and faith-based agencies.

The Issues and Challenges Around Encouraging Parenting Skills Are:

- *Resistance*: Parents being resistant to the information being provided.
- *Materials*: Gathering information that assists parents in providing the necessary boundaries, high expectations, adult role models, support for academic achievement, and an environment that nurtures the positive social/emotional development of children.
- *Information-sharing*: Making all information for families clear, usable, age-appropriate, and linked to children's success. Discover ways to provide useful information to all families, not just to those who attend meetings at school.

● *Acknowledging and embracing all families and cultures*: Assure that all families are welcomed at school and invited to participate at all levels of involvement.

● *Engagement*: Enabling families to share information with schools about background, culture, children's talents, goals, and needs.

The Benefits of Helping Families Enhance Their Parenting Skills Are:

● *Self-confidence and support*: Parents feel the school is supporting them and they are confident that they are helping their children.

● *Learning readiness*: Parents send their children to school ready to learn, and children are able to concentrate on school issues, without worrying about safety or basic needs.

● *Development of parenting strategies*: Parents are learning effective parenting strategies they can use as their children move from one phase of development to another.

Strategies for Encouraging Positive Parenting Skills

● *Survey parents*: Ask parents what information and workshops they would find most helpful.

● *Consult with parents and others in the community*: Ask about their preferences and the best ways to translate or modify messages to all parents.

● *Establish home visiting programs*: When teachers visit with parents in the home, teachers can share with them school and classroom expectations, and parents can share information about home situations that might affect student achievement.

● *Make referral information readily available*: Put referral information on bulletin boards, in newsletters, and on information tables at school events. This information can include times and locations of parenting classes, agency services to families, and parks and recreation schedules. Offer information about parenting that is provided by community agencies and churches.

● *Offer school space*: Have a room available for parent-led support groups and parenting education classes where parents can share their parenting successes and challenges and gain knowledge to enhance their parenting skills. Schools having the greatest success with parent centers are those with a parent-and-teacher team that coordinates activities and use of the room. When parents know it is a place they can gather informally, as well as hold scheduled meetings, it can become more than a place of work; it becomes a place to connect with others.

● *Provide child development information*: Conduct workshops on what parents can expect as their child moves into middle school or high school. Workshop topics can include:

- Changes in homework requirements
- Communication with your adolescent or teen
- Specific issues of parenting the adolescent

● *Capitalize on parent attendance at neighborhood and community fairs and events*: Offer outreach materials such as brochures, posters, bookmarks, tip sheets, school phone numbers, and welcoming messages.

● *Offer a sharing night for parents*: Have parents share their best practices for nurturing, discipline, homework help, creating time for reading, or other pertinent topics.

● *Create lending libraries*: Provide toys, games, math and literacy kits, books and videos for families to check out to use at home.

● *Develop training tips*: Offer workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child development at each age and grade level.

● *Offer adult education*: Provide parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, school readiness, family literacy, effective discipline, college preparation programs).

● *Create wraparound connections:* Connect to family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and parenting, including clothing swap shops, food co-ops, parent-to-parent groups.

● *Meet families in their environment*: Develop home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families.

Effects of Parenting Programs

Students

- Awareness of family supervision
- Respect for parents
- Positive personal qualities, habits, beliefs, and values taught by family
- Balance between time spent on chores, other activities, and homework

- Regular attendance
- Awareness of importance of school

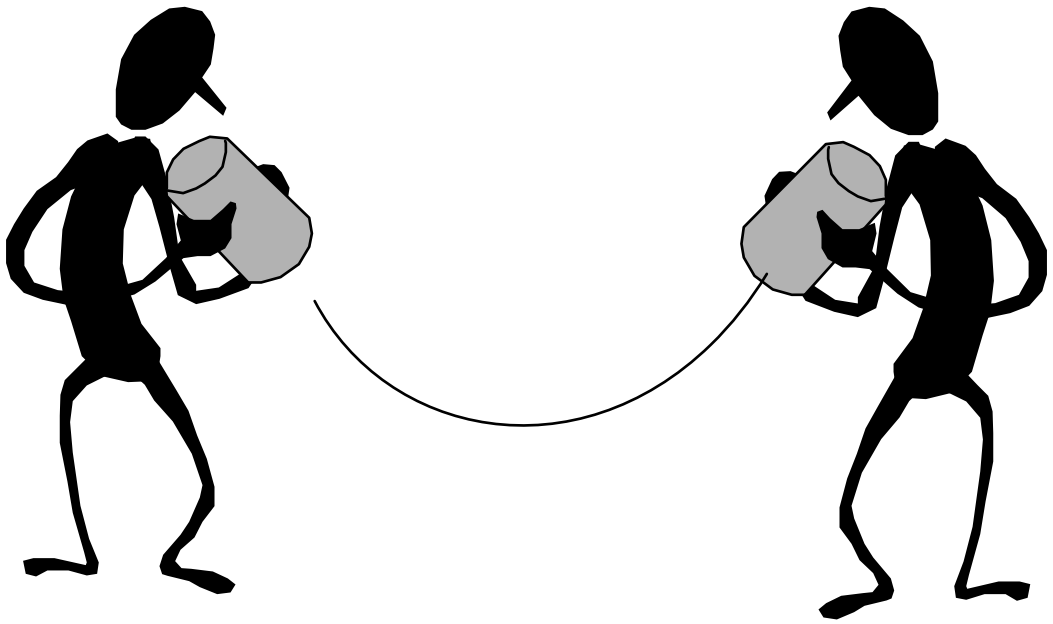
Parents

- Self-confidence about parenting
- Knowledge of child and adolescent development
- Adjustments in home environment as children proceed through school
- Awareness of own and others' challenges in parenting
- Feeling of support from school and other parents

Schools

- Understanding of families' backgrounds, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of their children
- Respect for families' strengths and efforts
- Understanding student diversity
- Awareness of own skills to share information on child development

(National Network of Partnership Schools; Strengthening Parent Involvement Toolkit; Supporting Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Your School)



Chapter 6

Type Two of Family Involvement : Communicating With Families

Type Two of Family Involvement: Communicating With Families

The more that schools and families can share pertinent information with each other about students, the better equipped they will be to help those students become successful. Family and school consultation and collaboration create the climate for maximum realization of a student's potential. Effective communication with families means that the school welcomes and consistently supports families to support their children. Two-way communication about school programs and children's progress will result in better outcomes for students.

The Issues and Challenges of Communicating With Families Are:

- *Clear expectations*: Communicating frequently with parents about curriculum, classroom expectations, and ways parents can become involved.

- *Frequent and positive communication*: Helping teachers see the importance of using frequent, clear, and positive communication strategies with parents.

- *Facilitate families' understanding*: Ensure all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications clear and understandable for all families. Consider parents who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type.

- *Conveying that the school is a welcoming, caring place*: Ensuring that visitors are greeted by welcoming signs and responsive staff.

- *Developing appropriate strategies*: Using information from parents, families, and community members to focus on appropriate strategies.

- *Involve families in communication planning*: Solicit ideas from families to improve the design and content of major communications such as newsletters, report cards, and conference schedules. Establish an easy-to-use two-way channel for communications from school-to-home and from home-to-school.

- *Getting information into parents' hands*: Getting information home via students and parents being inundated with competing information.

The Benefits of Enhancing Communication With Families Are:

- *A feeling of community*: Parents feel that they are part of the school community, as they are kept aware of school events and other important school information.

- *Clear information*: Parents learn about the school's curriculum, assessments, achievement levels, and reporting methods.

● *Parents receive information about how to support their children*: Parents have the information they need to help their children thrive and achieve. When families are happy, children tend to do better in school.

● *Relationships are developed*: When schools and families share information and strategies, everyone feels connected to the school community.

● *Positive outcomes*: School staff realize the positive ways that parents contribute to student success.

Strategies for Enhancing Communication With Families

● *Emphasize the importance of strong family involvement*: Devote staff meeting time to exploring ways to improve communication with families.

● *Devote Title I or other funds to compensate teachers for time spent making home visits*: This time can pay back huge dividends when teachers develop relationships with families and can communicate with them about ways to support their children.

● *Solicit financial support to improve telephone communication opportunities with families*: Many schools are still operating with only one or two phone lines, making it virtually impossible to reach teachers during the day.

● Engage in meaningful dialogue with families: Ensure conferences with every parent at least once a year with follow-ups as needed. Offer language translators to assist families as needed.

● *Share school expectations*: Share the school's goals and policies about student expectations and school assessment procedures.

● *Provide clear information*: Give families clear information in a language they can understand about choosing schools, selecting courses and programs, activities within schools, all school policies, programs, reforms, assessments, and transitions.

● *Make sure that all teachers have an e-mail address with easy and regular access*: This form of communication can link parents at work and at home.

● *Increase parent-school communication about student work*: Develop folders of student work that are sent home weekly or monthly for parent review and comments.

● *As a faculty, develop a format for classroom newsletters*: Basic information about classes and opportunities for parent support can be included and sent home on a weekly or twice monthly basis. Students can do some of the reporting, which can be directly linked to writing goals.

● *Have several mechanisms for gathering opinions from parents, students, and teachers*: Have a suggestion box in the hall, a tear-off suggestion form in the newsletter, a questionnaire at student-teacher conferences, a random sample phone-call effort, focus groups, or an annual satisfaction survey.

● *Communicate frequently about the school's achievement data*: Share the school's achievement data and offer parents suggestions about ways they can help their children succeed.

● *Send information to both parents*: In the case where a child doesn't live with both parents, it's important to keep each parent informed about the child's progress and about school activities.

● *Update signs around the school*: Be sure that notices asking parents to check in at the office include a warm welcome in all languages represented at the school. Students can create the signs as part of their language arts curriculum.

● *Listen to families*: Conduct annual survey of families on students' needs and families' suggestions and reactions to school programs. Invite families, community members and school staff to bi-monthly "listening sessions" throughout the district, where open questions and dialogue are encouraged.

Effects of Communicating With Families

Students

- Awareness of own progress in subjects and skills
- Knowledge of actions needed to maintain or improve grades
- Understanding school programs and policies
- Informed decisions about courses and programs
- Awareness of own role as courier and communicator in school-family partnerships

Parents

- Understanding school programs and policies
- Monitoring and awareness of child's progress in subjects and skills
- Responses to student problems
- Ease of interactions and communications with school and teachers

- High rating of school quality

Schools

- Diversity of communications with families
- Ability to communicate clearly
- Use of network of parents to communicate with all families
- Ability to understand family views and elicit help with children's progress

(National Network of Partnership Schools; Strengthening Parent Involvement Toolkit; Supporting Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Your School)

Chapter 7

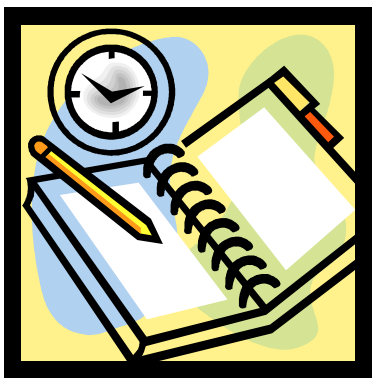
Type Three of Family Involvement : Volunteering

Type Three of Family Involvement: Volunteering

Families' attendance, recruiting and organizing volunteer support of school events can be truly helpful to schools on a number of levels. Successful volunteering creates families' engagement in schooling and increases community awareness of the school, its mission, and the issues face. Adults who volunteer to support their child's school report feeling a greater understanding and sense of empowerment around their child's schooling experiences. To increase opportunities and participation, volunteer experiences can be both school- and home-based.

The Issues and Challenges of Increasing Volunteerism and Attendance at School Events Are:

- *Offering flexible times to volunteer*: People have varied and hectic schedules.



- *Child care*: Many parents will need child care so that they may participate at their child's school.

- *Providing meaningful volunteer experiences and matching volunteer strengths to schools needs*: Volunteers want to feel that the work they are doing is beneficial to the students and staff. Their work should be a reliable form of assistance to teachers.

- *Language and cultural barriers*: Schools will need to address the issues of language and cultural barriers.

- *Past negative experiences*: Some people may be reluctant to volunteer or attend school events because of past negative school experiences.

- *Training staff and teachers to work with volunteers*: School staff and teachers may need some training to expand how they work with volunteers. When teachers are asked to use volunteers, schools must provide them time to plan for including volunteers in their classrooms.

- *Volunteer recognition*: To motivate and retain volunteers, it is vital to recognize them for their efforts.

The Benefits of Increasing Volunteerism and Attendance at School Events Are:

- *Time for teachers to work individually with students*: Often, when teachers have assistance in the classroom, they have more time to work one-on-one with students.

- *Positive relationships*: Creating a welcoming environment lays the groundwork for positive relationships. By increasing parent, family, and community participation, schools raise awareness of how much their help is needed and appreciated.

● *Increased skills and knowledge*: Volunteer opportunities can lead to paid positions or increased knowledge that can be used in the workplace.

Strategies for Increasing Volunteerism and Attendance at School Events

● *Survey potential volunteers*: Throughout the year, survey parents about their interests and availability to volunteer.

● *Offer a variety of times to volunteer*: People have varied and hectic schedules, so successful school volunteer programs will need to offer flexible volunteer schedules.

● *Offer training to volunteers*: Offer volunteers training in interpreting academic performance assessments so that they can better understand what is expected of students and can provide help accordingly in the classroom. It is vital for the school to help volunteers feel competent about their ability to assist.

● *Invite parents to ride the school bus and eat lunch with their children*: This offers another way for the school to be accessible and welcoming.

● *Train parents to become more involved in school activities*: Parent mentors can work with new volunteers and answer questions at their school. Train parents to provide extra assistance on the playground promoting positive social interactions and challenging activities.

● *Encourage opportunities for volunteers to be seen as positive adult role models*: Offer regular career exploration opportunities. Have volunteers answer basic questions about their careers, such as job title, subjects to take in school that will help them to do the job, training needed to do the job, great things about the job, and tough things about the job.

● *Publicize volunteer opportunities throughout the year*: By publicizing volunteer opportunities year-round, families and community members who come to the school midyear can be made aware of the volunteer opportunities and can become connected with the school community.

● *Create home-based volunteer activities*: Create opportunities to volunteer from home, such as preparing activities or homework packages, creating newsletter, translating materials, or grading homework.

● *Offer families a space onsite*: Create a parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, and resources for families.

● *Hire or appoint a volunteer coordinator*: A volunteer coordinator can make phone calls to remind volunteers of their commitments, to provide training on equipment such as the copy machine, laminator, and playground equipment, and to organize volunteer activities and recognition events.

● *Include students in meetings with parents*: Have students participate in some way in the meeting with parents. This provides additional incentives for families to attend together.

Effects of Volunteering

Students

- Skills in communicating with adults
- Skills that are tutored or taught by volunteers
- Awareness of many skills, talents, occupations, and contributions of parents and other volunteers

Parents

- Understanding the teacher's job
- Self-confidence about ability to work in school and with children
- Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school
- Specific skills of volunteer work
- Use of school activities at home
- Enrollment in programs to improve own education

Schools

- Organization, training, and use of volunteers
- Readiness to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school
- Awareness of parents' talents and interests in school and children
- Individual attention to students because of help from volunteers

(National Network of Partnership Schools; Strengthening Parent Involvement Toolkit; Supporting Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Your School)

Chapter 8

Type Four of Family Involvement : Learning at Home

Type Four of Family Involvement: Learning at Home

This type of partnership shows the most promise for increasing student achievement. When families are involved in their child's learning at home, children's academic achievement increases. Successful family involvement programming addresses schools' partnership in families' learning-at-home routines.

The Issues and Challenges of Enhancing Learning at Home Are:

- *Expectations*: Parents are often unaware of the teacher's and the school's expectations of students.

- *Curriculum-related decisions*: Schools generally have not developed strategies to involve parents in curriculum-related decisions.

- *Clear communication between teachers and parents*: Strategies will need to be developed to overcome children's tendencies toward not discussing their homework requirements with their parents.

- *Teacher preparation time*: Teachers will need time to prepare homework assignments and projects that truly engage students, promote higher levels of learning, and productively involve parents.

- *Busy family schedules*: Schools will need to work through the issues of busy family schedules, single parent homes, and children switching between homes.

The Benefits of Enhancing Learning at Home Are:

- *Parental understanding*: Parents will understand the material their children are responsible for knowing.

- *Attainment of learning goals*: Parents can assist their children with attainment of learning goals.

- *Positive attitude*: Students develop a more positive attitude about homework.

Strategies for Enhancing Learning at Home

- *Make parent support at home an important topic*: At the beginning of the school year, old discussions about parent support at home. This can be done at open houses, back-to-school nights, in school newsletters, at parent meetings, and during parent-teacher conferences.

- *Encourage parents*: Ask parents to spend at least 30 minutes a day working with their children, reading all student work and newsletters.

● *Develop a reading contract*: The reading contract will be for reading goals and expectations and will be signed by the teacher, parent and student.

● *Teach parents how to support homework activities*: Provide an adequate and organized workspace, create a daily routine, ask learning-based questions and offer incentives.

● *Make expectation and actions explicit and offer training*: Provide families with information on homework policies, how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home, and how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.

● *Engage families in goal-setting*: Involve families in school and program goal setting each year and evaluate regularly. Promote family participation in helping students set academic goals each year and plan for college or work.

● *Offer suggestions to parents*: Suggest informal ways to strengthen children's reading and math skills by playing games like cribbage, Scrabble, or rummy. Suggest ways they can help children make connections between schoolwork and the world. In addition, give parents guidelines to follow as they assist their children with school projects.

● *Have family reading, math, or science nights at school*: Give parents practical and fun ideas on how to work with their children at home.

● *Develop learning activities for families to use in the car*: Families spend a great deal of time going to or from places together. Offer parents suggestions on ways to make outings fun learning experiences.

● *Have a library of games that students can check out*: Encourage them to play with a family member at home. Games that reinforce literacy and math skills will also provide opportunities for interaction among family members.

● *Help families celebrate successes*: Offer parents suggestions about ways they can praise their children and celebrate their academic achievements.

● *Establish a homework hotline*: Offer parents a homework hotline that they can call to identify assignments, due dates, and ways to get help with homework questions.

● *Ask parents for input on homework assignments*:

Ask questions such as:

- Was this assignment appropriate for your child's ability level?
- Did your child have problems completing this homework?

- Do you have any questions or concerns about your child's homework?

- *Foster year-found learning*: Develop summer learning packets or activities.

Effects of Learning at Home

Students

- Skills, abilities, and tests scores linked to homework and classwork
- Homework completion
- Positive attitude about homework and school
- View of parent as more similar to teacher and of home as more similar to school
- Self-confidence in ability as learner

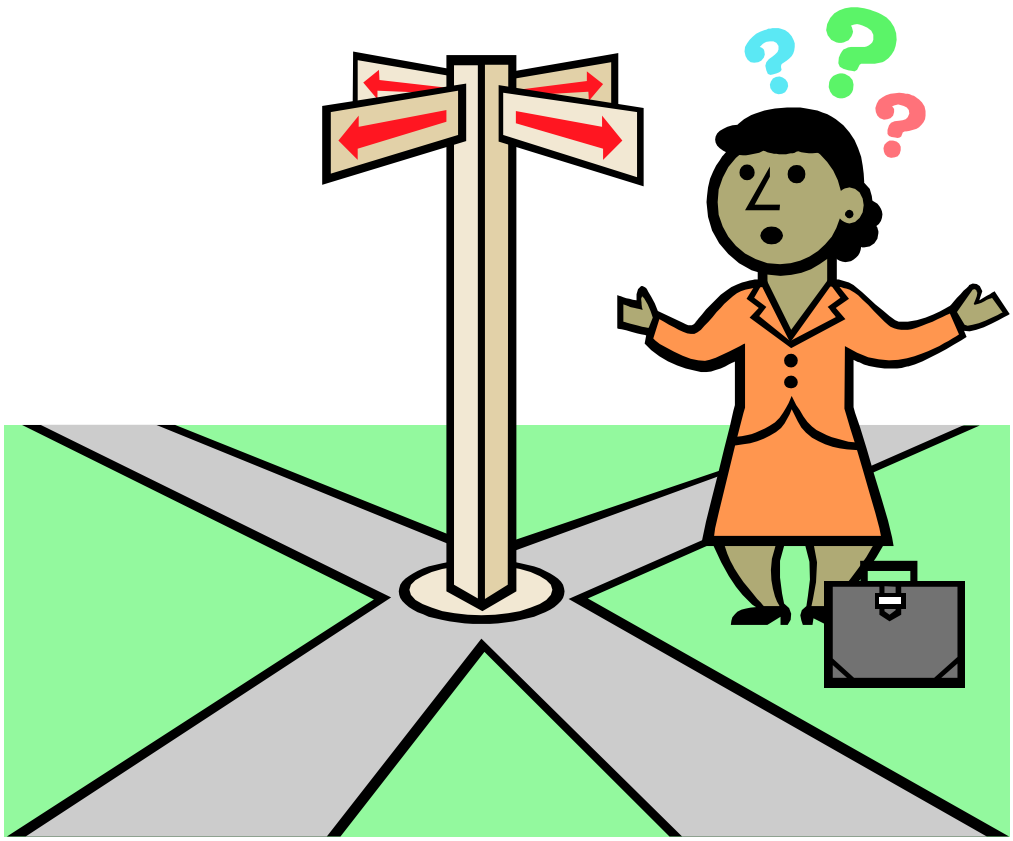
Parents

- Knowledge of how to support, encourage, and help student at home each year
- Discussions of school, classwork, homework, and future plans
- Understanding of instructional program and what child is learning in each subject
- Appreciation of teacher's skill
- Awareness of child as a learner

Schools

- Varied designs of homework, including interactive assignments
- Respect of family time
- Recognition of helpfulness of single-parent, dual-income, and all families in motivating and reinforcing student learning
- Satisfaction with family involvement and support

(National Network of Partnership Schools; Strengthening Parent Involvement Toolkit; Supporting Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Your School)



Chapter 9

Type Five of Family Involvement : Increasing Parents' Participation in Decision-making and Leadership Roles

Type Five of Family Involvement:
Increasing Parents' Participation in Decision-making and Leadership Roles

Schools benefit when they include parents in the decision-making process. When parents provide their opinions and preferences regarding issues under consideration, they are more likely to buy-in to school policies and initiatives. When parents are aware of the complexities of running a school, they are often more supportive. Additionally, parents can help the school reach out to other parents, share ideas, and gather input because they have informal access through extra-curricular activities and neighborhood connections.

The Issues and Challenges to Increasing the Number of Parents in Decision-making and Leadership Roles Are:

- *Key roles*: Offering parents key roles in the school decision-making process.

- *Inclusive representation*: Assembling a representative group of parents from all the racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school.

- *Leadership training*: Offering parents training on how to serve effectively as leaders and parent representatives.

- *Time constraints*: Developing strategies for overcoming parent and staff time constraints that interfere with arranging meetings.

- *School data*: Making school data understandable and available to teachers and parents so that they can make informed decisions.

- *Resistance issues*: Developing strategies for working through staff resistance to change, turf issues, and power struggles.

The Benefits of Increasing the Number of Parents in Decision-making and Leadership Roles Are:

- *Parents are more supportive*: When parents are involved in leadership and Decision-making roles, they become more supportive of the school's efforts and they have a better understanding of school issues and priorities.

- *Schools are more aware*: By involving parents in leadership and Decision-making roles, schools are more aware of parents' perspectives.

- *Funding issues*: Involved parents are more supportive of school funding issues.

Strategies for Increasing the Number of Parents in Decision-making and Leadership Roles

● *Make decisions after surveying comprehensive data*: Study data on student and family characteristics, academic achievement, and parents' opinions and willingness to support proposals for change.

● *Offer leadership training*: Bring in a trainer or develop a leadership training workshop which is offered to both parents and staff.

● *Create strategic opportunities for parents to become involved*: Develop thoughtful and intentional plans and opportunities for all parents to participate in school leadership and decision-making, including site council, federal Title program teams, PTA/PTO, minority parent advisory, program development and evaluation teams, grant writing and fundraising.

● *Do a parent check-in*: Before there is an urgent need to make decisions about vandalism, violence, and drug and alcohol issues, check in with parents. Discuss these problems before a crisis occurs. This offers parents an opportunity to play an active role in these very critical areas.

● *Deal with conflict promptly*: Explore the issues with a neutral facilitator who will help set boundaries for the discussion and guide parties in developing common purposes, methods for working together, and timelines and check-in points to make sure that the resolution is achieved.

● *At the end of meetings, do an "ABC" evaluation*:

  ○ What **action** will you take as a result of the meeting?

  ○ What was the **best** part of this meeting?

  ○ What **concerns** do you have?

● *Recognize parents for their efforts*: Recognize all of the efforts made by parents who serve on school advisory committees and in other decision-making roles. This will not only give credit where credit is due; it will help other parents to know who is representing them.

● *Award one parent a stipend*: Have that parent contact other parents, welcome new parents to the school, help resolve conflicts between the home and school, and actively seek parents' opinions and support.

Effects of Decision-making and Leadership Practices

Students

- Awareness of representation of families in school decisions
- Understanding that student rights are protected
- Specific benefits linked to policies enacted by parent organizations

Parents

- Input into policies that affect children's education
- Feeling of ownership of school
- Awareness of parents' voices in school decisions
- Shared experiences and connections with other families
- Awareness of school, district, and state policies

Schools

- Awareness of perspectives of families in policy development and school decisions
- Acceptance of equality of family representatives on school committees and in leadership roles

(National Network of Partnership Schools; Strengthening Parent Involvement Toolkit; Supporting Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Your School)

Chapter 10

Type Six of Family Involvement : Collaborating With the Community

Type Six of Family Involvement: Collaborating With the Community

Schools are increasingly looking to community collaboration to meet the educational needs of children. "Community" means not only the neighborhoods where students' homes and schools are located, but also all neighborhoods or locations that influence their learning and development. Community includes not only families with children in the schools, but also all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education. Communities are rated not only by low or high social or economic qualities, but also by strengths and talents available to support students, families, and schools. Building better connections to meet the needs of children and further the goals of school reform starts with effective school and community partnerships.

The Issues and Challenges of Improving Community Collaborations Are:

- *Improving communication within the community*: Often community members are not aware of the positive things happening in a school, so schools will want to help community partners understand the value of school/community partnerships.

- *Determining roles*: Addressing "turf" problems of roles, responsibilities, funds, and places for collaborative activities.

- *Reaching all families*: Informing all families and students about community programs and services.

- *Matching community contributions with school goals*: Clearly illustrating how communities can contribute to achieving school goals.

- *Making positive connections*: Matching business and community volunteers and resources with school goals.

- *Integrating child and family services with education*: Working closely with the agencies and service providers that deal with parents and families to assure equal opportunities for services and that information about community resources is provided in appropriate languages.

- *Ensuring equity*: Assuring equal opportunities for students and families to obtain services or participate in community programs.

- *Establishing clear policies about the importance of confidentiality*: It is important for all parties to have a clear understanding of the school policies concerning confidentiality.

- *Extending the use of school buildings*: Providing neighborhoods with a place to hold activities, thereby elevating the status of schools within the community.

***The Benefits of Improving Community Collaborations Are**:*

- *Schools feel they are getting help from multiple sources*: With the support of their communities, schools can accomplish their goals, which in turn, can result in more community support for increased school funding.

- *Communities can unite around the shared responsibility of educating youth, and schools are able to expand the number of positive role models*: Community partners can offer varied mentoring experiences to students.

- *Community businesses can make people aware of their support for schools and families*: Businesses can benefit from the positive public relations of working closely with schools.

Strategies to Improve Community Collaborations

- *Convene at least three meetings a year*: Invite all agencies and community partners who serve students or families within the school populations. Ask everyone to come prepared to talk briefly about who they serve, what is their mission, and with whom they are already partnering. Create a plan for working together, along with check-in points to assure progress is occurring.

- *Ask all who participate in meetings to evaluate progress and identify obstacles*: Ask questions such as:

  - Does the work provide further opportunities to share resources and reach more families?

  - Was the meeting an opportunity to expand possibilities?

  - How can future meetings be more productive?

- *Get feedback and ideas to improve outreach to families*: When community-based organizations meet to discuss programs and services they are providing to families, use the opportunity to discuss any ideas they may have about improving outreach to families.

- *Create linkages*: Provide accessible information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services.

- *Streamline service coordination*: Develop "one-stop" shopping for family services through partnerships of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.

- *Invite the community into the work*: Develop relevant, strong and meaningful school-business partnerships.

● *Invite businesses to school events*: Extend invitations to businesses for events such as performances and recognition celebrations. This gives businesses the opportunity to be a part of the school's life and promotes long-lasting partnerships.

● *Publicly acknowledge partnerships*: Partnerships can be acknowledged through newsletters and signs at the school. The goal is to make partnerships more visible.

● *Mention generosity frequently and prominently*: When businesses agree to assist the school by making donations, providing staff, or helping in other ways, be sure to acknowledge their contributions.

● *Write thank you notes*: Have students write thank you notes to businesses that contribute to the school.

● *Develop community service opportunities*: Provide service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g., recycling projects; art, music, drama, and activities for senior citizens; tutoring or coaching programs).

● *Increase engagement*: Develop opportunities for participation of alumni in school programs for students.

Effects of Community Collaboration Practices

Students

- Skills and talents from enriched curricular and extracurricular experiences
- Knowledge and exploration of careers and options for future education and work
- Self-confidence and feeling value and belonging in the community
- Positive relationships with adults in the community

Parents

- Knowledge and use of local resources to increase skills and talents or to obtain needed services
- Interactions with other families in community activities
- Awareness of community's contributions to the school
- Participation in activities to strengthen the community

Schools

- Knowledge and use of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction

- Skill in working with mentors, business partners, community volunteers, and others to assist students and teaching practice

- Knowledge of referral processes for families and children with needs for specific services

(National Network of Partnership Schools; Strengthening Parent Involvement Toolkit; Supporting Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Your School)

Chapter 11

Engaging Parents of Students With Disabilities

Letter from Nancy Latini, Assistant Superintendent

There is no doubt that all students, including students with disabilities, experience greater school success when their parents are actively involved in school matters. There is no doubt that schools welcome parent involvement and that schools know that collaboration with parents makes schooling more valuable for all involved.

For parents and families who have children with disabilities, and those representing diverse populations, the work of schools to actively engage parents in school matters may be a challenge. There may be times when students with disabilities or students who speak a language other than English are placed in school programs which are not in their neighborhoods, leaving parents to either have children in many different schools or at least in unfamiliar neighborhoods. There may be other times when parents are well aware that their child with a disability poses unique challenges to the school and are thus hesitant to engage in school activities.

To accomplish full and meaningful parental involvement requires creative thinking and understanding of the unique situations in which these parents and families of diverse populations might find themselves. While the challenges do exist, there are indications that the strategies to engage these parents work for all parents; and not just those representing unique circumstances.

The arena of special education specifies times when parents are required to participate in decision making events for their child. This alone does not equal full and meaningful parental participation. This alone equals only compliance with the federal special education law. Schools and parents deserve more. They deserve time to engage in planning and creating strategies to enhance the educational and instructional opportunities offered to all students.

Nancy J. Latini
Assistant Superintendent
Office of Student Learning & Partnerships

Parent Participation in the Special Education Process According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004)

In December 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized. The reauthorization of IDEA continued the tradition of requiring schools to include parents in all aspects of the special education process. IDEA 2004 sets the minimum requirements for parent involvement (see Parent Participation in the Special Education Process) at each stage. IDEA 2004 also includes the definition of a "parent" for the purposes of the special education process.

According to IDEA 2004, a parent is considered one of the following:

- Natural, adoptive, or foster parent of a child (unless a foster parent is prohibited by state law from serving as a parent) – Oregon allows for this;
- Guardian, but not the state (DHS or other state agency);
- Individual acting in the place of a parent (e.g. grandparent, stepparent, or other relative) with whom the child lives;
- Individual legally responsible for the child's welfare;
- Surrogate:
    - The judge overseeing the welfare of a child who is a ward of the state may appoint a surrogate parent for the child.
        - A foster child, but not foster children with foster parents who meet the definition of "parent";
        - A child who, as determined by the state where the child resides, is a ward of the state;
        - A child in the custody of a public child welfare agency.
    - Districts must appoint surrogate parents for unaccompanied homeless youths ("not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian").

New Source of Local Data to Measure Program Effectiveness

One of the major changes to IDEA 2004 is the way that states must report data to the US Department of Education. The State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Reports require public reporting at the state and district level on a number of indicators, including parent involvement. Beginning with the 2005-2006 school year, the Oregon Department of Education's Office of Student Learning & Partnerships must collect and report data regarding the "percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving service and results for children with disabilities." Data for this indicator will be collected using a survey developed by the National Center for Special Education Accountability and Monitoring. The survey will be sent to a sample of parents of students with disabilities in each district for the 2005-2006 school year.

Parent Participation* in the Special Education Process

	Identification / Eligibility	Evaluation Planning	IEP / Provision of FAPE	Placement
Opportunity to Participate in Meetings	Yes.			
Meeting Required (see link below – Written Agreements Between the Parent and the District)	Not specifically required. Parent & District may agree not to conduct a 3-year re-evaluation.	Not specifically required. Parent & District may agree not to conduct a 3-year re-evaluation.	Yes, but IEP team members may be excused from the meeting and revisions may be made without a meeting.	Yes, but IEP team members may be excused from the meeting and revisions may be made without a meeting.
Prior Written Notice (purpose, time, location, who will attend, may invite others)	Yes (written).	If meeting conducted, yes (written).	Yes (written).	Yes (written).
Mutually Agreed Upon Time and Place	Not specifically required.		Yes.	
Provide Interpreter (if needed)	Yes.			
Other Methods to Ensure Participation ff Parent Does Not Attend	Not specifically required.		If neither parent can attend, use other methods to ensure parent participation, including individual or conference calls or home visits.	
Meet without the Parent	Yes, as long as parents have been given written notice of the meeting sufficiently in advance to ensure that one or both parents have an opportunity to participate.		Yes, but must make and document attempts to arrange mutually agreeable time and place for the meeting.	
Give Parent Copy	Copy of evaluation report and documentation of eligibility.	Parent gets copy of prior written notice/consent if evaluation needed, or notice of no evaluation if not needed.	Copy of IEP (including placement determination) at no cost to the parent.	
Notice of Procedural Safeguards (see links below)	At initial referral.	Once a year and/or upon request.		

*This chart represents the **minimum** requirements for parent participation in the special education process.

Recommended Strategies/Activities for Increasing Involvement of Parents of Students with Disabilities

While the information in this toolkit is relevant for all parents, including parents of students with disabilities, involving this group of parents in their children's education poses different challenges that can be addressed through several means. The activities and strategies that follow should be implemented in tandem with other efforts at the school and district level to increase and improve family involvement.

Strategy #1 – Create a School/District Advisory Council for Special Education

Rationale: The creation of a special education advisory council can give parents of students with disabilities a voice in how the school or district operates its special education programs. It can also improve communication between the school or district and the parents, thereby increasing parental support for the school/district and reducing the likelihood of costly litigation.

Implementation Steps – Questions that must be answered:

1. What is the purpose of the group?

2. Is the group formed at the school or district level?

3. Who should be included in the group? (e.g., parents, current or former student on an IEP, Special Education Director, school administrator, regular education teacher, special education teacher, school counselor, representatives from outside agencies, etc.) If the group is a district level council, representation from all schools/levels of schools depending on the size of the district is recommended.

4. How large is too large? What percent of the council should be parents? (e.g., over 50%)

5. How will group members be selected? How will parent members be recruited?

6. How long will members serve? (e.g., one year, two years, etc.)

7. Who will the group report to? (e.g., Special Education Director, Principal, School Board, PTA/PTO, Site Council, etc.)

8. What kind of support will be provided? (e.g., meeting place, refreshments, printing, web-page, e-mail, etc.)

9. Where, when, and for how long will the group meet?

10. How often will the group meet? (e.g., monthly, quarterly)

11. How will the group know when it has accomplished its goals?

Strategy #2 – Create a Mentor Parent Program

Rationale: Parents who are new to the special education process and system need support and understanding from people who are in their situation. A mentor parent program could pair parents who are familiar with the process with parents who are new to the system. These mentor parents could offer tips, hints, guidance, and support for parents new to the special education world. This would alleviate some of the fear and confusion that can accompany the news that a parent has a child with a disability.

Implementation Steps:

1. Determine need for program. (e.g., survey parents, conduct focus groups, etc.)

2. Determine who will be responsible for program development and implementation. (e.g., Special Education Advisory Council, Special Education Director, PTA/PTO, etc.)

3. What kind of support will be needed? (e.g., meeting space, web-page, printing, mailing, stipends for mentors, etc.)

4. Recruit parents interested in becoming mentors.

5. Bring potential mentors together for a planning meeting.

6. Set program goals. (e.g., number of mentors, number of parents served, increased satisfaction, etc.)

7. Establish working parameters for the program that address issues of confidentiality.

8. Establish procedures for informing new parents about the availability of mentors.

9. Establish procedures for pairing mentors with new parents.

10. Establish procedures for mentor parents' work with new parents (including training needs).

11. Establish procedures for resolving conflict between mentors and new parents. (e.g., assigning new mentor, retraining mentor, facilitate a discussion to resolve the conflict, etc.)

12. Establish procedures and timelines for new parents to become mentor parents.

13. Implement the program and conduct ongoing evaluation. (e.g., collect data on how many mentors are available, how many parents are served, etc.)

14. Revise program as necessary.

Strategy #3 – Create a Parent Transition Program

Rationale: Transitions for parents of students with disabilities can be extremely stressful. Education in general and special education in particular have numerous transition points. Many of these transition points are predictable and can be made easier for parents with some advanced planning and information sharing.

Implementation Steps:

1. Convene a group of interested stakeholders representing all levels. (e.g., parents, administrators, special education teachers, general education teachers, school counselors, representatives from outside agencies, etc.)

2. Determine transition points in your school system. (e.g., pre-school – kindergarten, elementary – middle, middle – high, high – post-secondary, etc.)

3. Determine programs and activities that are already in place to help parents with their students' transitions. (e.g., kindergarten round-up, open-house, preview days, informational sessions on financial aid/scholarships for college, etc.)

4. Evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs and identify gaps/needs.

5. Develop activities at each stage that address the specific differences in the special education program and process at each level.

Strategy #4 – Offer Community Education Courses

Rationale: Parents of students with disabilities have unique needs and interests regarding topics for learning. In addition to all of the general parenting classes that may be offered by the district or community organizations, parents of students with disabilities may be interested in classes specific to the disability that their children have, the special education process, and resources available to them and their children.

Implementation Steps:

1. Convene a group of interested stakeholders. (e.g., parents, advisory council members, Special Education Director, school administrator, regular education teachers, special education teachers, specialists, school counselor, representatives from outside agencies, etc.)

2. Determine the need and interest for community education. (e.g., number of interested parents and staff members, topics of interest, etc.)

3. Determine the support needed for the program. (e.g., child care, refreshments, meeting rooms, course materials, web-site, mailings, registration, stipends for speakers, etc.)

4. Locate possible speakers for topics of interest. (e.g., experienced parents, district personnel with expertise in the topic area, representatives from parent organizations, representatives from health care, representatives from mental health, representatives from disability rights groups, etc.)

5. Offer classes based on interest and availability of the speaker on a regular basis. (e.g., monthly, quarterly, etc.)

6. Evaluate the courses and instructors by gathering feedback from the participants at the end of each class.

7. Make adjustments to the program and courses as necessary.

The four strategies described above have the ability to stand alone and improve the participation, involvement, and satisfaction of parents of students with disabilities. If, however, multiple strategies are implemented in concert, the effect will be even more powerful.

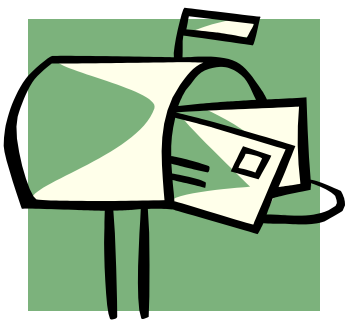
Chapter 12

Reaching Out to Families

Reaching Out to Families

Early Fall Mailings

The beginning of the school year is a key time to communicate with parents. Some will be new to the school. All will want to know what to expect from schools and new teachers, and how they can help their children learn. Some of this information can easily be mailed to parents or other responsible family members.



Welcome Letters

Welcome letters are generally sent home by teachers at the beginning of the school year or when a new student enrolls. Some items for these letters might include:

- A list of basic subjects and broad plans for the year
- A list of materials the child will need for class
- A phone number and time when the teacher can be reached
- A sincere invitation to share concerns and provide assistance to parents as they help their child with school work

Remember to use clear, simple language and short sentences that avoid education jargon so all can understand.

Information Packets

These materials can be distributed at open houses in the fall. Schools often mail these items to all parents who do not pick them up at the open house.

- School handbooks and information sheets can contain updated lists of school policies and special programs. They also can contain services offered by the school and telephone numbers of school officials, parent leaders, and room parents.
- If the school, district, or community has a school-home connection through a local cable channel, e-mail, or homework hotline, highlight how it can be easily accessed.

Calendars

Monthly or annual calendars highlight upcoming school events and meetings. Here are some tips for calendar preparation:

- Calendars can be designed to be posted conveniently on the refrigerator door. Some include ideas for each day on ways families can help children learn. For example, "Have your child identify the items in the kitchen that are square, oblong, and triangular."

- Television programs or movies that the family may enjoy together can be noted.

- Upcoming community events for families can be listed.

- Supplements with more information and event schedules can be mailed later.

Home-School Handbooks

The home-school handbook provides families with a handy information packet about the school. Handbooks help parents understand school policies and programs and become aware of the ways they and their children can be involved in the school.

Content

A home-school handbook serves as the school's calling card, establishing a tone for its relations with its families. It also serves as parents' yellow pages, providing all the basic information they need. But make sure all phone numbers, dates, and locations are up to date. Handbooks can contain the following:

- Statement of school goals and philosophy.

- Discipline policy and code.

- Operations and procedures regarding

    - grades and pupil progress reports;

    - absence and tardiness;

    - how to inquire about student difficulties;

    - emergency procedures for weather and other events; and

- transportation schedules and provisions for after school activities.

- Special programs at the school such as after-school enrichment or child care programs

- Parent involvement policies and practices at the school, with items that describe

  - "Bill of Rights" for parents;

  - "Code of Responsibilities" for parents;

  - open house and parent-teacher conferences; and

  - involvement opportunities such as volunteer programs, advisory councils, and PTAs.

- A calendar of major school events throughout the year: holidays, vacations, regular PTA meetings, report card periods, open houses, and other regularly scheduled school-home contacts.

- Names and phone numbers of key school contact people.

- Names and phone numbers of parent leaders (e.g., members of advisory councils, key people in parent organizations, and room parents.)

- A tear-off response form allowing parents to ask questions, voice concerns, and volunteer at the school.

The handbook could be distributed at schoolwide gatherings such as open house and parent-teacher meetings, or through the mail to those who do not attend. The main idea is to get the handbook to everyone early in the school year and discuss it briefly if possible when it is presented. While it is tempting to include as much information as possible, avoid making a handbook too long; otherwise many parents will put it aside.

Handbook Preparation

Handbooks that are prepared collaboratively by administrators, teachers, and parents are able to reflect the interests of each group. If administrators develop the book, they may want to ask teachers, parent groups, student associations, and others to review it in draft form.

Other tips for successful handbook preparation:

- Use clear, simple language that avoids educational jargon.

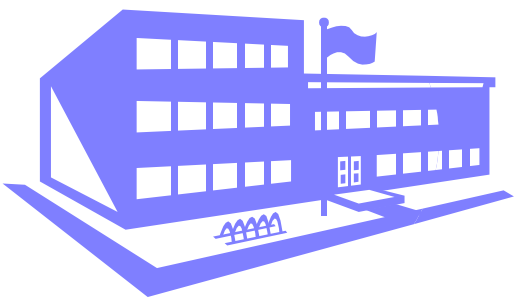
- Use in-service days to familiarize staff with the handbook so they can be effective in using it with parents.

- Translate the handbook into the languages spoken by school parents.

- Make sure teachers, and parent and student leaders approve of and understand the content of the handbook.

Open House

Schools need to share information about their programs with all parents. One widespread approach is the open house. It is a great way to welcome all families to the school. The open house works best if schools:



- Hold them just once or twice a year.

- Schedule them at times of low "calendar conflict."

- Attend to the 3 P's--publicity, planning, and preparation.

Publicity

A carefully thought-out publicity campaign is essential to success. The open house should be scheduled about a month after classes start so that teachers are somewhat familiar with their students, and there is time to contact all parents. Districts need to hold their schools' open houses on different evenings so parents with children in more than one school and teachers who have school-age children can attend each open house.

The most important element in success is to set an expectation among all students that their parents will attend. The following strategies may be helpful in a publicity campaign:

- Have students design personal invitations to the event for their parents.

- Mail every parent an invitation from the school which explains in detail the event and what parents can expect to learn.

- Note on the invitation the transportation and child care arrangements that the school will provide.

- Hang posters developed by classes of students in local grocery stores, banks, and the public library.

- Set aside time for teachers and parent volunteers to call all parents, particularly new parents, a day or so before the event to personally invite them.

- Use the loud speaker to remind all children on the day of the event that the school staff is eager to meet their parents that evening at the open house.

Planning

Open houses are successful when they meet the real needs of parents. The best way to insure success is to involve parents in the planning process. Open house programs could include:

- A welcoming session, led by the principal, introducing the teaching staff and the school's philosophy.

- A tour of the school.

- Time for parents to meet in their children's classrooms and hear about the year's curriculum and the teachers' expectations. Encourage parents to try some of the student activities.

- A chance to meet and talk with children's teachers. Make sure parents have enough time to ask questions.

- Open houses can also include an opportunity for teachers to:

    - demonstrate some of the activities which will take place in their classrooms;

    - describe the kinds of assistance they would like from parents; and

    - give parents a chance to ask questions about the upcoming school year.

Preparation

The school will want to convey a warm and inviting atmosphere to parents and insure that teacher and staff presentations are informative and enjoyable. The administrative team can contribute to the success of the open house by:

- arranging to direct parents with clearly marked signs and support staff around the building;

- making sure arrangements for child care and transportation run smoothly;

- providing translators for parents who do not speak English;

- arranging for a display table that has copies of the school's annual report, handbooks, discipline codes, and other items of interest to parents;

- requesting art classes to prepare a welcome sign for parents and put art work all around the school;

- requesting that bulletin boards are bright and up-to-date; and

- encouraging band and chorus classes to play and sing in small groups around the school before and after the open house activities.

Teachers can help by:

- making clear, brief presentations about the curriculum and teacher expectations;

- preparing handouts for parents that reinforce their presentations and involve parents in a typical interesting class activity; and

- increasing parent enjoyment of the open house with techniques such as

    - displaying unfinished student work to give parents a sneak preview of what's in store for their children;

    - giving parents a chance to complete a few of the activities on which their children have been working; and

    - inviting children to conduct a few learning activities with their parents.

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Special Practices and Programs

This set of strategies includes some rather new and uncommon approaches to reaching all parents. One is resource centers in schools. In an informal setting they can provide parents with materials to help children learn more, offer space for personal and small class meetings, and help link parents to the school and community resources. Informal school-family gatherings around simple meals or refreshments with teachers and principals and neighborhood coffees are other ways to help create a welcoming atmosphere around schools. While parent workshops are widely used, the ideas

presented here will help make them more effective. The final set of strategies shows ways of reducing some common obstacles to involvement among families of secondary students.

Parent Resource Centers

Parent resource centers in schools can support parents as both learners and teachers. These centers provide materials and a space where parents can get together with other parents and school staff to learn how to assist in their children's at-home learning. Parents can come to such a center for educational materials, training, informal meetings, and even for referral to other community services.

Parent resource centers may contain:

- information about current school programs and events;
- reading materials to help parents guide their children's learning;
- games, books, and videos that parents can use with children at home, as well as toys and books for visiting pre-school children;
- a paid aide or volunteer who provides parents with instruction in subject areas and in using learning materials;
- a place where parents can "fill prescriptions" written by teachers for specific educational materials to be used at home;
- "Parents Corner" with comfortable furniture where parents can talk with other parents and teachers who come into the center; and
- an exchange box where parents and teachers can drop off unwanted books, toys, and surplus household items and take or borrow them for their own use.

Parent resource centers send a very positive message to parents that they belong in the school and should feel welcome in it. Some have a coffee machine and other amenities to reinforce the welcome. Many have donated furnishings and equipment.

These centers can be used for a variety of purposes:

- meeting space for parent groups and workshops;
- an informal location for individual parent-teacher or parent-principal discussions;
- lounges and "waiting rooms" for parents in school on other business;
- recruiting tutors and classroom volunteers; and

- information and guidance about higher education opportunities, cultural and community services and agencies to help families with educational, health, and social service needs.

A parent resource center can be created in a spare classroom or a corner of a school library. The center will need some staffing by a paid aide, parent/community volunteer, or a rotating teacher.

Principals and central administration staff can encourage teachers working with parents to develop at-home learning activities as part of their curriculum. Principals and teachers may want to devote several professional development sessions to this task. Schools can also provide clerical and printing assistance to teachers who develop materials for parents.

Informal School-Family Gatherings

Individual teachers and school staff can create ways to involve families in significant gatherings at school or nearby in more informal settings than the open house or parent-teacher conference. Schools have found the following approaches useful:

Grade Level Sessions

Individual teachers or groups of teachers from the same grade level have invited their parents to an educational event geared especially for them. Topics of interest to parents might include the following:

- instruction on the computers their children are using in school;
- an introduction to a series of home-learning activities for use with their children;
- handling negative peer pressure, discipline, drugs; and
- getting ready for college.

Meet With the Principal

School principals have hosted monthly or bimonthly luncheons in the school cafeteria. These luncheons let parents engage in informal conversations with the principal and each other and can be organized schoolwide, by grade level, or by interest areas such as arts, special needs students, and advisory councils. Some principals also hold open hours when any parent can drop into their office.

Breakfast With the Teacher

Some teachers have invited parents to bring their children to school on a selected day and stay for an informal potluck breakfast. Parent volunteers help teachers organize these breakfasts which give parents an opportunity to meet with the teacher and with each other.

Neighborhood Coffees

Neighborhood coffees organized jointly by school staff and parents are held in homes, community centers, or other convenient locations. Some parents feel more comfortable meeting there than in schools. These get-togethers are designed to give a small group of parents an informal opportunity to talk with school staff about issues affecting their children. For example, neighborhood coffees might be organized for parents of sixth-grade children who will soon be going to junior high to share ideas on helping them with this important transition.

Parent Workshops

Parent education can include activities, workshops, and materials that give parents skills or experiences to help them as parents and as individuals. Successful parent workshops require careful planning and implementation. The following step-by-step process provides ideas that schools have found effective.

Assess Parent Needs

Successful, well-attended parent workshops respond to the specific needs of parents rather than what schools assume they need. Determining the interests of parents requires a broad-based needs assessment. There are several approaches:

- *Surveys*: Questionnaires can be sent directly to all parents at the beginning of the school year. They can suggest topic areas to parents or can ask them to recommend areas of interest.

- *Home Visits*: These visits provide an opportunity for workshop coordinators to develop programs based on personal, in-depth conversations with parents.

- *Informal Methods*: There are other relatively quick and easy ways to gather ideas about the interests and needs of parents. Parents can be polled at all-school meetings, parent conferences, and advisory council meetings. Parents who use a resource room and parent aides are a good source of information.

Identify Resources

Once parent needs have been identified, schools look for resources to speak to these needs either internally or from outside agencies. Resources could come from universities, businesses, social service agencies, regional education centers, and other school systems. Depending on the topic, workshop leaders could include:

- *Specialists*: physicians, lawyers, speech therapists, and social workers.

- *Skilled Parents*: members of the parent group or the community who have the skills to train other parents.

- *Practitioners*: staff of community agencies and health clinics; members of church groups and volunteer groups; paraprofessionals.

- *Educators*: university professors, teachers, school or district staff, and community educators.

Recruit Participants

Parents need to be both informed and have their interest aroused. Advance notice of upcoming workshops with note of transportation and child care services is essential for parents to plan their schedules.

- *Written Materials*: A parent newsletter can include articles on upcoming workshops and can be followed up with flyers that remind parents of the date, time, place, and topic of the workshop. Recruitment announcements should be circulated in all languages spoken by parents at the school and posted in strategic locations such as neighborhood centers, churches, supermarkets, and laundromats.

- *Home Visits*: Personal contacts appeal to parents, especially if the visitor is a member of the community and speaks the language of the parent. Schools also inform parents about workshops and encourage their participation during regular home visits by parent liaisons and school staff.

- *Telephone Networking*: When all parents of children at the school have telephones, schools have used telephone trees to contact and recruit parents. Some parents call a few other parents, and they in turn are asked to call others from a master list.

- *Announcements at Meetings*: The school's open house, PTA meetings, advisory council sessions, and parent room gatherings provide good opportunities. Neighborhood centers, adult learning centers, churches, and other community institutions may also be willing to announce parent workshops.

Provide Support Services

Strategies that make it easier for all parents to attend include:

- organizing on-site child care;
- reimbursing parents for child care costs;
- helping parents form carpools;
- reimbursing for bus fare;
- providing a school bus or shuttle to the workshop; and
- opening parent rooms. Some schools support parent education activities by providing permanent space for parent gatherings. In these parent rooms, parents can meet with other parents, use resource materials, and learn about other programs and services of the school.

Evaluate Success

Schools with strong parent education programs assess their activities to see whether they were successful, how they might be modified, and what activities should be added. Two useful ways to evaluate programs are:

- *Evaluation Forms*: After each session, parents can be asked to fill out a short evaluation form. This form can include questions such as:
    - What was the most useful?
    - What was the least useful?
    - What other information would you like a workshop to cover?
    - What kinds of workshop experiences would you like in the future?
- *Group Discussion*: After some workshops, parents are asked to share their thoughts about the effectiveness of the session. They can be asked questions similar to those that would be on an evaluation form or can have a free form discussion.

Secondary School Strategies

Research and experience indicate that parent participation falls off in the upper grades. Secondary schools can reduce some common obstacles to family involvement that stem from the organization and curriculum of the school, and help parents cope with the challenges of adolescence.

Welcome Parents

One set of obstacles stems from the sheer size and layout of many secondary schools which make them less than visitor friendly. Schools can become more friendly to visitors in these ways:

- Place clearly marked signs on the outside of the building showing where to enter.
- Instruct guards or other monitors to welcome parents who enter the building and assist them in finding their way.
- Expect office staff to assist parents in a prompt and friendly fashion.
- Rethink the wording of signs that command outsiders to "report to the office" on arrival.
- Create a welcome sign for parents in the entryway, and repeat it in all the languages spoken by families of the students.

Promote Closer Relationships

Another obstacle to family involvement is that students typically have many teachers. Parents can find it difficult to know which teacher to contact. Rarely does any one staff member have a complete picture of each student, except perhaps the guidance counselor. But they often have a heavy caseload of students, making it difficult to know each well.

Some secondary schools are reorganizing in ways that increase teachers' ability to form relationships with parents and students. Secondary schools can encourage family involvement in these ways:

- Create smaller units within the school through "clusters," "houses," schools-within-schools, and other organizational devices.
- Keep the same counselors throughout the high school years so that students have an ongoing relationship with at least one individual at the school.
- Create teams of teachers who stay with students for more than one year.

- Schedule periods for teaching teams to meet with each other to discuss students they all teach and how to build continuing relationships between the school and families.

Reach Out to Specific Groups

Secondary schools are attempting to reach out to special groups of families to address their specific needs:

- Meetings for limited-English parents with translators for major school meetings and parent-teacher conferences.

- Meetings for parents of students who want to attend college to discuss college options and financial aid programs.

- Meetings to describe options available in vocational-technical and work-study programs and career planning generally.

Explain the Curriculum

The secondary curriculum is often more complex and technical than the curriculum parents experienced in their own schooling. Parents may feel incapable of helping their children with questions and homework and intimidated about discussing curriculum concerns or issues with teachers. This has led some schools to offer the following kinds of programs to parents:

- *Training in School Subjects*: Some schools offer workshops for parents in specific curriculum areas such as math so they, in turn, can tutor their children.

- *Parent-Student Workshops*: Information sessions provide learning opportunities for the whole family. Sessions can be organized around math, science, computers, creative writing, and other topics. Parents and students can work together with hands-on activities and be given more activities to do at home.

- *Parent Homework Networks*: Schools can help organize parent networks that supervise afternoon and evening homework sessions. These sessions are particularly useful for single or working parents. Several parents agree to host a group of children on a rotating basis and provide them with a supervised and quiet place to study and do homework. These networks require much coordination such as might be provided by a parent liaison, volunteer, or release time teacher.

- *Parent-Teacher-Student Study Group*: Teachers in some schools engage parents in reading books that their children are reading and hold group discussion seminars with students and parents on issues that are raised in these books.

Understand the Needs of Adolescence

The changes of recent decades that we have seen in social patterns in this country are reflected in our secondary schools. Many social and developmental factors impact adolescents.

- Adolescents are faced with the social realities of peer pressure, alcohol and other drugs, appeals to sexuality, racism, and sexism. Schools and parents must understand the ways in which these factors affect students.

- In adolescence, children seek greater autonomy. Students may not want their parents to play the same role in their schooling that they once did.

- Parents of adolescent children are more likely to be divorced, single, or remarried than are parents of elementary school children.

Provide Assistance

Schools can assist in the parenting of adolescents.

- *Parent Education*: Many schools offer workshops and ongoing educational programs for parents on issues related to adolescent development. Parents are responsive to programs where they can learn about and discuss the difficult issues of adolescence. Some innovative programs link parents' educational activities with their children's curriculum. Students, for example, work in school on issues such as teenage suicide, drugs, and sexuality while parents are learning how to talk with their children about these issues.

- *School-Family-Community Partnerships*: Schools also are engaging families in solving problems and taking action regarding specific issues, such as racial tension in the schools. Parents have collaborated with school staff to design programs that involve other community resources and agencies in addressing critical issues.

- *"What's Next" Nights*: Schools are finding that parents are very concerned about what's next for their children after high school. Programs that address the transition to work after high school, college selection and financial assistance, and related topics should be offered to parents with children at all grade levels in the secondary schools so their planning for the future can start in a timely manner.

- *Parent Support Groups*: Schools can involve parents in school programs by recognizing parents' need to have peer support during their children's adolescent years. Many parents appreciate the opportunity to share approaches and perspectives on parenting issues. Schools hold parenting workshops for parents and offer seminars for divorced and single parents to address their special needs.

- *Parents as Tutors and Mentors*: Many parents have volunteered to be tutors or mentors to students at risk of failure, knowing that they especially need positive adult role models. These tutoring and mentoring programs take place in business, community, and school settings. Schools also are developing community service programs and other creative opportunities for students to go into the community and learn by working with adults.

Strategies for Children With Special Needs

Parents of students with special needs have been actively involved with teachers and administrators in their children's education for more than 20 years, as the diversity of needs has been recognized and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) have been developed to meet them. In fact, many of the suggestions in this book have already been successful in meeting the requirements of families who have children with special needs.

Parents of children with special needs often feel isolated and uncertain about their children's future. Schools can help parents find the facts and support they need to understand that they are not alone and that help is available within the community as well as the school. Teachers can help parents feel comfortable discussing their children's future by listening to the parents--who know their children better than anyone else--and by explaining school programs and answering questions in words that parents can easily understand.

What Administrators Can Do

Teachers and parents need support from schools and the community to help children with special needs reach their full potential. Schools can be both a clearinghouse for information and a place where parents can gather to support one another.

Administrators can help teachers and parents by:

- establishing parent resource centers to help parents and teachers develop good working relationships;

- provide basic training to help parents understand special education and the role of the family in cooperative planning, as well as offering workshops on topics requested by parents;

- make available up-to-date information and resources for parents and teachers; and

- encourage creation of early childhood and pre-school screening programs, and other community services that can be centered in the schools.

What Teachers Can Do

The relationship between teachers and parents with special needs is defined by specific programs with specific guidelines too detailed to summarize in this book. In addition to these guidelines, some general advice is available for teachers, including:

- make it clear to parents that you accept them as advocates who have an intense desire to make life better for their children;

- provide parents with information about support groups, special services in the school and the community, and family-to-family groups;

- offer to give parents referrals to helpful groups;

- encourage parents to organize support systems, pairing families who will complement each other for school activities;

- involve parents in specific projects centered around hobbies or special skills that parents can share with students in one or several classes;

- discuss a child's special talents with parents and use that positive approach as a bridge to discuss other issues.

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Personal Contacts

The best chance for teachers and other school staff to become acquainted with the families of students is through personal contacts. In face-to-face contacts people exchange a wide range of information: detailed views and concerns as well as observations of each other and the meeting surroundings. The parent-teacher conference is a common if brief form of personal contact which may be arranged for all families once or twice a year. Richer contacts are likely to occur in home visits because they demonstrate strong interest in students' families. How to make the best use of these strategies is explored in this section.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Regular parent-teacher conferences for all families are an essential building block of home-school communication. Parents provide important perspectives and information that can be extremely valuable. Teachers need the help of parents to do the best possible job of educating every child and can help parents play an active role in education at home. Conferences are a time for listening and sharing. They can reinforce the idea of working as a team.

Conferences also provide an opportunity for teachers to explain the criteria and grades used on report cards. In fact, many schools schedule conferences right after a reporting period. Some use the conference itself as the means to distribute report cards.

Conferences are successful when teachers and the school system create a climate that invites collaboration with parents. Creating this climate involves planning and effort. The following suggestions indicate ways teachers, principals, and school systems can maximize the effectiveness of parent-teacher conferences.

Before The Conference

- *Principals and District Officials*: Principals and district officials play a critical role by coordinating activities and providing encouragement to teachers. Some organizing principles are suggested.

Prepare Teachers for Conferences

  - Use in-service meetings to orient teachers to the system's goals and effective procedures for conferences.

  - Role playing exercises can help teachers, especially new teachers, to anticipate and deal positively with typical parent questions.

Allocate Resources

  - Allot sufficient time for teachers to conduct conferences and provide substitutes if added time is needed.

  - Provide child care and refreshments, and transportation if needed.

  - Arrange translation services and let parents know that they are available.

  - Develop a flexible conference schedule that will provide options for working parents and parents who have more than one child in the school.

Involve Parents Well in Advance

  - Let parents know about upcoming conferences through various channels--letters, newsletters, radio and television announcements, PTA meetings, and community cable television channels.

  - Survey parents to identify their areas of concern.

  - Send parents a conference planning sheet which outlines a set of questions they may want to ask teachers.

  - Ask parent volunteers to telephone parents to confirm their conference times and encourage them to attend.

- *Teachers*: The role of teachers in arranging conferences involves planning and preparation. Some tips on preparation include:

    - Contact parents well in advance to arrange the conference.

    - Send a personal letter or make a phone call outlining a specific but brief agenda that will interest the parents.

    - Indicate that individual conferences are being held with all parents, and how important they are.

    - Encourage parents to review class work brought home and to note questions, concerns, and comments to bring to the conference.

    - Confirm the conference time by letter.

    - Prepare for the conference by developing a conference folder with samples of the student's work and a list of the teacher's concerns and questions.

    - Create a comfortable and private physical environment with enough adult-sized chairs and no desk separating teacher from parent.

During The Conference

- *Establish Rapport With Parents*: Develop a relationship with parents by asking them about their work or about an interest you may know they have.

- *Accept Parents as Advocates*: Provide parents with opportunities to speak about their children. Do not interpret a parent's advocacy as belligerence or as a criticism.

- *Emphasize the Positive*: Indicate appreciation of the unique qualities of the child.

    - Research suggests that parents use a teacher's knowledge of their child's personality or interests as a screening device. They are more willing to listen to a range of feedback about their child if they hear the teacher comment on the child's special qualities first.

    - Recount a brief anecdote or story about the child before sharing positive or negative information on the child's performance.

- *Establish Priorities*: Pick one or two areas for growth and improvement so that parents are not overwhelmed.

- *Learn From the Parents*: Together, parents and teachers make a great team for student learning.

- Involve parents in creating solutions to problems.

- Devote at least half the conference to parents' concerns, ideas, and questions.

- *Action Steps*: Close the conference with some action steps.

  - Identify concrete suggestions for how the parents and the teacher will together help the child.

  - Emphasize the parents' role in the education of the child, and ways the teacher can assist them.

  - Provide resources and materials such as booklets that families can use at home to build student skills.

  - Give parents specific times when they may call you.

  - Plan to meet again if advisable.

After the Conference

- Keep brief notes about the conference; follow through and remember parents' concerns.

- Note and address any suggestions made and questions raised during the conference.

- Keep parents informed of any steps that you or other school personnel have taken and follow up with parents on actions that they were going to take.

- Share non-confidential helpful information about students and their families with colleagues, and seek the same from them.

- Contact other school staff where issues discussed involve their work.

- Follow-up the conference with a phone call or a note to all parents to show commitment to working as a team.

Home Visits

A home visiting program can show that the teachers, principal, and school staff are willing to "go more than halfway" to involve all parents in their children's education. Home visits help teachers demonstrate their interest in students' families and understand their students better by seeing them in their home environment.

These visits should not replace parent-teacher conferences or be used to discuss children's progress. When done early before any school problems can arise, they avoid putting any parents on the defensive and signal that teachers are eager to work with all parents. Teachers who have made home visits say they build stronger relationships with parents and their children, and improve attendance and achievement.

Planning

Administrators and teachers must agree to participate in the program and be involved in planning it.

These programs are successful when:

- teachers' schedules are adjusted so that they have the necessary time;
- home visits are scheduled during just one month of the school year, preferably early; and
- visits are logged so that teachers and administrators can measure their benefits.

Strategies For Successful Home Visits

- *Who does the visiting?* Wherever possible, teachers should visit homes of children in their classes. If this is not possible, the principal should ensure that every home that requests a visit receives one.

  If teachers do not speak the parents' language, a translator needs to accompany them.

- *Scheduling*: These suggestions may be helpful:

  - Some schools have scheduled home visits in the afternoon right after school. Others have found that early evening is more convenient for parents. Some schedule visits right before a new school year begins. A mix of times may be needed to reach all families.

  - Teachers should be given flexibility to schedule their visits during the targeted time period.

  - Teachers of siblings may want to visit these children's homes together, but take care not to overwhelm parents.

  - Some schools work with community groups (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, housing complexes, 4-H, Y's, and community centers) to schedule visits in neutral but convenient space.

Making parents feel comfortable--Here are some useful tips:

- Send a letter home to parents explaining the desire to have teachers make informal visits to all students' homes. Include a form that parents can mail back to accept or decline the visit.

- The letter should state clearly that the intent of this 15-30 minute visit is only to introduce the teacher and family members to each other, and not to discuss the child's progress.

- The letter might suggest that families think about special things their children would want to share with the teacher.

- The tone of the letter should try to lessen any parents' worries. One school included a note to parents which said, "No preparation is required. In fact, our homes need to be vacuumed and all of us are on diets!" This touch of humor and casualness helped to set a friendly and informal tone.

- A phone call to parents who have not responded can explain the plan for home visits and reassure parents that it is to get acquainted and not to evaluate students.

- Enlist community groups, religious organizations, and businesses to help publicize the home visits.

Parent Liaisons

Parent liaisons are members of the community who work with teachers, administrators, and parents to coordinate and advocate for family involvement to help students learn to high standards. Parent liaisons are often hired on a full or part time basis to provide continuity for the school's parent involvement initiatives.

Parent liaisons are the primary contact people who respond to the needs and concerns of particular parents and families. They may work especially to involve "hard to reach" parents. And they create ongoing mechanisms for parents to play various roles at the school and at home.

In these capacities parent liaisons can:

- Coordinate and implement outreach to traditionally non-participating families.

- Discuss with parents home learning activities suggested by schools (see *Homework and Home Learning* section).

- Conduct surveys of parent and teacher needs and interests and play matchmaker in promoting parent-teacher partnerships.

- Coordinate parent education events and parent volunteers.

- Create and publish school newsletters or other forms of communication.

- Coordinate school tours and orientation sessions for new families.

Parent liaisons can provide the leadership and resource coordination for many of the outreach strategies presented in this booklet. They are a legitimate use of Title I funds under the federal Improving America's Schools Act.

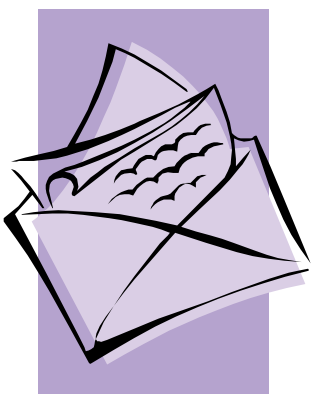
For school systems with limited funds, the position can be filled by members of an organized volunteer program. In small systems, the parent liaison functions and position can be system wide rather than building based. In large schools, several parent liaisons might handle different grade levels.

(Reaching All Families: Creating Family-Friendly Schools)

Ongoing Communications

Some strategies can be easily reenacted through the school year. A school newsletter, for example, can be issued monthly or bimonthly. Phone calls to introduce the curriculum and teacher and tell each parent of their child's progress can be repeated as opportunities arise. Such calls counteract the feeling of many parents that schools only contact them when there is bad news. Giving parents ideas for home learning activities and how to assist with homework can also be done on a continuing basis. Research shows that involving parents in these ways is a very effective means to improve children's school performance. Thus many suggestions are offered in this area for things teachers, schools, and school systems might do.

Newsletters



Newsletters can provide a steady stream of information from the school to the home. They are used by many schools. A quality newsletter may well be the least expensive way of informing families of school activities and expectations.

As their name implies, newsletters provide readers with "news" in an informal "letter" style. They are useful when careful thought is given to: "Why have a newsletter?" "Who is the audience?" "What do we want to communicate?" "How should we present the information?"

Content

Timely, brief, and lively reporting are the hallmarks of an effective newsletter. Newsletters often include:

- How the school is working to improve the basics and discipline.
- Recent accomplishments of students in academic, athletic, artistic, and citizenship areas.
- New services of the school or changes in organization.
- Upcoming school events, schedule changes, conference times, and testing dates.

- Human interest items featuring students, parent volunteers, teachers, and other staff, or written by them.

- Articles on curriculum and teaching innovations.

- Scholarship application information and school-college connections.

- School-business partnerships, particularly family-friendly employers and school-to-career opportunities.

- Activities scheduled for parents, students, and community members and related transportation arrangements.

- After school child care and education programs.

Interactive Features

To promote two-way communication, newsletters can:

- Encourage parents to write letters to the newsletter.

- Provide an "op-ed" column that is open to anyone from the school community.

- Contain short questionnaires soliciting reader opinions on a variety of topics.

Format and Design

To attract the attention of parents, newsletters should be attractive, well-organized, and easily read. Assume that some parents may not be comfortable with reading or with English as their primary language. This suggests:

- Keep both sentences and paragraphs short.

- Use easy words unless a big word is needed for a precise meaning.

- Avoid education jargon and abbreviations.

- Use language that is familiar and direct.

- Use simple techniques, such as boxes, graphics, and illustrations to call attention to special items.

Production

In some schools, the PTA or parent-teacher organization produces the school newsletter. In schools with parent liaisons or outreach workers, they may assist or be in charge of editing the newsletter. In other schools, the newsletter is edited by a teacher or administrator and, especially in the upper grades, can become the project of a language arts or journalism class.

Many high schools have fairly sophisticated word processing, printing, and typesetting equipment that are used to expose students to career-related communications technology. These publishing centers can be used to produce newsletters for the school and for other schools in the system.

A note on the first principle of newsletters: If the information is important enough to be sent to parents, it is important enough to be sent in the most attractive and readable form.

Positive Phone Calls

Imagine the impact when parents receive phone calls letting them know how much progress their children have made in recent weeks or asking if they need any information about school programs and expectations. Home-school communication is greatly increased through personal contacts such as this between teachers and parents.

When a telephone call from school carries information that is positive, the atmosphere between the home and the school is improved. It encourages everyone to believe that all children can learn.

Benefits of Positive Phone Calls

To be most effective, parents need to receive at least two or three positive phone calls over the course of the school year. Some topics for consideration are

- introducing the teacher to the parent;
- describing the child's curriculum;
- commenting on the child's progress;
- informing the parent of a special achievement or improvement by the child;
- telling the parent of particular strengths of the child and sharing an anecdote about them; and
- inviting the parents to open houses, conferences, volunteering in the school, and other school functions.

While simple in concept, a positive phone call program does require time and effort. Strong support is needed from school administrators, who must provide teachers with the time, feedback, and resources they will need to implement this program. Teachers also need to be involved in the planning to ensure their commitment.

Since many parents work during the day, teachers may need to contact parents in the evenings or on weekends. Teachers will need to have some accommodations made in their work schedules to compensate them for this extra time.

In order to gain commitment from teachers, schools must be willing to:

- Make time available to staff. Positive telephone calls can be carried on during selected months of the year. During these periods, the workload of teachers can be adjusted.

- Provide a proper facility. The program will not succeed unless teachers have a private and comfortable place from which to make their calls. Schools may need, therefore, to install additional telephone lines in classrooms and in lounge areas.

- Provide translation services for parents as needed.

- Provide a feedback system. Teachers should maintain log books or calling index cards so that the school has a record of positive phone calls. In this way, teachers and administrators can have a clearer sense of the scope and effectiveness of their efforts on a schoolwide basis.

Parent Call-In

An outgrowth of personalized telephone communication at some schools is the parent call-in. Teachers or administrators set up a regular call-in hour on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. During this time, parents can call to discuss their questions or concerns. These calling hours are announced in school newsletters, flyers sent home, and at school meetings.

Homework and Home Learning

Research indicates that involving parents' as educators at home with their children is one of the most effective ways to improve students' attitudes toward school and their achievement. This form of parent involvement does not require that parents come to the school, which makes it more accessible for many parents. While research indicates that homework supervision and home learning activities are closely related to higher achievement for children, many parents want help to do these better. The combined efforts of the school system and individual teachers are needed to make this happen.

What Teachers Can Do

- *Homework*: At the beginning of each year, many teachers:

  ○ Emphasize to parents, through open house and written communications, that they should expect their children to have regular homework assignments and to complete them promptly.

  ○ Request parents to negotiate clear rules with their children about where, when, and how homework is done each night and set clear expectations that children will tell their parents how much and what kinds of homework they have.

  ○ Encourage parents to ensure that reference materials, such as dictionaries, are available in the home.

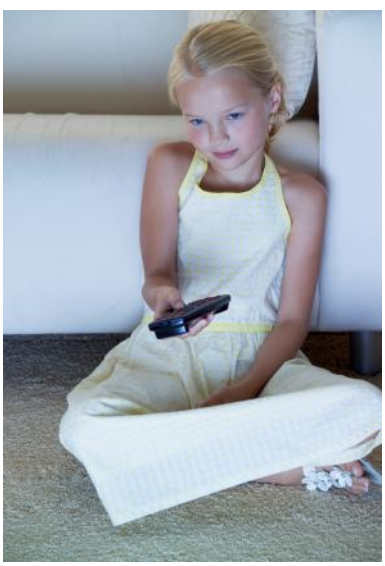
  ○ Inform parents of any extra homework help available--homework hotlines, homework centers, after school tutors, and mentors.

- *Reading*: Teachers are finding it increasingly important to:

  ○ Tell parents how important it is to express positive attitudes about reading beginning early.

  ○ Encourage parents to read to or with children each day even in the older elementary grades.

  ○ Send home recommended reading lists or suggestions about how to use household materials, such as newspapers and magazines, to encourage reading.



- *Television*: Understanding that in many homes television watching plays a major role in daily activity, many teachers:

  ○ Communicate to parents the power of television as a positive and a negative educational experience.

  ○ Inform parents that more than 2-3 hours of television viewing on school nights is related to lower student achievement.

  ○ Encourage parents to select with their children the programs they may watch.

  ○ Recommend ongoing programs which families may want to watch together and talk about afterward.

- Send home notices about special programs parents may want to watch with their children and suggestions for discussing issues that the program will highlight.

- *Learning Activities*: Teachers send home ideas for family games and other informal learning activities related to school work, such as word games, puzzles, math challenges, and "kitchen sink" experiments for parents and children to enjoy together.

- *Field Trips*: Many teachers send home suggestions for using community resources that may provide enjoyable educational experiences for parents and children, such as the town library, local historical sites, museums, music series, and cultural events.

What Schools Can Do

- *Parent Workshops or Conferences*: Workshops or conferences are held by schools on topics such as:

  - How to help children with reading.

  - How to make home learning materials.

  - How to create educational games with your children.

  - Grade level math or reading instructions for parents who want to tutor their children.

  - Learning about computers--keeping ahead of the kids.

  - How to handle the challenges of teenagers.

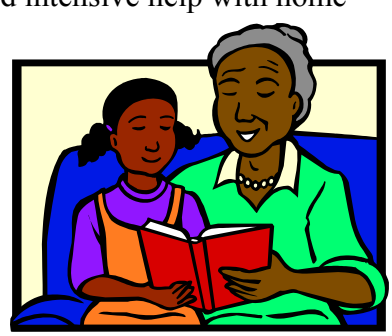
Some teachers and schools also give formal instruction to show parents how to help their children in specific areas, such as math, or how to develop teaching skills.

- *Parent Training Programs and Outreach*: Schools can respond to parents' requests for assistance with home learning in several ways:

  - Hold ongoing training for groups of parents who want or need intensive help with home learning.

  - Provide training and assistance to parents with limited English and those of "at risk" children.

  - Hire outreach workers to visit parents in their homes to provide individualized assistance with home-learning activities.



- *Summer Activities Packets*: Schools provide packets of materials, specifically designed for each grade level, that parents can use with their children over the summer. These activities and materials might include:
    - Reading lists.
    - Suggested summer field trips.
    - Lists of community activities and summer programs.
    - Math, science, and reading activities to do at home.
    - Names of local organizations that provide summer tutoring in reading and other basic skills.

Schools can contact the national Read*Write*Now! program to match children with adults who will read together regularly with them. Call 1-800-USA-LEARN for information.

- *Voice Mail*: Some schools have installed telephone answering systems that permit teachers to record homework assignments and suggestions to parents for home learning as well as giving parents a chance to leave messages when they need assistance. Parents and students can call at any time to keep abreast of daily coursework and class activities.
- *Computer Lending Libraries*: Some schools allow students and parents to take home personal computers and software, or offer family classes on computing.
- *Hotlines-Cable TV*: Schools offer parents and students help with homework and other school-related concerns through telephone hotlines staffed by teachers and "homework hours" on cable TV. These interactive resources let parents talk with teachers from their homes and have individual issues addressed.

What School Systems Can Do

As with all forms of parent involvement, the resources and support provided to individual teachers and parents by the school and school system will determine the quality of the home-learning effort. The essential ingredients for support of home learning are:

- *Policy*: Administrators should make it clear that they recognize and are willing to help support the parent's role as educator at home and build positive teacher-parent connections. This philosophy should be communicated to parents through:
    - The parent handbook and other policy documents.
    - Letters and pamphlets to parents.
    - Meetings and other parent forums.

- Personal contacts by teachers and other staff.
- Speeches before local groups and in the media.

● *Resources*: Schools and school systems can demonstrate their commitment to partnerships by providing resources for home learning such as:

- Releasing staff to work with families and providing a budget for home-learning activities.
- Providing clerical and printing assistance to teachers when they develop materials for parents.
- Providing easy access to phones for teachers to call families.
- Investing in school programs on cable television.
- Building partnerships with local organizations to jointly support home learning activities.

● *Home-Learning Coordinator*: Specialists and teachers need time to develop home-learning ideas and materials for themselves and for other teachers to use. Designating one or more persons to coordinate and help with the logistics of gathering and producing materials will ensure that home-learning materials are efficiently and effectively developed.

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Special Groups

In this final section, strategies are offered for involving certain kinds of parents who are often ignored or served poorly. Parents with limited English skills are increasingly common in many localities, and various tips on how schools have assisted them are provided. Single and working parents are found everywhere, and schools can use the practices suggested here to be sensitive to their circumstances. Fathers are also key family members, and their involvement with their children's education is much needed. The last set of strategies show different ways that schools and educators can reach out to them.

Involving Parents With Limited English

Involving parents with limited English proficiency in their children's education can present special challenges. Creative approaches may be required as schools work to become partners with parents who have different cultural backgrounds and whose English is limited. Some strategies that have helped others include the following:

- Translate letters, notices, progress reports, school handbooks, and information packets into the languages of families of all students.

- Have individuals available to answer the school telephone who speak the languages of parents.

- Translate newsletters or key newsletter articles.

- Record phone messages in other languages so non-English speaking parents can also keep track of their children's coursework and school events.

- Use school newsletters to announce cultural and other events sponsored by other language groups represented in the school.

- Integrate bilingual and multicultural materials in school displays, publications, libraries, and classrooms.

- Use paid or volunteer interpreters to promote communication with limited English parents.

- Hire bilingual parent coordinators or find volunteers to meet with parents in their homes and at parent centers, churches, and other gathering places to talk about school-related issues.

- Recruit, train, and hire bilingual parents to be paraprofessionals in the schools.

- Make special efforts to welcome limited English proficient parents who visit the schools.

Developing Innovative Programs

Many schools have also developed innovative programs to help parents with limited English take part in their children's education:

- *School-Based Literacy and Family Nights*: Literacy and other adult basic education programs are offered in schools with activities for children, such as homework tutoring and recreational activities, available at the same time.

- *Enrichment Programs*: Schools work with adult education agencies to conduct enrichment programs designed for parents with limited English proficiency. These programs include workshops for skill development, field trips that provide educational experiences, and other special events.

- *English as a Second Language Adult Education Programs*: These programs coordinate the education of parents with the education of their children. Materials used for English as a Second Language and literacy training are also used by children in their classrooms.

- *Utilizing All the Community's Resources*: Ethnic communities often sponsor activities and events that enrich children's appreciation of their parents' cultural heritages. In connection with these events, teachers can integrate specific cultural knowledge into the curriculum by inviting parents to make presentations and undertake projects with students. Activities could include cooking classes, celebrations of holidays, craft fairs, and international dinners.

Respecting Culture

Communicating with limited English proficient parents will take sensitivity, time, and effort. It may involve, for example, respecting religious and cultural holidays when planning school events. Schools will need to help all teachers and other staff to:

- Explore research on stereotypes and prejudice toward the school's ethnic populations so as to challenge any misconceptions about them.

- Learn about these groups' cultural, family, and social structures and expectations regarding school systems.

- Identify community leaders and include them in school improvement efforts.

An advisory committee composed of parents and teachers from many cultures may help foster a positive climate for culturally diverse parents and students in the school.

Involving Single and Working Parents

An increasing number of children live in single parent and step families. Many also live in foster families, and other non-traditional family forms. And in many two-parent families both parents work full days, so children come home to an empty house. Involving single and working parents presents many challenges to schools.

Communication

Communication with single-parent and other non-traditional families will be more effective if schools

- Avoid making the assumption that students live with both biological parents.

- Avoid the traditional "Dear Parents" greeting in letters and other messages, and instead use "Dear Parent," "Dear Family," "Friends," or some other form of greeting.

- Develop a system of keeping non-custodial parents informed of their children's school progress.

● Demonstrate sensitivity to the rights of non-custodial parents. Inform parents that schools may not withhold information from non-custodial parents who have the legal right to see their children's records.

● Develop a simple unobtrusive system to keep track of family changes, such as these examples:

  ○ At the beginning of the year ask for the names and addresses of individuals to be informed about each child and involved in school activities.

  ○ At mid-year send a form to each child's parents or guardians to verify that the information is still accurate. Invite the parents or guardians to indicate any changes.

● Place flyers about school events on bulletin boards of major companies in the community which are family-friendly to learning.

These approaches use different and more sensitive ways of communicating with non-traditional families, and do not require much more material resources.

Involvement

The following practices can make the involvement of single and working parents in school life more feasible:

● Hold parent-teacher conferences and other school events in the evenings.

● Welcome other children at such events, and provide organized activities or child care services.

● Provide teachers and counselors with in-service training that sensitizes them to special problems faced by children of single and working parents and the parents themselves.

● Gather information on whether joint or separate parent conferences need to be scheduled with parents.

● Sponsor evening and weekend learning activities at which parents can participate and learn with their children.

● Work with local businesses to arrange released time from work so that parents can attend conferences, volunteer or in other ways spend time at their child's school when it is in session.

Workshops

Schools can also offer parent education workshops on topics such as:

- understanding the impact of separation and divorce on children;
- developing a safe and secure environment for latchkey children; and
- handling the multiple roles of the single parent.

The Community

Draw on the community. Schools can facilitate the involvement of single and working parents in their children's education by seeking cooperation and collaboration with resources in the community.

- Approach human service, cultural, social, and other organizations to suggest the development of programs and services that meet the needs of children and parents.
- Enlist the aid of high school students and senior citizens with whom before- and after-school recreational and child care programs can be developed.
- Form partnerships with organizations that can provide programs for children.
- Work with employers to encourage them to institute flexible hours for working parents who want to attend school activities.
- Use a variety of approaches to enable as many parents and children as possible to benefit from these programs.

Involving Fathers

Fathers are often the forgotten ones in family-oriented programs. Mothers have traditionally been more involved in the schools and community organizations. But with more mothers in the labor force and a growing recognition of the father's importance for child development, there is new interest in meaningful ways of involving dads in their children's education.

Schools can reach out to fathers in at least three ways: their basic orientation, their in-school programs, and encouragement of out-of-school learning activities.

Basic Orientation

All forms of communication to families need to mention fathers as well as mothers, assume that both will be interested, and encourage both to participate in school-sponsored activities. Further, non-custodial parents, who are usually fathers, need to be informed of these activities too unless there are strong reasons for not doing so.

In-School Activities

These should be scheduled at times when all parents can attend, such as before school, in the evenings, or on weekends. They could include:

- Father-child breakfasts or dinners could provide an informal setting to meet teachers and school staff where adult male friends or father substitutes are also encouraged to come.

- In parent-teacher conferences, draw out the views of fathers and give them suggestions on ways to help children learn more at home.

- For school leadership positions such as PTA officers or advisory committee members, seek a balance of fathers and mothers.

- Volunteer positions should be filled from among both fathers and mothers who are free during the school day to help with activities such as being classroom aides or chaperons for field trips. The presence of fathers or even older men as hall monitors may help reduce school discipline problems.

- Fathers should be invited to help with special events such as constructing exhibit booths or judging contests.

- On career days ask fathers and mothers to tell how their education helped prepare them for their careers.

Out-of-School Activities

Fathers contribute to children's learning and development in many ways, and schools can assist them by:

- Making a point to invite fathers and make them feel welcome at workshops and courses on topics such as parenting skills, helping students learn non-violent ways to resolve conflicts, and exploring college and career opportunities.

- Creating support groups for parents experiencing the death or departure of a spouse, a difficult or disabled child, alienated teenagers, and other traumatic events.

- Providing training for fathers and other men as well as women to learn how to tutor students in basic subjects and mentor them in long-term relationships.

- Working with major local employers to adopt family-friendly policies such as releasing workers to attend school conferences, allowing flexible work schedules, and creating lunchtime seminars on family and home-school relations topics.

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Developing Parent Leadership

A critical element in family involvement is involving parents and other adults in leadership and decision-making activities. While many parents may be unfamiliar with the skills required to participate in these activities, it is important for schools to offer training to parents to engage meaningfully in this work. Family members can learn to interpret and analyze school test data, they can help develop effective programming, and they can help guide the school to improve student achievement. Indeed, federal Title laws require that parents are involved in many of these activities.

What Parent Leaders Need to Know and Be Able to Do

In most districts, developing parent leadership will require a new look at traditional attitudes toward authority, participation and service. Being an effective leader involves a set of knowledge, skills and approaches that few parents have had the opportunity to develop.

Parents who step forward deserve training that can help them become proficient in areas such as:

- gaining access to and interpreting data and other information;

- using data to develop proactive strategies to address problems and set priorities;

- constructing new roles for themselves as parent leaders; and

- understanding people from different cultures and backgrounds, and learning how to work together.

Follow-up coaching and support are essential. Most organizations that promote and train parent leaders offer on-site technical assistance to work through tough issues or personality clashes. They also can help parents at a school site build a powerful organization, by providing sample by-laws,

communications tools like a Web site or hotline, contacts to community groups, and expert trainers and presenters.

For many parents, this is not entirely unfamiliar territory. Parents whose jobs involve managing projects or people will be able to transfer these skills to their work with schools. Others can draw on their experience as family managers or as leaders in other community organizations and transfer those skills to school settings. Still, parents of all backgrounds will need information about how the school system works, their rights and responsibilities, effective approaches to school improvement, standards-based curricula and assessments, and new approaches to teaching and learning.

While various parent leadership programs have their own ideas about training and what it should cover, they all agree that parents should be able to make a real difference for children.

Are Schools Ready for Parent Leaders?

Creating successful schools is a shared responsibility — this is the basic operating principle that underlies parent leadership. Putting this principle into practice is a major goal of parent leadership training.

As we have seen in the examples throughout this guide, this new way of working involves major changes in how parents and schools view and interact with each other. Building and maintaining mutual trust is essential. While either parents or school leaders can take the first step, the most effective partnerships will result when both embrace new expectations and responsibilities. Public officials on all levels can support partnerships by championing parent leadership and adopting policies that support parent-school partnership. Here are some specific steps that school leaders, parents and policymakers each can take.

What Can School Leaders Do?

Challenging deeply entrenched assumptions and ways of working takes commitment and skill, but it can generate real payoffs in supportive relationships, increased resources and higher student achievement. Schools can begin by examining their current policies and practices to see whether they welcome parents as partners or exclude them.

Together, school leaders, teachers and staff can come up with new strategies to open their doors. Start by focusing all efforts to involve parents explicitly on improving student achievement. Think carefully about how each planned or existing program or activity will:

- help families understand what their children are learning in class;

- promote high standards for student work and knowledge about what proficient-level work looks like;

- understand what effective teaching practice looks like;
- help parents assist their children at home; and
- stimulate discussion about improving student progress.

Schools without formal parent leadership training programs can still develop the leadership potential of parents and families. First, examine what the district already is offering to families to see if these resources could be better coordinated and focused. Explore the resources of the state education agency, federal programs, local and state organizations, and foundations. What is their potential to create and support a parent training program?

"Trying to teach children without involving parents is like raking leaves in high wind."
- Dr. Kimberly Muhammad-Earl.

If a school gets federal Title I funds, *at least* 1 percent of that money must be used to build parents' capacity to work with teachers to help their children. A Title I school also must have a parent involvement policy and a school-family compact. Ask these questions: When were the policy and compact last revised? How were parents involved in developing and approving them? How do the policy and compact reflect the actual learning needs of children in your school?

Take some time to consider this question: What topics, besides confidential personnel matters, does the school treat as off limits to families? If the list is long, perhaps the school should explore attitudes and trust issues among the staff.

There are many examples of ways that school leaders have reached out to engage parents as partners. First, classrooms are opened to families so they can experience how and what students are learning. For families who can't come during the day, an evening "visit the classroom" program can display student work, along with standards and scoring guides. Schools also have combined student-led conferences with exhibits of student portfolios, where students explain how their work meets standards.

To explain further how students will be assessed, some schools have held "take the test" events. Parents try answering sample questions from the state assessment, look at their children's work and talk in small groups about the skills students need to do well on the test. Teachers share examples of class assignments and explain how they will develop problem-solving and other critical-thinking skills that the new standards require.

"Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results."
- George S. Patton

Schools that actively build parent leadership often develop a relationship with a local college, a university or another organization that offers training. Skills for developing partnerships with parents can be woven into

every topic of staff development for teachers and other staff. For example, in considering a proposed policy, program or practice, school staff can explore its implications for families. They also can consider how to get information about it to parents. Even better, they can invite parents to the meetings where these programs are being discussed. Staff developers should ask parents for input when designing these sessions.

Some schools invite parents to staff development programs for teachers. Many parents are interested in learning about new approaches to teaching math, science and reading; positive discipline; conflict resolution; and ways to get high standards into the classroom. They also can offer valuable advice about how to work more effectively with families. Another step is to invite parents to staff meetings. Give them the opportunity to raise issues of concern, such as safety, discipline, grouping practices or achievement gaps. Include parents in discussions about assessment, new programs and staff training.

Expectations for Effective SCHOOL Leaders

Share power:
- Open up the decisionmaking process so that families have a voice.
- Give parents a role in selecting administrators, including the next principal.
- Deal with elected parent leaders, not parents hand-picked by the school administration.
- Find out the concerns of all the different groups of families in your school community. Reach out beyond the active middle class parents.
- Always consider the interests of all children.

Communicate expectations:
- Be clear about having high expectations for parents, as well as for the entire staff.
- Take time to define those expectations, in joint discussion with parents and staff.

Open doors:
- Give families full access to the school building.
- Be available — set regular office hours for the principal to meet with families.
- Hold frequent and open meetings — in a variety of settings, not just at school.
- Set a regular schedule for classroom observations.

Offer training:
- Offer workshops for teachers and other school staff (including classified staff) about how to communicate more effectively with parents and families. Include parents and family members.
- Give parents good information about standards, curriculum and assessment.
- Help parents understand the data on school performance.
- Offer workshops to parents and teachers on skills that will help them mediate conflicts and have more productive meetings.

Answer the hard questions:
- Be prepared and pleased to be challenged. Admit it when you don't know the answers. Get the information you need to respond.
- Give a state of the school report every year and report regularly through the year on how students are doing.
- Fully explain school test results and report cards.
- Share the school's improvement plan with families and the community.

Recognize and work with parent-led organizations:
- Recognize a variety of groups, not just the "official" school parent group.
- Provide resources: space; supplies; information; and facilities, such as computer time, copier and fax.
- Help arrange for food, activities for younger children and transportation.
- Be available to speak at their meetings.

Support regular, positive, two-way communications:

- Recognize that community organizations are part of the school community.
- Translate all communications (including report cards) into your families' languages and have interpreters available at all meetings and for phone calls.
- Publish a directory of community resources.
- Encourage school staff to reach out to parents, through regular telephone calls, home visits, and informal conversations at the start and close of the school day.

Give parents information about how the school system works:

- Share data and school improvement plans.
- Invite district staff and school board members to come to school to meet with parents about parents' concerns.
- Work with parent and community groups during election season. Help prepare an agenda for candidate meetings so that parents can raise their concerns, not just listen to campaign speeches.

Expectations for Effective PARENT Leaders

Use power wisely:

- Accept the obligations that come with having power.
- Go to meetings and events. Speak up when you have a question or problem.
- Ask for information when you need it.
- Take part in elections for school boards, school councils and PTA officers.
- Consider the interests of all children, not just your own.

Be accountable:

- Set high expectations for yourself and other parents, as well as school staff.
- Do what you say you will.
- Earn the trust of those you work with — keep private information to yourself.

Get training:

- Become familiar with standards, the curriculum and the state assessment.
- Understand and know how to use data about school performance.
- Develop the skills you need to make your case to different audiences, run meetings, recruit other parents, set an agenda, make a plan and put it into action.

Knock on doors:

- Build personal relationships. Get to know the principal, teachers, front office staff and everyone else who works at the school. Talk to parents one on one to let them know they are needed and can help.
- Be involved in structured activities and roles, such as parent-teacher organizations, but also take time to hang out and talk to people informally.
- Reach out to parents of all backgrounds by going to their neighborhoods and listening to their ideas and concerns.

Ask the hard questions:

- How is the curriculum aligned to standards? How are teachers held accountable for student progress in meeting those standards?
- Do students make steady gains, or is their progress uneven? How does their progress compare to other schools in the district?
- What progress is the school making in addressing achievement gaps between different groups of students, and who is responsible?
- What evidence do we have that the programs or strategies to improve achievement are working?
- What are the school's grouping or tracking practices? If there are lower tracks, how will those students catch up?
- Are parents and families doing all they can to help? What more is needed?

Organize your efforts:

- Engage other parents, especially those who have traditionally stayed away.
- Establish a formal organization. Identify needs and problems through group process.
- Set priorities and create projects to improve learning. Do the follow up work needed after issues have been identified.
- Set up and serve on committees and councils.
- Insist on a voice for parents in selecting principals and other school leaders.

Foster effective communications:

- Build a network of community organizations that can offer resources to families and to the school.
- Develop and implement a communications plan for reaching families on a regular basis.
- Take responsibility for keeping the school principal and school council in the loop for receiving feedback.

Learn how the system works:

- Understand your state's and school district's standards-based system.
- Access and understand student test data and other information about the school.
- Learn to make use of key leverage points in new federal and state laws (e.g., annual school report cards, parent participation in school improvement plans and school-family compacts).
- Identify the people who hold power in your district and state and develop relationships with them.

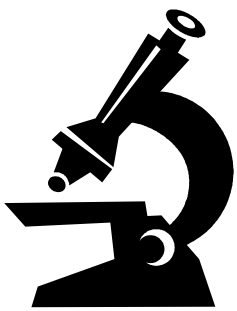
What Can Parents Do?

Although some schools actively promote parent leadership, parents in many communities will have to take the initiative to change the *status quo*. This means that people used to accepting passively the tasks assigned by principals and teachers will need to start taking active responsibility for change.

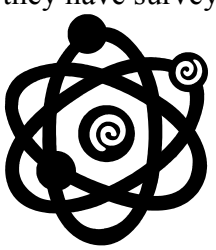
A perceptive superintendent once observed, "School systems, just like most other large organizations, don't change because they see the light. They change because they feel the heat."

Parents and other community activists must generate enough heat to make a difference. As "Collaboration Counts" makes clear, a single parent can rarely change much, other than getting his or her own child some extra help. Fifty parents with a well-developed agenda can do much more. Effective school leaders are not threatened by activism; they welcome allies for improving student achievement.

Generating heat, however, is not enough. Parent leaders also need to preach hope. They need to understand what is happening in high-performing schools and then share these examples with fellow parents, teachers, principals and other school leaders. They need to be able to point to these schools and say, "If they can do that there, why can't we try to do that here?" The new annual school report cards, now mandated by the federal government, should be a valuable resource to help parent leaders identify high-performing schools and make a case for change in their own schools.



Finally, parent leaders have a responsibility to help. As discussed in earlier chapters, this assistance can take many forms. Parents have surveyed other parents about school communications to find out how the school could do a better job, and they have surveyed students to find out why they were often absent. They have organized Family Math and Science Nights so that families can work together conducting experiments and solving problems. They have shown teachers and students how to use desktop publishing and other programs on the computer. They have worked with teachers to write curriculum guides for parents, and they have organized drama clubs to engage low-performing students. They recognize that job one is taking responsibility for the success of *all* children.



There are many examples of what parent leaders have done to demonstrate their commitment to making their schools the best they can be. Here are some steps that parents can take to foster heat, hope and help.

- *Get familiar with the school.* Parent leaders drop into the school building during the day and get a feel for the school environment, including how teachers and principals interact with students and with each other. If the leaders don't feel welcome, they talk with other parents about their experience and what needs to change.

● *Step forward.* Parent leaders will approach the principal or their child's teacher and express interest in becoming involved. If they have a specific idea or issue, they explain their position. But leaders do not wait for a problem to arise. The parents at Conway Middle School took on the principal's idea of student-led conferences and developed their own ideas for making it work.

● *Find out what's on other parents' minds.* Leaders compare impressions with their neighbors and the families of their children's friends about what is happening at the school. Even when a school is open to parent partnerships, bringing many voices together offers the opportunity to examine all sides of an issue, work out effective positions and present a strong position to the school. There are many tools for holding structured discussions, such as study circles, town meetings and roundtables. Keeping the focus on improving student achievement moves the discussion away from assigning blame for problems.

● *Learn how your state education system works.* What are the leverage points you can use to press schools for better results? Parent leaders know how to use opportunities like requirements for school improvement plans and written parent involvement policies and compacts.

● *Analyze your school's achievement data.* Parent leaders know how the schools in their district are performing and what is being done (or not done) to improve them. They talk to principals and teachers about needs they see and offer to organize other parents to help. If the school is not responsive, leaders will organize parents to meet as a group with the principal and the school council to make the point more forcefully.

● *Run for school council or school board.* Many parent leaders begin their careers in the school parent group, whether it's a PTA or Parent Association. Others start by joining the standards or curriculum committee or the school improvement team.

What Can District Policymakers Do?

District policymakers can support partnerships by setting high expectations for schools; by providing resources such as professional development, training and up-to-date information; and by recognizing and rewarding good programs and practices. At the district level, superintendents, Title I directors and community relations directors should make it a priority to build a family-friendly culture of open access, inclusion and accountability in their districts and schools.

● *Commit the resources.* Include permission and time for teachers to engage with parents in informal as well as structured ways. Offer administrative support for parent activities, such as transportation, insurance coverage, security and food services.

● *Ask parents what gets in the way — and respond.* Many parents say they need translation services, transportation and child care. Holding meetings at the end of their workday, rather than later in the evening or during the day, is often more convenient for families, especially if they can bring the whole family and food is served. Keep the meetings short, two hours or less.

● *Make sure that schools do their job.* Every school should develop and implement school-parent compacts and parent involvement policies. Policies and compacts should be developed with and approved by parents, and should give parents a genuine voice in crafting school improvement plans. Such policies are now mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law.

● *Get good advice.* Create a district parent and community advisory council. Make sure all segments of your community are represented. This group can help with developing a district parent involvement policy and set up a process for getting parent input and approval.

● *Go beyond the usual suspects.* Recognize and work with a wide variety of parent and community leaders. This means going beyond the established parent organization, like the PTA. Ask people who are running effective community programs who the real leaders are. Open up schools to parent and community groups based outside schools.

● *Connect schools and community partners.* This may require investing in outreach staff and opening a family center. A family center can provide links to community resources and connect with organizations that reflect the diverse cultures of the community.

● *Get the message across.* Make timely, understandable information about the system and student performance available to parents. This can be done through the Web, regular written reports, state of the school meetings, study circles and informal rap sessions. Annual school reports are now mandated by the new federal education law. They must be in languages that parents can understand, and they must be disseminated widely.

(The Case for Parent Leadership)

Chapter 13

Program Evaluation

Program Evaluation

Once you have developed and implemented a family involvement program, the next step is to evaluate your program. Evaluation should be conducted planfully and be both formative (on-going) and summative (at the end of the program or activity). This chapter addresses the rationale, concerns, and steps to conducting an effective program evaluation.

Why Evaluate Your Program?

You should evaluate your program because an evaluation helps you accomplish the following:

- Find out what is and is not working in your program,
- show your staff, stakeholders, funders and the community what your program does and how it benefits your participants,
- raise additional money for your program by providing evidence of its effectiveness,
- improve your staff's work with participants by identifying weaknesses as well as strengths, and
- add to the existing knowledge in the human services field about what does and does not work in your type of program with your kinds of participants.

Despite these important benefits, program managers often are reluctant to evaluate their programs. Usually this reluctance is due to concerns stemming from a lack of understanding about the evaluation process.

Common Concerns About Evaluation:

● *Evaluation diverts resources away from the program and therefore harms participants*. This is a common concern in most programs. However, because evaluation helps to determine what does and does not work in a program, it is actually beneficial to program participants. Without an evaluation, you are providing services with little or no evidence that they actually work!

● *Evaluation increases the burden for program staff*. Often program staff are responsible for collecting evaluation information because they are most familiar with, and have the most contact with program participants. Despite this potential for increased burden, staff can benefit greatly from evaluation because it provides information that can help them improve their work with participants, learn more about program and participant needs, and validate their successes. Also, the burden can be decreased somewhat by incorporating evaluation activities into ongoing program activities.

● *Evaluation is too complicated*. Program managers often reject the idea of conducting an evaluation because they don't know how to do it or whom to ask for help. Although the technical aspects of evaluation can be complex, the evaluation process itself simply systematizes what most program managers already do on an informal basis — figure out whether the program's objectives are being met, which aspects of the program work, and which ones are not effective. Understanding this general process will help you to be a full partner in the evaluation, even if you seek outside help with the technical aspects.

● *Evaluation may produce negative results and lead to information that will make the program look bad*. An evaluation may reveal problems in accomplishing the work of the program as well as successes. It is important to understand that both types of information are significant. The discovery of problems should not be viewed as evidence of program failure, but rather as an opportunity to learn and improve the program. Information about both problems and successes not only helps your program, but also helps other programs learn and improve.

● *Evaluation is just another form of monitoring*. Program managers and staff often view program evaluation as a way for funders to monitor programs to find out whether staff are doing what they are supposed to be doing. Program evaluation, however, is not the same as monitoring. Sometimes the information collected to monitor a program overlaps with information needed for an evaluation, but the two processes ask very different questions.

● *Evaluation requires setting performance standards, and this is too difficult*. Many program managers believe that an evaluation requires setting performance standards, such as specifying the percentage of participants who will demonstrate changes or exhibit particular behaviors. Program staff worry that if these performance standards are not met, their project will be judged a failure. This concern is somewhat justified because often funders will require setting such standards. However, performance standards can only be set if there is extensive evaluation information on a particular program in a variety of settings. Without this information, performance standards are completely arbitrary and meaningless.

Guidelines for Conducting a Successful Evaluation:

You can maximize the benefits that evaluation offers by following a few basic guidelines in preparing for and conducting your evaluation.

● *Invest heavily in planning*. Invest both time and effort in deciding what you want to learn from your evaluation. This is the single most important step you will take in this process. Consider what you would like to discover about your program and its impact on participants, and use this information to guide your evaluation planning.

● *Integrate the evaluation into ongoing activities of the program*. Program managers often view evaluation as something that an outsider "does to" a program after it is over, or as an activity "tacked on" merely to please funders. Unfortunately, many programs are evaluated in this way. This approach greatly limits the benefits that program managers and staff can gain from an evaluation. Planning the evaluation should begin at the same time as planning the program so that you can use evaluation feedback to inform program operations.

● *Participate in the evaluation and show program staff that you think it is important*. An evaluation needs the participation of the program manager to succeed. Even if an outside evaluator is hired to conduct the evaluation, program managers must be full partners in the evaluation process. An outside evaluator cannot do it alone. You must teach the evaluator about your program, your participants, and your objectives. Also, staff will value the evaluation if you, the program manager, value it yourself. Talk about it with staff individually and in meetings. If you hire an outside evaluator to conduct the evaluation, be sure that this individual attends staff meetings and gives presentations on the status of the evaluation. Your involvement will encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility for the evaluation among all program staff.

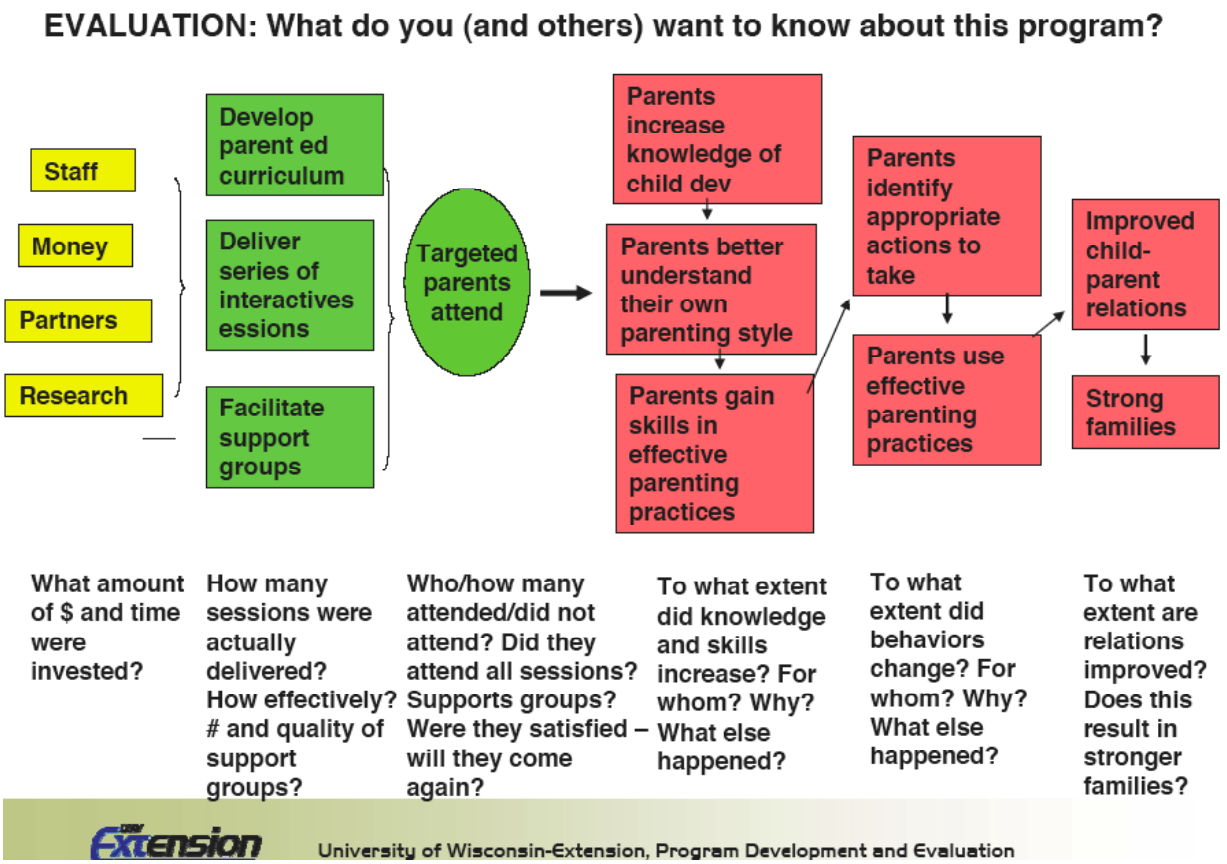
● *Involve as many of the program staff as much as possible and as early as possible*. Project staff have a considerable stake in the success of the evaluation, and involving them early on in the process will enhance the evaluation's effectiveness. Staff will have questions and issues that the evaluation can address, and are usually pleased when the evaluation validates their own hunches about what does and does not work in the program. Because of their experiences and expertise, program staff can ensure that the evaluation questions, design, and methodology are appropriate for the program's participants. Furthermore, early involvement of staff will promote their willingness to participate in data collection and other evaluation-related tasks.

● *Be realistic about the burden on you and your staff*. Evaluations are work. Even if your evaluation calls for an outside evaluator to do most of the data collection, it still takes time to arrange for the evaluator to have access to records, administer questionnaires, or conduct interviews. It is common for both agencies and evaluators to underestimate how much additional effort this involves. When program managers and staff brainstorm about all of the questions they want answered, they often produce a very long list. This process can result in an evaluation that is too complicated. Focus on the key questions that assess your program's general effectiveness.

● *Be aware of the ethical and cultural issues in an evaluation*. This guideline is very important. When you are evaluating a program that provides services or training, you must always consider your responsibilities to the participants and the community. You must ensure that the evaluation is relevant to and respectful of the cultural backgrounds and individuality of participants. Evaluation instruments and methods of data collection must be culturally sensitive and appropriate for your participants. Participants must be informed that they are taking part in an evaluation and that they

have the right to refuse to participate in this activity without jeopardizing their participation in the program. Finally, you must ensure that confidentiality of participant information will be maintained.

The graphic below illustrates a sample evaluation process.



How Do You Prepare for an Evaluation?

When you build a house, you start by laying the foundation. If your foundation is not well constructed, your house will eventually develop cracks and you will be constantly patching them up. Preparing for an evaluation is like laying a foundation for a house. The effectiveness of an evaluation ultimately depends on how well you have planned it.

Begin preparing for the evaluation when you are planning the program, component, or service that you want to evaluate. This approach will ensure that the evaluation reflects the program's goals and objectives. The process of preparing for an evaluation should involve the outside evaluator or consultant (if you decide to hire one), all program staff who are to be part of the evaluation team, and anyone else in the agency who will be involved. The following steps are designed to help you build a strong foundation for your evaluation.

Step 1: Decide what to evaluate. Programs vary in size and scope. Some programs have multiple components, whereas others have only one or two. You can evaluate your entire program, one or two program components, or even one or two services or activities within a component. To a large extent, your decision about what to evaluate will depend on your available financial and staff resources. If your resources are limited, you may want to narrow the scope of your evaluation. It is better to conduct an effective evaluation of a single program component than to attempt an evaluation of several components or an entire program without sufficient resources.

If your program is already operational, you may decide you want to evaluate a particular service or component because you are unsure about its effectiveness with some of your participants. Or, you may want to evaluate your program because you believe it is effective and you want to obtain additional funding to continue or expand it.

Step 2: Build a model of your program. Whether you decide to evaluate an entire program, a single component, or a single service, you will need to build a model that clearly describes what you plan to do. A model will provide a structural framework for your evaluation. You will need to develop a clear picture of the particular program, component, or service to be evaluated so that everyone involved has a shared understanding of what they are evaluating. Building a model will help you with this task.

- Assumptions about your target population. Your assumptions about your target population are the reasons why you decided to develop a program, program component, or service. These assumptions may be based on theory, your own experiences in working with the target population, or your review of existing research or program literature.

- Program interventions. The program's interventions or implementation objectives represent what you plan to do to respond to the problems identified in your assumptions. They include the specific services, activities, or products you plan to develop or implement.

- Immediate outcomes. These are your expectations about the changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that you expect to result from your intervention by the time participants complete the program.

- Intermediate outcomes. Intermediate outcomes represent the changes in participants that you think will follow after immediate outcomes are achieved.

- Anticipated program impact. The anticipated program impact represents your expectations about the long-term effects of your program on participants or the community. They are derived logically from your immediate and intermediate outcomes.

Step 3: State your program implementation and participant outcome objectives in measurable terms. The program model serves as a basis for identifying your program's implementation and participant outcome objectives. Initially, you should focus your evaluation on assessing whether implementation objectives and immediate participant outcome objectives were attained. This task will allow you to assess whether it is worthwhile to commit additional resources to evaluating attainment of intermediate and final or long-term outcome objectives.

Remember, every program, component, or service can be characterized by two types of objectives — implementation objectives and outcome objectives. Both types of objectives will need to be stated in measurable terms.

Often program managers believe that stating objectives in measurable terms means that they have to establish performance standards or some kind of arbitrary "measure" that the program must attain. This is not correct. Stating objectives in measurable terms simply means that you describe what you plan to do in your program and how you expect the participants to change in a way will allow you to measure these objectives. From this perspective, measurement can involve anything from counting the number of services (or determining the duration of services) to using a standardized test that will result in a quantifiable score. State implementation objectives in measurable terms. Examples of implementation objectives include the following:

- What you plan to do — The services/activities you plan to provide or the products you plan to develop, and the duration and intensity of the services or activities.

- Who will do it — What the staffing arrangements will be; the characteristics and qualifications of the program staff who will deliver the services, conduct the training, or develop the products; and how these individuals will be recruited and hired.

- Who you plan to reach and how many — A description of the participant population for the program; the number of participants to be reached during a specific time frame; and how you plan to recruit or reach the participants. State participant outcome objectives in measurable terms. This process requires you to be specific about the changes in knowledge, attitudes, awareness, or behavior that you expect to occur as a result of participation in your program. One way to be specific about these changes is to ask yourself the following question:

How Will We Know That the Expected Changes Occurred?

To answer this question, you will have to identify the evidence needed to demonstrate that your participants have changed.

Step 4: Identify the context for your evaluation. Identifying contextual issues is essential to building a solid foundation for your evaluation. During this process, you will want to involve as many members of your expected evaluation team as possible. The decisions you make about how to address these contextual issues in your evaluation will be fundamental to ensuring that the evaluation operates successfully and that its design and methodology are appropriate for your participant population.

Program evaluations do not take place in a vacuum, and the context of an evaluation must be considered before the evaluation can be planned and designed. Although many contextual factors can affect your evaluation, the most common factors pertain to your agency, your staff, and your participant population.

Participant diversity can present a significant challenge to an evaluation effort. Instruments and methods that may be appropriate for some participants may not be for others.

Written questionnaires may be easily completed by some participants, but others may not have adequate literacy levels. Similarly, face-to-face interviews may be appropriate for some of the cultural groups the program serves, but not to others.

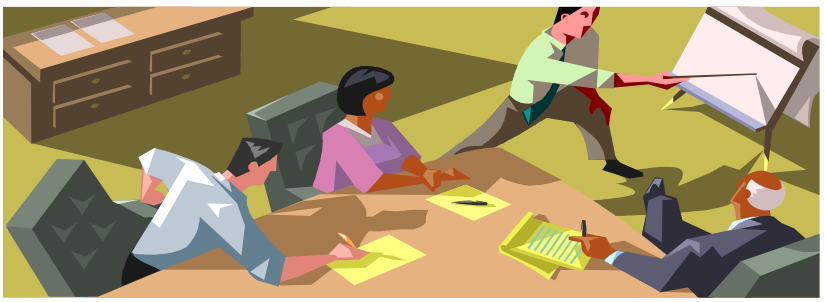
If you serve a diverse population of participants, you may need to be flexible in your data collection methods. You may design an instrument, for example, that can be administered either as a written instrument or as an interview instrument. You also may need to have your instruments translated into different languages. However, it is important to remember that just translating an instrument does not necessarily mean that it will be culturally appropriate.

If you serve a particular cultural group, you may need to select the individuals who are to collect the evaluation information from the same cultural or ethnic group as your participants. If you are concerned about the literacy levels of your population, you will need to pilot test your instruments to make sure that participants understand what is being asked of them.

(The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation; Administration on Children, Youth, and Families)

Sharing Evaluation Results

Evaluation results need to be shared with school and community members. The following text offers suggestions for making clear and effective presentations. While the topic addresses school board presentations, the tips are useful for presentations in a variety of situations and settings.



Tips for Making Presentations to School Boards: Preparing Your Remarks, Power Point Slides, etc.

- *Delete "educationese."* Words frequently used in education don't seem like jargon to educators, but may to others. Ask a "lay" person to review your slides.

- *When possible, include both statistics and anecdotes in your presentation.* Policy /decision makers need data and detail, but be sure to include anecdotal evidence as well. Share successes. (E.g., "One of our teachers said, 'The climate here has really improved since we all worked together on outlining our performance criteria.'" Or, "a student told me that working on the history portfolio was the most exciting learning experience he's had in high school.")

- *Ask students and parents to be part of your presentation whenever possible.* Board members want to hear from those most affected by the proposal or program you are presenting.

- *Don't "surprise" the administration.* Some administrations will want to review your presentation before a meeting; others may not.

- *Send handouts/Power Point slides out to board members in their packets before the meeting.* Most board members would rather listen to you than appear rude while reading your material.

- *Keep your presentation shorter than the time you are allotted to allow time for questions.*

- *Brainstorm a list of board member questions beforehand and decide how you will answer them.* Think about budget issues, policy issues, community concerns. You may not have answers to all the questions, so decide in advance how you will respond to that type of question.

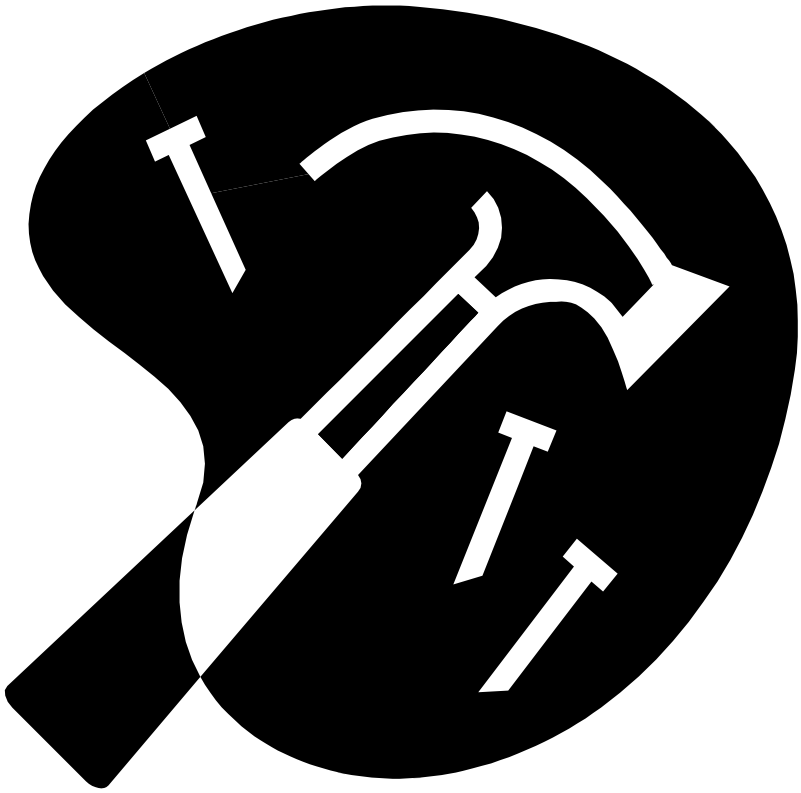
- *Attend a board meeting before your presentation.* Note how the room is laid out, how board members are addressed, and the kinds of questions they ask.

Presenting to the Board

- *Speak directly to board members (unless the room is arranged otherwise) using effective presentation skills: eye contact, voice inflection, open body language, etc.* It may be tempting to look at/talk to administrators (you probably know them well) or the audience (especially if it's a large and interested one), but keep in mind that the board members are the decision makers—ultimately the ones you want to direct your message to—and you don't want to turn your back to them or avoid eye contact.

- *Don't react defensively to board questions.*

(Small Schools Project; Reaching All Families: Creating Family-Friendly Schools)



Chapter 14

Tools

Tools

When developing, implementing and evaluating a program, it is important to use data to make decisions. Data come in two forms—qualitative (e.g. data in the forms of interviews, focus groups, video, written responses) and quantitative (data that can be gathered using a scale and are counted or compared.) This chapter offers a variety of tools schools and districts may utilize in to gather the data necessary to develop, evaluate and refine family involvement programs.

Surveys

Surveys can be developed in house, or acquired and developed according to determined standards. Before choosing a survey tool, it is important to determine the survey's suitability by considering the following questions:

- Is the survey's reading level appropriate for our school and community?

- Is the language appropriate for our school and community? (Surveys may need to be translated for non-English speaking parents and community members, but literacy must also be considered. Some parents and residents do not read their native language.)

- Is there a common understanding about the concepts? Are there terms or phrases in the survey that will be confusing to or misinterpreted by our staff, parents, or community members? (e.g., Parent Room versus Family Center)

- Are the tasks and directions easy to follow?

- Will the questions be perceived as too intrusive?

- Will we get the information we want if we use the questions in the survey?

Assessing Current Practices

The Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium provides a checklist that assesses current parent involvement practices.

The survey is based on the six types of parent involvement identified by Joyce Epstein, Ph.D., of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University. The survey is intended for parents with children from Pre-K through 12th grade and is seven pages long. Interpretive information is not provided online.

For more information, go to http://www.maec.org/index.html.

The Mid-Atlantic Equity Center Parent Involvement Survey

School:_____Date:_____

Number of Children:___Grade level(s): Pre-K K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 (circle all that apply)

Language(s) spoken at home:_____ Country of origin:_____

The _____ Public School system is working to strengthen partnerships between schools and families in order to help children perform better in school. In order to continue to do so, they would like to collect as much information as possible regarding the involvement of parents of diverse backgrounds and the schools their children attend. The purpose of this survey is to get your opinion on how well the schools have met your family's and children's needs and how do you feel about your and/or the involvement of other parents in the schools. There are no right or wrong answers. We are only interested in your opinions. The findings of the survey will be summarized and used to make improvements.

DIRECTIONS: Please circle or check the selection that most closely matches your answer for each item. The last page provides room for written comments.

A. PARENTING

1. Last year, did the school sponsor workshops or courses to help parents understand and work with children?

   __Yes __No __Do not know

2. Approximately how many workshops or courses did the school provide for parents on parenting skills (e.g. discipline, child development, etc) last year?

   1 2-3 4-5 6 or more Do not know

3. How many workshops or courses did you or your family attend last year?

   1 2-3 4-5 6 or more

4. If you did attend workshops or courses, overall, were they well prepared and interesting?

   __ Yes always
   __ Usually
   __ Not usually
   __ Never

5. If you did attend workshops or courses, overall, did they provide you with useful information?

__ Yes always
__ Usually
__ Not usually
__ Never

6. Are workshops or courses provided in different languages? Are interpreters used?

__ No, workshops are only in English
__ Yes, workshops are in different languages (specify other languages: _____)
__ Yes, interpreters are available (specify other languages:_____)
__ I do not know

7. If you did not attend many workshops, please specify why (check all that apply):

__ I was not provided with enough information or notice
__ Workshops were not held at convenient times
__ No child care was available
__ Workshop information provided is difficult for parents to understand
__ I am not interested in workshop topics

8. If you attended workshops, respond to the following:

STATEMENT	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The workshops helped me better understand my child's needs				
I have used the techniques offered in the workshops				
I believe that my child has improved his/her skills and/or behaviors as a result of using the techniques suggested in the workshops				

9. If you did not attend many workshops, please specify why (check all that apply):

__ I was not provided with enough information or notice
__ Workshops were not held at convenient times
__ No child care available
__ Workshop information provided is difficult for parents to understand
__ I was not interested in workshop topics

10. How much of the following information has the school provided to you or your family:

Topic	A lot	Some	Very little	None
Child development and parenting				
How to support learning at home				
Discipline techniques				

11.
12. **B. COMMUNICATION**
13. When you visit your child's school . . .

Question	Yes	Somewhat	No
Is the reception staff friendly and helpful?			
Are the teachers easy to talk to?			
Is the principal easy to talk to?			
Do you feel comfortable interacting with parents of cultural & ethnic backgrounds different from yours?			

14. Are written communications from school, such as report cards and newsletters . . .
15. Available in a language you understand?

__Yes __ No

16. Clearly written?

__Yes __ No

17. The best way to communicate with you and/or your family is: (check your two preferred methods)

__ School memos
__ Children's teachers
__ PTA newsletter
__ Parent liaison
__ Counselor
__ Parent representative (your own culture)
__ Parent representative (of any given culture)

18. How many parent-teacher conferences did you attend last year?

None 1 2 or more

19. Did you receive sufficient information about:

Category	Yes	Somewhat	No
English-as-a-second language programs			
Special education programs			
Gifted & talented programs			
Bilingual education programs			
Title I programs			
Report cards			
Standardized testing			

20. How often do you communicate with teachers about your child's performance?

__Often __ A little __ Never

21. Are report card grades fully explained to you?

__Yes __ Somewhat __ No

22. Are standardized tests fully explained to you?

__Yes __ Somewhat __ No

23. Does the school provide translators, when needed, for:
24. Parent conferences?

__ Yes __ No __ Not Sure

25. Private individual meetings?

__Yes __ No __ Not Sure

26. When requested by parent?

__Yes __ No __ Not Sure

C. VOLUNTEERING

27. Were you asked about your interests, talents, and availability for volunteering at school?

__ Yes
__ No

28. Last year, did you volunteer at school?

__ Yes __ No

29. If you did volunteer, please indicate for what type of activity and the frequency:

Activity	Never	1 Time	2-3 Times	3+ Times
Helping on trips or at parties				
Sharing food, stories and customs from your culture				
Assisting in the classroom (e.g., tutoring, grading papers, etc.)				
Leading club and/or activities				
Other (please specify)_____				

30. If you have not volunteered at school, please indicate why:

__ Have never been asked
__ I don't know how
__ Conflict with work schedule
__ Have other children to care for
__ I do not feel comfortable
__ Not interested
__ Other (please specify)_____

D. LEARNING AT HOME

31. Do teachers suggest homework activities for you and your child?

__ Often __ Sometimes __ Very Little __ Never

32. Do you listen to your child read or read aloud to your child?

__ Often __ Sometimes __ Very Little __ Never

33. Is the information related to home learning activities provided in different languages?

__ No, information only in English
__ Yes, information is in different languages (specify other languages: _____)
__ I do not know

E. DECISION MAKING

34. Does the school have an active parent-teacher organization (e.g. PTA, PTO)?

__ Yes __ No __Do not know

35. If yes, how many parent-teacher organization meetings have you attended?

__ 1 __ 2 or more __ None

36. Are parents involved in planning and evaluating school programs?

__ Yes __ No __ Do not know

37. If yes, have you participated on any school councils or committees?

__ Yes (please specify: _____)
__ No, I have not participated on any school councils or committees.

38. Does the school actively seek ideas from parents on school-related issues (e.g. selecting staff, developing programs)?

__ Yes __ No __ Do not know

39. If yes, have you given your ideas or advice on school-related issues?

__ Yes (please specify _____)
__ No, I have not offered my ideas or advice on school-related issues
__ No, I have not been asked for my ideas or advice on school-related issues

40. Which of these statements best reflect your opinion and/or level of participation?

STATEMENT	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel my opinion is taken in consideration when it comes to school policy decisions.				
I actively participate in PTA meetings.				
I actively participate in school committees and/or school improvement teams.				
School staff consider my opinion when it comes to decisions concerning my child.				
I don't feel part of the decision making body at the school at any level.				
I believe Latino parents are very involved in decision making at the school.				
I have not been asked for my ideas or advice on school-related issues.				

41. Would you like to participate more in school decisions? (Please check all that apply.)

__Yes, I would like to participate more but I don't feel encouraged by the school.

__Yes, I would like to participate more but I do not know how to get involved.

__Yes, I would like to participate more but I do not have time.

__Yes, I would like to participate more but communicating in English is difficult for me.

__Yes, I would like to participate more but I do not understand the issues very well.

__Yes, I would like to participate more but I do not feel comfortable.

__No, I am not interested in participating in school decision making.

__No, I would rather become involved in other school activities.

__ Other reasons: _____

F. COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

42. Does the school participate in events planned by members of the ethnic community?

__ Yes __ No __ Do not know

43. Does the school provide any of the following support programs for families of diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds?

Family literacy programs PROGRAM	Yes	No	Do not know
G.E.D. programs			
English-as-a-second-language programs			
Computer training programs			

44. In which of these support programs have you participated?

Family literacy programs PROGRAM	Yes	No
G.E.D. programs		
English-as-a-second-language programs		
Computer training programs		

45. What kind of support programs would you like the school to offer to you and your family?

__ Family literacy programs
__ G.E.D. programs
__ English-as-a-second language programs
__ Computer training programs
__ Other programs:

(1) _____

(2) _____

46. What is your opinion about the following statements? Please indicate.

STATEMENT	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The school provides information about community organizations that support my child's learning.				
The school participates in community events organized by diverse ethnic groups				
The parent liaison assists parents and communities to become more involved in the schools				

47. What best describes your education level

__ Informal Education
__ Elementary School
__ High School
__ Trade school/Community College degree
__ College degree
__ Master's/Doctorate degree

48. What best describes your household?

__Two parents or guardians, both working outside the home
__Two parents or guardians, one working outside the home
__Two parents or guardians, none working outside the home
__One parent or guardian, working outside the home
__One parent or guardian not working outside the home
__Other, please specify_____

49. Do any other relatives (or other persons) live in your home? Please specify.

_____

_____

_____

50. Other comments or suggestions on how the school can create better connections with families:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS FORM.

Connecting Home and School

An assessment tool for educators working with culturally and linguistically diverse students

Developed by
the Countywide Working Group for Latino Student Success

Co-Chaired by
Serena Cruz Walsh, Multnomah County Commissioner
and
Dr. Terry Kneisler, Superintendent Reynolds School District

Family involvement is crucial to the success of all students. Families whose home language is not English face larger obstacles than most in order to become involved in their child's education. This tool was developed using research based best practices on the importance of family involvement for students for whom English is not their home language.

The tool is versatile; the assessment can be completed by individual teachers or administrators or by staff working as a group. There are at least three suggested uses for the tool: as an evaluative measure, as a guide to improving family involvement, and finally and perhaps most significantly, **to promote reflection and discussion among staff.**

MULTNOMAH
COUNTY

I. Preconditions for Family Involvement: School Staff and School Environment

	Yes		No	
	In Place	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
School Staff:				
1. Understand the importance of the family's role in their child's education	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Understand the customs and cultural history of immigrant families	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Recognize the strengths of families raising children under adverse circumstances	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Have personal contact with parents	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creating a welcoming environment				
5. School signage is adequate, clear, and in multiple languages	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. All staff can access language interpreters in person or by phone on the spot	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. School invites new parents to visit the school before the start of the year, meet the teachers, view the classrooms etc	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Staff is welcoming to parents and helpful in directing them where they need to go	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Family members are actively encouraged to visit and/or volunteer in the class, especially in primary grades	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Family members are invited to join their child for meals	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. School displays reflect the diversity and multi-culturalism of the student population	☐	☐	☐	☐

For the following items, please rate your school's engagement as either basic, advanced, or excellent:

12. Staff Trainings on Cultural Competency
    - ____ ***Basic:*** Staff trainings and discussions at the start of each year during a regular staff meeting
    - ____ ***Advanced:*** two or more staff trainings a year on cultural competency
    - ____ ***Excellent:*** In addition to ongoing training, staff uses self-reflective tools on a regular basis to identify potential for cultural bias

13. Contact Between Teachers and Families
    - ____ ***Basic:*** Families are invited in their home language to attend back-to-school night and parent teacher conferences
    - ____ ***Advanced:*** Teachers have a minimum of one face to face with the family of each of their students
    - ____ ***Excellent:*** Teachers have multiple in-person contacts with family members

14. Parent Notification of Important Meetings
    - ____ ***Basic:*** Families are notified of important meetings in writing
    - ____ ***Advanced:*** Families are notified of important meetings in writing in their home language
    - ____ ***Excellent:*** In addition to written notification in their home language, parents receive a follow-up phone reminder

15. Parents as Classroom Volunteers
    - ____ ***Basic:*** Family members are informed in home language of how/when they can volunteer in their child's class
    - ____ ***Advanced:*** Family members are actively recruited to volunteer in their child's class
    - ____ ***Excellent:*** Family members who volunteer are provided with some training and an appropriate role in the classroom

II. Familiarizing Families with the System: How Do Schools Work?

	Yes		No	
Orienting Families on an On-Going Basis	In Place	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
16. School staff develops regular community contacts to communicate important information to families, including housing complexes, stores, libraries and radio	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Principal hosts informal gatherings and invites new and existing families	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. School holds orientation in appropriate languages at the beginning of the year and throughout, which explain:				
a. How families can access a person who speaks their language when they want to communicate	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. How and when families can communicate with teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. School schedule and critical dates	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Absence and tardy policy	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Specifics on how to register their child for sports and other activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. When to expect report cards and how to interpret them	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. The role and contact information for counselors	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Understanding behavior policies	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Understanding testing	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Dress codes	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Vaccinations	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. New families are paired with more established families for mentoring	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Principals make themselves available to parent meetings as requested	☐	☐	☐	☐

For the following item, please rate your school's engagement as either basic, advanced, or excellent

21. Parent/Family Orientation
    _____ ***Basic:*** orientation information is in the family's home language, is mailed to each family and they are actively encouraged to attend a one-time orientation meeting
    _____ ***Advanced:*** the orientation is done in person at the start and middle of the year and outreach to families is active and culturally appropriate
    _____ ***Excellent:*** Orientation and informational meetings are held in appropriate language on a regular basis and outreach is active and culturally appropriate

III. Families as Partners: Involving Families in Student Learning

	Yes		No	
	In Place	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
Parent/Teacher Conferences				
22. Teachers arrange a family conference early in the year to learn about the child, to orient the parent to classroom policies, and to share academic information	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Sufficient numbers of language translators (not children) are available for non-English speaking parents	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Language appropriate childcare is available	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Teachers establish method for families to communicate directly with teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. Families participate with teacher in helping children set academic goals each year	☐	☐	☐	☐

For the following item, please rate your school's engagement as either basic, advanced, or excellent

27. Parent/teacher conferences:
____ ***Basic:*** conference is scheduled and a written notification in the family's home language is sent home
____ ***Advanced:*** Each parent receives a phone call, in the family's home language, to schedule the appointment
____ ***Excellent:*** If a parent does not come into the conference, the teacher either conducts a phone conference or makes a home visit with an interpreter if necessary

On-Going Family Involvement in Academics

28. Principals and teachers regularly send home:				
a. Notes to celebrate successes	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Folders of completed student to be reviewed regularly	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Specifics about how to create a positive learning environment at home	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. Teachers distribute a homework log to families with instructions in the family's home language on how to help their child with homework (Family level of involvement may range from sitting with the child while he/she works to actually assisting the child)	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. Classrooms produce bilingual newsletters for families on a regular basis	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. A school representative (this may include community partners) visits the home of all new elementary students and middle and high school students who are having problems	☐	☐	☐	☐

IV. Parents as Leaders in Education: Developing Leadership Skills in Family Members

	Yes		No	
	In Place	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
Provide Access to Tools Families Need to Help Their Children (may involve collaboration w/ community partners)				
32. Create and promote learning opportunities for families in the school: e.g. ESL, computer, and/or in home language literacy classes	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. Offer and promote family involvement classes using evidence based curriculum such as "Parents as Partners" to increase familial knowledge of: educational systems, school expectations, social/emotional development of children, and how families can support education	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provide Leadership Opportunities and Training				
34. Offer culturally appropriate leadership training classes for family members	☐	☐	☐	☐
35. Actively recruit immigrant family members to participate in leadership roles in the school, and provide:				
a. interpretation	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. childcare	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. mentoring	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please complete the following identifying information:

The tool was completed by:

☐ An individual staff person

☐ Group of staff

☐ _____

Please complete the following evaluation information:

	Yes		No	
	In Place	Could Improve	Could Do It	Not Possible Now
Please review the tool and total the number of checks in the following categories:	____	____	____	____

	Basic	Advanced	Excellent
Please review the tool and total the number of checks in each of the engagement categories:	____	____	____

Assessing Your Attitudes

Whether a school limits parents to traditional roles or embraces their leadership often depends on the attitudes of school leaders, such as officers of the parent association or the principal and senior staff. Which set of attitudes about parent involvement more closely resembles those at your school?

Traditional Parent Involvement:	**Parent Leadership:**
☐ It is the school's job to determine how parents should be involved.	☐ Parents should be fully involved in deciding how to engage the school's families.
☐ Only well-educated parents should be involved in the classroom.	☐ Every family has something important to contribute to children's learning.
☐ Parents' primary role is to reinforce at home what the school is teaching.	☐ Parents and teachers share responsibility for children's learning.
☐ Most parents want to leave their children's education to the experts and don't want to intrude in school matters.	☐ Most parents want to be actively engaged in their children's learning and to be consulted about school policies.
☐ Parents are interested primarily in their own children.	☐ Parents are concerned about the success of all children.
☐ Schools know best about students and their needs. Parents should let educators do their jobs.	☐ Schools should recognize that all parents are experts about their children and have much to offer educators.
☐ Families should make their homes more like the school.	☐ A school should reflect its families' cultural backgrounds and traditions.
☐ Few parents want to take leadership responsibility.	☐ Parents can be at different stages of readiness for leadership. Many want more responsibility.
☐ Problems at school should be resolved within the school. Involving families might undermine community support and damage the school's reputation.	☐ When problems arise, the principal and staff should reach out to all who are affected. Many problems cannot be resolved without active community support and cooperation.

(The Case for Parent Leadership)

PTA®

*every*child. *one* voice.®

PTA
Schools of Excellence Certification
A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Community

An Introduction to Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification

PTA's Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification is the gold standard for parent involvement practices. National PTA believes schools that implement the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement, the foundation of our certification program, are demonstrating a commitment to building strong partnerships between home and school to support student success.

The certification process offers schools the opportunity to evaluate strengths and accomplishments in parent and family involvement while shedding light on areas that need improvement. It can also bring recognition, credibility, respect, and pride to a school and its community.

The Certification of Excellence distinguishes these schools that include input from all stakeholders: parents, teachers, students, administrators, and the community. Certification also can assist schools in showing how they are meeting the parent involvement requirements in the No Child Left Behind Act. This includes, ensuring that parents:

- Play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
- Are encouraged to be actively involved in their children's education at schools;
- Are full partners in their children's education; and
- Are included, as appropriate, in the decision-making and advisory committees to assist in the education of their children

All schools earning a Parent Involvement Certification of Excellence receive significant public recognition at the local, state and national level. The certificate is valid for three years.

National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement

More than 35 years of research has proven beyond dispute the positive connection between parent involvement and student success. Effectively engaging parents and families in the education of their children has the potential to be far more transformational than any other type of education reform. National PTA recognizes that schools with well-structured, quality parent and family involvement programs experience profound benefits for students, parents, teachers, and overall school quality.

National Standards

Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification is based on National PTA's six National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs, which have been endorsed by nearly 100

education organizations and universities. The National Standards are built around the types of parent involvement identified by Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., at Johns Hopkins University. They are:

I: Communicating—Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful (e.g., school newsletters, parent–teacher conferences).
What to look for: Do parents receive copies of their child's work for comment and review? Does the school offer informal activities in which parents, staff, community members, and business leaders can interact? Does the school regularly send a newsletter to parents and the community?

II: Parenting—Parenting skills are promoted and supported (e.g., parenting workshops and classes).
What to look for: Does the community think of the school as a resource for parenting support? Does the school offer classes, workshops, or meetings on positive parenting? Does it offer links to community resources or services?

III: Student Learning—Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning (e.g., assistance on how to help with homework, understanding testing and assessment of children).
What to look for: Do parents volunteer in the classroom, provide support through a tutoring hotline, or help maintain teacher quality? Do parents interact regularly with their child's teachers about setting student goals?

IV: Volunteering—Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought (e.g., assisting in the classroom or at home, celebrating volunteer efforts).
What to look for: If parents do not have time to volunteer, have they received helpful information about alternate school resources such as transportation and childcare?

V: School Decision Making and Advocacy—Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families (e.g., participating on a decision-making committee/council, informing parents about school policies and how they affect students).
What to look for: Have parents been invited to participate in important decisions about school policies, practices, reform issues, and goals? Do parents know what the school's current goals and policies are?

VI: Collaborating with Community—Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning (e.g., providing community resources for families, model school partnerships with community groups and businesses).
What to look for: Does the school partner with local businesses, community organizations, and service groups to strengthen the school and student learning? Do community members receive resources—cultural, recreational, academic, health-related, and others—from the school?

Parent Involvement Certification Process at a Glance

1) Register online (PTA website).
2) Form an action team that represent the key stakeholders in your school and community.
3) Provide opportunities to share the National Standards with the school community
4) Survey the school community
5) Record survey results online
6) Share survey results with the school community
7) Create a Parent Involvement Plan that build on your strengths and address your areas that need improvement
8) Gather supporting documentation and submit your application and processing fee to the National PTA.
9) Celebrate your success

For more information on National PTA's Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification Program please visit our website at www.pta.org

#1. Recruit and Welcome Adults

Name…….. School…… Date……..

I am a (check one) ☐ parent/guardian ☐ other family member (grandparent, uncle) ☐ community member ☐ student
☐ teacher ☐ principal/administrator ☐ school staff

Directions:
1. Check all the boxes for the statements that best describe how your school engages parents and community members according to this particular community value area.
2. Then review your responses, and mark the box that best describes how well your school "welcomes and recruits adults."
3. Finally, describe what you think your school-community should focus on to improve in this community value area.

Community Value #1 **Fresno Unified schools actively *recruit and welcome adults* that reflect the diversity of our children to be mutual partners in supporting student academic achievement.**

☆	☆☆	☆☆☆ *(Meets Community Standards)*	☆☆☆☆ *(Better Than Community Standards)*
☐ In general, the school activities that are open to parents and community members are poorly attended.	☐ In general, those parents and community members who attend school activities reflect only one or two groups of children at this school.	☐ In general, parents and community members who attend school activities reflect all but one group of children at this school.	☐ In general, parents, community members, and school staff who attend school activities reflect well the diversity of children at this school.
☐ The school has no designated person or group responsible for parent and community engagement at this school.	☐ This school has a designated person or group responsible for parent and community engagement, but their work has not been focused on recruiting and welcoming parents and community members into the school.	☐ This school has a designated person or group responsible for parent and community engagement, and they are effective in recruiting and welcoming parents and community members into this school.	☐ Engaging parents and community members is not the work of one person or group. Most adults in this school recruit and welcome parents and community members and work with them as mutual partners in the education of their children.
☐ This school does not plan school activities that fit into parents' work and home schedules.	☐ This school uses some strategies to ensure good participation by parents in school activities, such as start times that fit into parents' home and work schedules and notices that the school sends home with students.	☐ This school uses many strategies to ensure good participation by parents in school activities, such as good start times, snacks and meals, babysitting, translators, an activity calendar, and notices sent home.	☐ This school uses many strategies to ensure good participation by parents in school activities, and parents and teachers work together to get people out to the school activities.
☐ This school has no strategies to reach out to parents new to the school and to nearby community members.	☐ School strategies to build relationships with parents new to this school and with nearby community members include telephone calls and sending out letters.	☐ School strategies to build relationships with parents new to this school and with nearby community members includes individual meetings, house meetings, and neighborhood walks to talk about the school.	☐ School strategies to build relationships with parents new to this school and with nearby community members include individual meetings, house meetings, and neighborhood walks to talk about school and community issues.

☐ In general, parents and community members don't know about the way in which they can participate in the work of this school.	☐ In general, this school welcomes parents and community members to participate in limited ways, such as chaperoning, raising money, and helping teachers with classroom supplies.	☐ In general, this school welcomes parents and community members to participate in the work in the school, especially in helping students to learn such as tutoring, reading to students, helping in classroom activities, and participating in family learning activities.	☐ In general, this school welcomes parents and community members to participate in the work of the school, especially in helping students to learn and also in helping schools to bridge cultural differences.

Looking at my responses above, I think my school's ability to *recruit and welcome adults* is (mark one)

☐ ☆ *(is unacceptable)* ☐ ☆ ☆ *(needs improvement)* ☐ ☆ ☆ ☆ *(meets community standards)* ☐ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ *(better than community standards)*

To improve in this area, I think we should: (please describe)

(Fresno Unified School District)

#2. Parents as Partners

Name…….. School…… Date……..

I am a (check one) ☐ parent/guardian ☐ other family member (grandparent, uncle) ☐ community member ☐ student
☐ teacher ☐ principal/administrator ☐ school staff

Directions:
1. Check all the boxes for the statements that best describe how your school engages parents and community members according to this particular community value area.
4. Then review your responses, and mark the box that best describes how well your school "parents as partners."
5. Finally, describe what you think your school-community should focus on to improve in this community value area.

Community Value #2 **Fresno Unified schools have a diversity of options for *parents as partners* in supporting student academic achievement that are based on mutual commitment, responsibility, and respect.**

☆	☆☆	☆☆☆ *(Meets Community Standards)*	☆☆☆☆ *(Better Than Community Standards)*
☐ This school invites parents and community members to up to three annual school events, not including sporting events.	☐ This school invites parents and community members to at least four annual school events, not including sporting events.	☐ This school invites parents and community members to at least four annual school events, not including sporting events, of which at least two events involve review of classroom work (science fair, portfolio review, student exhibitions, and so on).	☐ Annual events are going on throughout the school year, many of which involve review of classroom work (science fair, portfolio review, student exhibitions, and so on).
☐ Not many parents attend Back-to-School night.	☐ Many parents attend Back-to-school night, but the focus is on classroom and teacher routines such as classroom rules and consequences, course information, and expectations for homework.	☐ Many parents attend Back-to-school night, and teachers and parents share equally in the conversations about student learning.	☐ A traditional Back-to-school night is no longer held because teachers and parents regularly engage in conversation and action about student learning.
☐ This school does not allow parents and community members to visit or assist in after-school and/or intercession activities.	☐ Parents and community members help to chaperone and hand out materials during after-school and/or intercession activities.	☐ Parents and community members help children learn during after-school and/or intercession activities.	☐ Parents and community members are trained to help children learn during after-school and/or intercession activities, and children see parents, community members, and teachers working as partners.

☐ The school expects parents and community members to only attend or chaperone school events.	☐ At this school, parents and community members help the school by chaperoning and/or raising money.	☐ At this school, teachers, students, parents, and community members plan and work on school events together.	☐ At this school, teachers, students, parents, and community members plan and work on school events together, and the events focus on student learning, such as student exhibitions, school community discussions on learning standards, family math nights, and so on.
☐ Parents know about student work by the homework, tests, and/or portfolios send home with the student.	☐ Parents know about student work by signing off on homework, tests, and/or portfolios sent home with the student.	☐ Parents know about student work by parent-teacher conversations-at least twice a year-about what a child must do to pass or to master material at that grade level.	☐ Parents and community members know about student work by parent-teacher conversations about what a child must do to pass or to master material at that grade level and by student exhibition nights (more than one per year).
☐ At this school, parents rarely help out in the classroom.	☐ At this school, parent help in the classroom by getting supplies and handing out materials.	☐ At this school, parents help in many classrooms by helping students with the learning activities.	☐ At this school, parents help in many classrooms by helping students with the learning activities and help in bringing the diversity of the students into the work of the classroom.
☐ In general, there are few opportunities for parents and community members to participate in the work of the school.	☐ In general, parents and community members can participate in school activities but they are limited to traditional roles, such as chaperoning and raising money.	☐ In general, parents and community members help in helping children learn.	☐ Parents and community members are recruited to help in the classroom and students see parents and teachers working together as mutual partners in their education.

Looking at my responses above, I think my school's ability to work with *parents as partners* is (mark one)

☐ ☆ *(is unacceptable)* ☐ ☆ ☆ *(needs improvement)* ☐ ☆ ☆ ☆ *(meets community standards)* ☐ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ *(better than community standards)*

To improve in this area, I think we should: (please describe)

(Fresno Unified School District)

#3. To Engage Our Children in the Work of the Community and the Community to Engage in Our Children's Education

Name…….. School…… Date……..

I am a (check one) ☐ parent/guardian ☐ other family member (grandparent, uncle) ☐ community member ☐ student
☐ teacher ☐ principal/administrator ☐ school staff

Directions:
1. Check all the boxes for the statements that best describe how your school engages parents and community members according to this particular community value area.
6. Then review your responses, and mark the box that best describes how well your school "engages our children in the work of the community and the community engages in our children's education."
7. Finally, describe what you think your school-community should focus on to improve in this community value area.

Community Value #3	**Fresno Unified schools collaborate with the Fresno community including city leaders, businesses, faith-based organizations, institutions of higher education, industrial/agricultural groups, and cultural and community organizations to engage our children in work of the community and the community to engage in our children's education.**

☆	☆☆	☆☆☆ *(Meets Community Standards)*	☆☆☆☆ *(Better Than Community Standards)*
☐ This school does not have relationship with a community organization.	☐ This school has a relationship with at least one community organization, but it is limited to donations and sponsoring school events and field trips.	☐ The school has a relationship with at least one community organization and members of that organization are regularly on campus helping students learn.	☐ This school has a relationship with one or more community organizations that spend time on campus helping students learn, helping schools bridge cultural differences, and helping the school work on community issues.
☐ This school does not have a relationship with a business, industrial, or agricultural organizations.	☐ The school has a relationship with at least one business, industrial, or agricultural organization but it is limited to donations and sponsoring school events and student field trips.	☐ The school has a relationship with at least one business, industrial, or agricultural organization and members of that organization are regularly on campus helping students learn.	☐ The school has a relationship with one or more businesses, industrial, and /or agricultural organizations and the members of the organizations are regularly on campus helping students learn. Also, the work of the organization is directly related to the school's academic focus.
☐ The school has no program involving a partnership with a college or university.	☐ The school has at least one program with a college or university but it generally benefits the college, such as student teaching or other internship program.	☐ The school has a program with a college or university that helps some students prepare for college.	☐ The school has an on-going relationship with at least one college or university that helps many parents, teachers, and students know about how to prepare students for college.

☐ Students at this school have little or no interaction with adults in the Fresnan community besides the school staff and their parents.	☐ Students at this school sometimes meet adults in the Fresnan community through field trips or tutoring.	☐ Students at this school often meet adults in the Fresnan community through school assignments that require interaction with Fresnan organizations, businesses, and colleges.	☐ Students at this school have on-going relationships with adults in the Fresnan community through school assignments that require students to help other Fresnans and require the organization to help students with their long-term educational goals.
☐ At this school, student learning rarely involves Fresnan community organizations, businesses, industrial/agricultural groups, colleges or universities.`	☐ At this school, student learning about Fresnan community organizations, businesses, industrial/agricultural groups, colleges or universities is limited to students knowing about the organization.	☐ Some students at this school develop relationships with Fresnan community organizations, businesses, industrial/agricultural groups, colleges or universities through internships and class assignments where students provide information or a service to the organization.	☐ Many students at this school develop relationships with Fresnan community organizations, businesses, industrial/agricultural groups, colleges or universities through internships and class assignments where student work provides information or a service to the organization.

Looking at my responses above, I think my school's ability to *engage our children in the work of the community and the community engage in our children's education* is (mark one)

☐ ☆ *(is unacceptable)* ☐ ☆ ☆ *(needs improvement)* ☐ ☆ ☆ ☆ *(meets community standards)* ☐ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ *(better than community standards)*

To improve in this area, I think we should: (please describe)

(Fresno Unified School District)

#4. Skillfulness in Communication and Outreach

Name…….. School…… Date……..

I am a (check one) ☐ parent/guardian ☐ other family member (grandparent, uncle) ☐ community member ☐ student
☐ teacher ☐ principal/administrator ☐ school staff

Directions:
1. Check all the boxes for the statements that best describe how your school engages parents and community members according to this particular community value area.
8. Then review your responses, and mark the box that best describes how well your school has "skillfulness in communication and outreach."
9. Finally, describe what you think your school-community should focus on to improve in this community value area.

Community Value #4 **Fresno Unified schools develop *skillfulness in communication and outreach* to parents, members of the community, and one another.**

☆	☆☆	☆☆☆ *(Meets Community Standards)*	☆☆☆☆ *(Better Than Community Standards)*
☐ In general, parents and community members do not see or hear signs of welcome when visiting or dropping by school.	☐ Parents and community members see signs of welcome in their home languages and are greeted warmly by the school staff in English.	☐ Parents and community members see signs of welcome in their home language, hear simple greetings in their home language, and are introduced to individuals who can interpret for them.	☐ Parents and community members see signs of welcome in their home language, hear simple greetings in their home language, and are introduced to individuals who can interpret for them.
☐ There is no parent resource center at this school for parents and community members to meet.	☐ There is a resource room at this school for parent and community members, but either they have to share the space with other school activities or there is little information available about parenting and student learning.	☐ There is a parent resource center at this school for parents and community members with materials and information on community resources, the American education system, school activities, homework, and parenting skills to support student achievement.	☐ There is a parent resource center at this school for parents and community members with materials and information on community resources, the American education system, school activities, homework, and parenting skills to support student achievement in the school's home languages.
☐ At this school, there is no training for parents.	☐ At this school, there is parent training on parenting skills and how to support student learning but it is conducted by FUSD staff.	☐ At this school, there is a "parent academy" staffed by other parents, providing training in parenting skills, the American education system, and how to support student learning.	☐ At this school, there is a "parent academy" staffed by other parents, providing training in parenting skills, the American education system, and how to support student learning. Also, parents can take adult education courses to earn their GED, learn English, and/or learn computer technology.

☐ At this school, when teachers meet with parents, the discussion is usually about student behavior and not about student learning.	☐ At this school, teachers meet with parents to discuss student learning, but the discussions are often one-sided because the teachers don't know very much about the student's home life and/or the parents don't know very much about the educational system.	☐ Many teacher and parents in this school are learning to share equally in conversations about student learning and progress.	☐ Many teachers and parents at this school share equally in conversations about student learning and progress. During these conversations, the teacher learns something important about the student's home life and the parents learn something important about the student's school work.
☐ There are few opportunities for parents and community members to share their ideas and concerns for their children's education and academic achievement. There is no network of school-family-community relationships.	☐ The opportunities for parents and community members to share their ideas and concerns for their children's education and academic achievement is mostly through traditional Back-to-school nights and parent-teacher conferences. There is a weak network of school-family-community relationships.	☐ Parents, community members, teachers, and administrators regularly share their ideas and concerns for their children's education and academic achievement through individual meetings and house meetings. There is a strong network of school-family-community relationships.	☐ Parents, community members, teachers, and administrators regularly share their ideas and concerns for their children's education and academic achievement through individual meetings, house meetings, and neighborhood walks. There is a strong network of school-family-community relationships and what is learned in those meetings becomes the basis for action to improve the school.
☐ Adults at this school often talk about "my school" and "these children" instead of "our school" and "our children".	☐ Some adults at this school talk about "my school" and "these children" while others talk about "our school" and "our children".	☐ Most adults at this school talk about "our school and "our children".	☐ Most adults at this school talk about "our school" and "our children" and there is a strong culture of "we all share in the education of our children".
☐ Few notices or newsletters sent home are translated in the school's home languages.	☐ Some notices and newsletters sent home are translated in the school's home languages.	☐ All notices and newsletters sent home are translated in the school's home languages.	☐ All notices and newsletters sent home are translated in the school's home languages.

Looking at my responses above, I think my school's *skillfulness in communication and outreach* is (mark one)

☐ ☆ *(is unacceptable)* ☐ ☆ ☆ *(needs improvement)* ☐ ☆ ☆ ☆ *(meets community standards)* ☐ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ *(better than community standards)*

To improve in this area, I think we should: (please describe)

(Fresno Unfied School District)

#5. Leadership Skills for Effective Parent Engagement

Name…….. School…… Date……..

I am a (check one) ☐ parent/guardian ☐ other family member (grandparent, uncle) ☐ community member ☐ student
☐ teacher ☐ principal/administrator ☐ school staff

Directions:
1. Check all the boxes for the statements that best describe how your school engages parents and community members according to this particular community value area.
10. Then review your responses, and mark the box that best describes how well your school shows "leadership skills for effective parent engagement."
11. Finally, describe what you think your school-community should focus on to improve in this community value area.

Community Value #5 **Fresno Unified in collaboration with school, parents, and community members, develops leadership skills for effective parent engagement.**

☆	☆☆	☆☆☆ *(Meets Community Standards)*	☆☆☆☆ *(Better Than Community Standards)*
☐ Parents, community members, school staff, and the principal do not meet to identify and solve problems affecting the school.	☐ As a school site council, parents, community members, school staff, and the principal meet to identify and solve problems affecting the school.	☐ Working on school problems is an ongoing process among parents, community members, school staff, and the principal and is not limited to the school site council.	☐ Working on school problems is an ongoing process among parents, community members, school staff and the principal. Oftentimes, someone other than the principal leads this work.
☐ In general, the school site council works in isolation of teachers, parents, and community members.	☐ Sometimes the school site council invites parents and/or community members to help with an issue or project.	☐ The school site council engages many parents and community in setting school priorities for resources and academic programs.	☐ Parents and community members work with members of the school site council to set school priorities and to get additional resources or academic programs for the school.
☐ The principal almost always makes decisions about the school.	☐ The principal asks a few people for their opinions and then usually makes a decision.	☐ The principal talks to many people about a situation and their ideas shape a decision.	☐ The principal talks to many people – always including parents and community members – before making a decision.

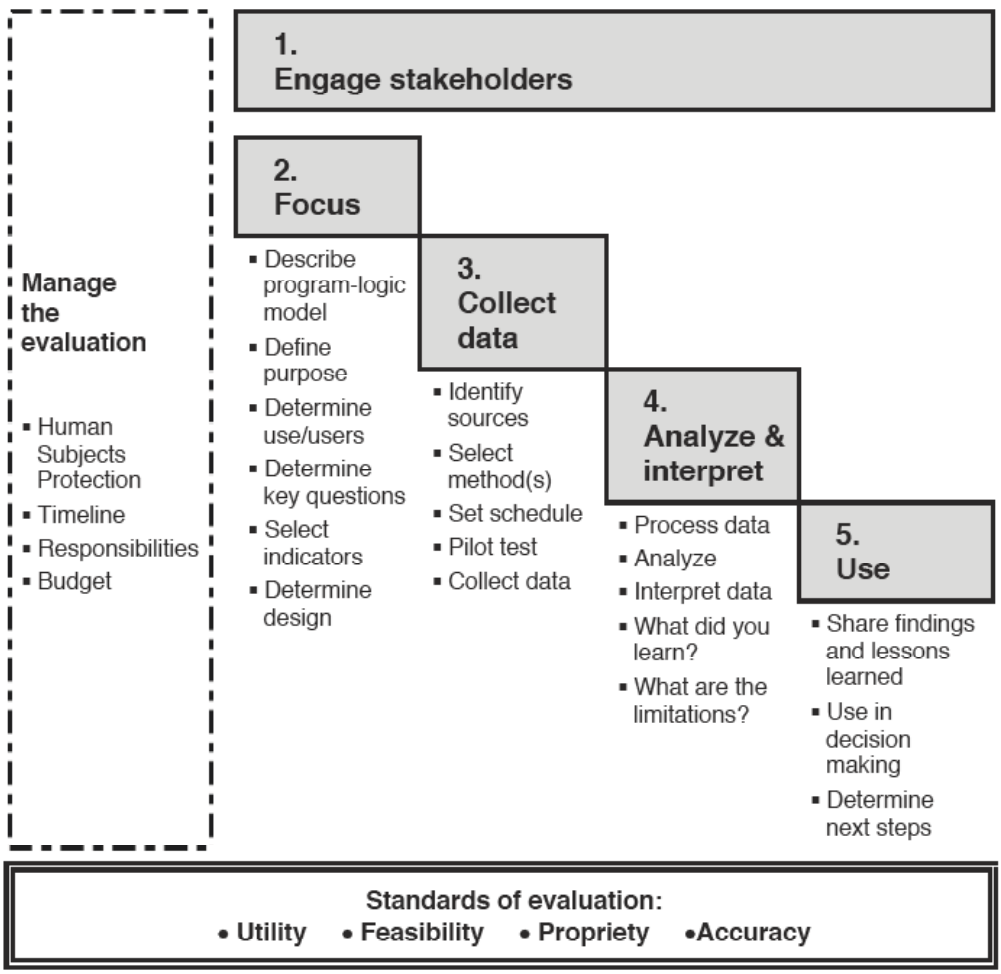
Looking at my responses above, I think my school's *leadership skills for effective parent engagement* are (mark one) ☐ ☆ *(are unacceptable)* ☐ ☆ ☆ *(need improvement)* ☐ ☆ ☆ ☆ *(meet community standards)* ☐ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ *(are better than community standards)*

To improve in this area, I think we should: (please describe)

(Fresno Unified School District)

Planning a Program Evaluation: Worksheet

Steps in Program Evaluation



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http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande

Engage Stakeholders

Who should be involved?

_____

How might they be engaged?

_____

Focus the Evaluation

What are you going to evaluate? Describe program (logic model).

_____

What is the purpose of the evaluation?

_____

Who will use the evaluation? How will they use it?

Who/users	How will they use the information?

What questions will the evaluation seek to answer?

_____

_____

_____

What information do you need to answer the questions?

What I wish to know	Indicators – How will I know it?

When is the evaluation needed?

_____

What evaluation design will you use?

_____

Collect the information

What sources of information will you use?

Existing information: _____

People: _____

Pictorial records and observations: _____

What data collection method(s) will you use?

- ❑ Survey
- ❑ Interview
- ❑ Observation
- ❑ Group techniques
- ❑ Case study
- ❑ Tests
- ❑ Photos, videos
- ❑ Document review
- ❑ Testimonials
- ❑ Expert panel
- ❑ Simulated problems or situations
- ❑ Journal, log, diary
- ❑ Unobtrusive measures
- ❑ Other (list) _____

Instrumentation: What is needed to record the information?

_____

_____

When will you collect data for each method you've chosen?

Method	Before program	During program	Immediately after	Later

Will a sample be used? _____

No ☐

Yes ☐ If yes, describe the procedure you will use.

_____

Pilot testing: when, where, how?

_____

Analyze and Interpret

How will the data be analyzed?

Data analysis methods: _____

Who responsible: _____

How will the information be interpreted—by whom?

_____

_____

What did you learn? What are the limitations?

_____

_____

Use the Information

How will the evaluation be communicated and shared?

To whom	When/where/how to present

Next steps? _____

Manage the evaluation

- ❑ Human subject's protection
- ❑ Management chart
- ❑ Timeline
- ❑ Responsibilities
- ❑ Budget

Standards

- ❑ Utility
- ❑ Feasibility
- ❑ Propriety
- ❑ Accuracy

Authors: Taylor-Powell, E.; Steele, S.; and Douglah, M.

MAKING EVALUATION MEANINGFUL TO ALL EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS

Paula Gangopadhyay[1]
September 2002

This checklist was developed to aid evaluators in making evaluation more meaningful to the diverse makeup of education stakeholders in the current marketplace. With education reform in the forefront and accountability a key issue, community involvement in education has greatly evolved in the past few years. As a result, the makeup of education stakeholders has also changed dramatically. Collaborations, partnerships, and collective action are buzzwords in education today. But businesses, government, parents, media, and community partners do not speak the same language as the education community. It is almost the tale of two different worlds that overlap the public and private sectors. Even though both are focused on issues of accountability, measurable outcomes, and connecting evaluation to strategic planning in school reform, the ideology and *modus operandi* of the education sector and larger community are quite different.

Evaluators need to recognize the current makeup of education stakeholders and format their *products* (reports) to be more meaningful and understandable to noneducation stakeholders in the community. This is critical in order to attract and sustain corporate funding and involvement in education, assist school board members in making important decisions about goals and objectives, and optimize the partnerships for overall gains in schools. By using an appropriate evaluation design and delivery method, evaluators can create a win-win situation for all and can impact major policy decisions.

The following checklist is organized on three levels:

1. Assessing the Customer Base (preevaluation)
2. Formatting the Evaluation (during and postevaluation)
3. Disseminating the Information and Educating the Stakeholders (postevaluation)

The rationale supporting each recommended step is provided in parenthesis.

1. Assessing the Customer Base. View the evaluation work from the stakeholders' perspectives. Consider your evaluation as 'the product' and take into account the larger audience who will be using your product.

❑	Determine who the evaluation's stakeholders are—school systems, government, corporations, parents, media, etc. *(This is critical to know up front, because it clearly delineates the context in which the evaluation results will be used.)*
❑	Examine the stakeholders' vested interests in the evaluation. *(Vested interests of community stakeholders may be tied to the local economy, politics, and other social issues indirectly connected to the project being evaluated. It is in the best interest of the evaluator to assess up front some of these indirect links that may affect the use of the evaluation in the future.)*
❑	Identify who is funding the evaluation. *(It is important for the evaluator to know the funding organization's goals and involvement in the project. This may help set up the framework for intended use of the evaluation.)*
❑	Find out if the evaluation will be built in from the inception of the project. *(In many instances projects do not involve evaluators while the project is ongoing; rather, they bring in evaluators late in the project to do summative evaluation with data collected by project staff. This limits the evaluation's potential to help improve the project. Also, without early joint planning with the evaluator, the project staff may not collect all the information needed to assess the project's merit and worth.)*

❑	Examine the existing research on the given issue. *(It is important to be informed about the subject area in which you are evaluating as well as about similar previous evaluations. This will help you identify approaches, theories, and tools that may help you conduct the evaluation. It will also help you identify gaps in the research that your evaluation may fill.)*
❑	Find out the main points of any contrary research. *(For your evaluation outcomes to challenge an existing point of view or prevalent assumptions, it is critical to address the claims of pertinent contrary research. Remember, these folks may challenge your evaluation findings, so place yourself in a strategic position by fully educating yourself about the opposition's main points and rationale.)*
❑	Identify what policy implications the evaluation research may have. *(This will help you assess how the evaluation may best generate long-term impacts.)*
❑	Find out which local legislators will be interested in your evaluation findings. *(Every evaluation aims to impact policymaking. Local legislators are the actors who can make use of the findings effectively and advocate for the cause. They can become strong and highly influential proponents of your evaluation findings.)*
❑	Assess the local, state, and national media's awareness, perception, and knowledge of the given issue. *(Remember, media can make or break the public's perception of a given issue.)*
2. Formatting the Evaluation Report. Make sure your evaluation report is comprehensible to all stakeholders.	
❑	Package your evaluation findings in a CASCADING MANNER to help the reader navigate from the key points (top) to the detailed format (bottom). *(Most nonacademic stakeholders will glance through the key points and will only refer to your actual detailed report "if need be." Suggested sequence: (1) title page with project title and evaluation question(s); (2) table of contents; (3) author's notes on approach taken/logic model; (4) one-page, bulleted summary of findings and related policy implications (most important; (5) executive summary; (6) at-a-glance bar graphs/pie charts delineating main findings; (7) other supporting research in the field; (8) your "in advance" counterpoints challenging any prospective opposing views; (9) full detailed report; (10) glossary of terms used in your evaluation report.)*
❑	Include simple, at-a-glance bar graphs, pie charts, and other graphic data displays. *(These are helpful visual aids for stakeholders, and business people especially are used to seeing information presented graphically.)*
❑	Clearly delineate the objectives for conducting the evaluation and provide author's notes on how you approached the topic and the rationale for using certain research methods. *(Assume that the reader does not know your rationale and approach.)*
❑	Always prepare a one-page, bulleted summary of the evaluation's findings and related policy implications. *(This is an alternative approach to the traditional executive summary. Most noneducation stakeholders are looking for a single page that identifies the evaluation's main findings and their relevance to policymaking or education reform. This is your chance to make the first and lasting impression.)*
❑	List references that support or endorse your findings. *(To demonstrate that your evaluation aligns with findings of other notable researchers.)*
❑	Cite your critics' potential counterpoints and support your findings with arguments based on empirical data. *(Most evaluators wait for critics to challenge their findings, then counter them with their own support points. Remember, the media and community stakeholders will not be interested in following a series of exchanges with supporting and counterarguments. To impact public opinion, make your point the first time.)*
❑	Address strands of education reform related to your evaluation results, and delineate the impact your findings may have on those issues. *(Additionally, these can be excerpted to be included in the popular and widely read national- and state-level education publications and media reports.)*

❑	Make specific recommendations on how to use the evaluation findings effectively and connect them to the overall strategic planning and change-management process of the project/organization. *(This will help the organization make effective use of the evaluation findings for long-term systemic change.)*
❑	Attach a glossary of research methods and terms used in your report. *(Assume 80 percent of your readers will not understand the evaluation vernacular. Educate them to make your work more meaningful.)*
3. Disseminating the Information and Educating the Stakeholders. Your role as the evaluator does not end with completing the report. To make a lasting and powerful impact on policy issues and in order to bring in systemic social change, your proactive involvement is needed in the postevaluation stages also. But remember, you can make or break your case depending on how you convey the message.	
❑	Disseminate your evaluation to all the stakeholders and not just your client. *(This helps a wider audience become aware of your research and opens the door for your involvement in future related projects.)*
❑	Disseminate your findings in a variety of ways to a wider and nontraditional audience. *(Consider disseminating your evaluation findings through local/regional Chamber of Commerce newsletters, letters to newspaper editors, school newsletters, legislative briefs, Web sites, and feedback workshops with various stakeholder groups and other means. Remember the wider the outreach, the greater the impact.)*
❑	Make press releases catchy rather than detailed and wordy—-provide the one-page bulleted findings rather than the executive summary. *(Chances of misreading bulleted points are far less than gleaning points from executive summary.)*
❑	Explore venues to educate all the stakeholders on how to use the evaluation. *(In addition to sharing the evaluation findings with educators and parents, consider briefing newspaper editorial boards, realtors, and local legislators.)*
❑	Keep a log on who is accessing, citing, and using your evaluation report. *(This is important for tapping into future clients as well as keeping track of how and where your evaluation findings are being used.)*

[1] Author's Profile: As the ex-Executive Director of Commission for Lansing Schools Success (CLASS), a major school reform initiative in Lansing, Paula Gangopadhyay gained valuable experience in helping disintegrate and interpret available data in a readily understandable format to various constituencies. Paula calls it "packaging in a user-friendly manner." Her recommended format was applauded at the National Partners in Education conference as well as utilized by school districts for school reform action plans. Ms. Gangopadhyay is also an Education Policy Fellow from the Institute of Education Policy and has valuable experience in connecting evaluation outcomes to policy development processes. She is currently involved in evaluating the Michigan Middle Start Public Policy Public Engagement program as well as the Kalamazoo United Way Youth Development Initiative.

Chapter 15

Resources

Family Involvement Resources and Links

Accountability

Continuous Improvement Planning (CIP). Planning for improvement leading to increased levels of student achievement requires clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the local school district and the state. The Supporting Evidence for Oregon's Standards for District Success Standard 4: Family and Community Engagement says that the district effectively engages families and community groups to remove barriers to learning in an effort to meet the intellectual, social, career, and developmental needs of all students. http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=201

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) NCLB Action Brief: Parental Involvement. While parents are mentioned over 300 times in various part of the No Child Left Behind act, this Action Brief will concentrate on Section 1118, Title I of the Act. It is the only section in the Act devoted solely to parental involvement, and if implemented effectively, provides the core elements that incorporate many of the other parental involvement provisions of NCLB. As you become familiar with NCLB through the various other PEN/NCPIE Action Briefs, you will find parental involvement roles defined throughout. These are important for you to know as well, but Section 1118 provisions are the core around which all of the other parental involvement provisions revolved. http://www.ncpie.org/nclbaction/parent_involvement.html

Title IA Federal Guidance. Title IA Federal Guidance is divided into five major sections. The first deals with general issues related to parental involvement, the second addresses the parental involvement responsibilities of State educational agencies (SEAs), the third describes responsibilities of local educational agencies (LEAs), the fourth describes the responsibilities of schools, and the fifth describes the responsibilities of LEAs and schools to build parents' capacity for becoming involved in improving their child's academic achievement. Included in the appendices are relevant definitions (Appendix A), key Title I, Part A parental notice requirements (Appendix B), a list of research-based resources for improving teaching and learning (Appendix C), a sample template that might be used for the development of a district-wide parental involvement policy (Appendix D), and a sample template for a school-parent compact (Appendix E). www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/parentinvguid.doc

Notice of Procedural Safeguards. This document outlines the legal rights of parents of children with disabilities. http://www.ode.state.or.us/pubs/proceduralsafeguards/

Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) 581, Division 15, Special Education. This site contains links to information about the OARs adopted by the State Board of Education. http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=47

Office of Student Learning and Partnership, Oregon Department of Education. On this site you will find an agreement form for a parent and district written agreement created by the Office of Student Learning and Partnership.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/pubs/forms/schoolage/agreedistparentasmform.doc

Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) Chapter 343, Special Education. This site contains a variety of links to information on the ORS education laws. http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=48

Title IA – Improving Basic Programs. This site offers links for applications and allocations for Title IA, planning tools, reporting, monitoring, evaluation, and resources.
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=95

Title IC – Migrant Education. Links to forms dealing with Title IC as well as a link to the Migrant Education Service Center (MESC) can be found on this site. The MESC is the educational support agency of the Title IC Migrant Education Office. http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=99

Title III – Limited English and Immigrant. Links to various programs pertaining to Title III, ELP standards, funding/grant information, as well as a program guide, monitoring forms, and other informational links are available on this site. http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=106

United States Code. This site offers information on education of individuals with disabilities (IDEA 2004: US Code, Title 20, Chapter 33). http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title20/chapter33_.html

Community Organizations and Government Agencies

Achiever. The Achiever is a newsletter published semi-monthly during the school year for parents and community leaders by the Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs.
www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/achiever/index.html?src=sm

The Chalkboard Project. The Chalkboard Project is an independent nonprofit group aimed at improving Oregon schools. The Chalkboard Project was created in 2004 by five Oregon foundations to find ways to strengthen the state's K-12 system. Two years ago, the organization launched the state's largest public opinion survey on education issues, collecting 50,000 Oregonians' opinions about their schools. Family involvement was identified by Oregonians as one of their top priorities. www.chalkboardproject.org

Education News Parents Can Use. Education News Parents Can Use is a television series about ways to ensure children's educational success focusing on schools, learning, and the No Child Left Behind Act. www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv

Family and Community Involvement. Community schools are grounded in the concept that learning occurs in many places – in school, after school, in neighborhoods and communities – throughout our lives. Research has shown that children need support from their families and communities to achieve their full potential. This site contains links for more information on Oregon's community schools. http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=274

Helping Your Child. The Helping Your Child publication series aims to provide parents with practical lessons and activities to help their children master reading, understand the value of homework and develop the skills and values necessary to achieve and grow. www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html

Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center. Matrix is the technical assistance center for Region 6 (which includes Oregon). http://www.matrixparents.org/Region6/

National Institute for Family Literacy. This comprehensive site offers links, definitions, programs and family literacy strategies. http://literacy.kent.edu/Midwest/FamilyLit/

Oregon Parent Training and Information Center's *(OrPTI).* Oregon PTI's mission is to educate and support parents, families and professionals in building partnerships that meet the needs of children and youth with the full range of disabilities ages birth through twenty six. Oregon PTI provides programs and services throughout the state. http://www.orpti.org/

Oregon PTA. For over 100 years, Oregon PTA has worked at the local, state and national levels to support and improve Oregon schools. Oregon PTA partners with educators to be a powerful voice for children, an important resource for parents and a strong advocate for public education. PTA offers trainings, tools and strategies for schools and families in English and Spanish. http://oregonpta.org/

Oregon Stand for Children. Stand for Children brings together people from all walks of life – parents, grandparents, people who work with children, and others who care about the next generation – in order to make children a top political priority. http://www.stand.org/or/

Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER). PACER is the national center for technical assistance for Parent Centers. The mission of PACER Center is to expand opportunities and enhance the quality of life of children and young adults with disabilities and their families, based on the concept of parents helping parents. http://www.pacer.org/

Parents for Public Schools. Parents for Public Schools is a national organization of community-based chapters working to strengthen public schools. Local chapters are groups of parents advocating for school improvement and more participation in school improvement programs. www.parents4publicschools.com

Salem Keizer Coalition for Equality. The coalition provides family involvement training and for low income and diverse families, as well as professional development to schools and districts. Contact: Eduardo Angulo, Director. eduardoangulo@bigplanet.com (503) 363-3909.

Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers. Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers is an innovative project that supports a unified technical assistance system for the purpose of developing, assisting and coordinating Parent Training and Information Projects and Community Parent Resource Centers under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This project is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and consists of 1 national center and 6 regional centers. The project is funded to strengthen the connections to the larger technical assistance network and fortify partnerships between parent centers and state education systems at regional and national levels. http://www.taalliance.org/

U.S. Department of Education. The U.S. Department of Education offers resources on a variety of topics including No Child Left Behind, choice, supplemental education, and helping your child learn. They offer information on the No Child Left Behind Act for parents (www.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/nclbguide/parentsguide.html), including a web page with descriptions of types of choices, programs, and resources about school choice and supplemental educational services.

Curricula and Programs

Aspira. Aspira produces the Aspira Parents for Education Excellence (APEX) program. The APEX program manual consists of 10 workshops that are available in both Spanish and English and are designed to increase the involvement of Latino parents in their children's education. www.aspira.org/Apex.html

Equals. Equals provides Family Math and Matemática Para La Familia. The program is designed to assist parents of children in Grades Pre-K–8 in becoming more effective partners in helping their children succeed in mathematics. The program provides workshops and curriculum materials that enable parents, teachers, and other community members to establish Family Math classes in their schools and communities. www.lhs.berkeley.edu/equals/FMnetwork.htm

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY). HIPPY is a parent involvement and school readiness program that helps parents prepare their young children for success in school. HIPPY helps parents empower themselves as their children's first teacher by giving them the tools, skills, and confidence they need to work with their children in the home. The program was designed to bring families, organizations, and communities together and to remove barriers to participation such as limited financial resources or lack of education. www.hippyusa.org

Math and Parent Partnerships (MAPPS). MAPPS engages parents in the mathematics of the schools. It revolves around three activities: workshops, mini-courses, and leadership development sessions. www.mapps.math.arizona.edu

National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI). NBCDI has developed the Parent Empowerment Project, a curriculum that seeks to educate, motivate, and inspire parents to excellence as their child's first teacher. www.nbcdi.org/programs/pep/pep.asp

National Parent School Partnership (PSP). The National Parent School Partnership Program of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) is a national program designed to train parents, school personnel, and community-based organizations to lead in the educational attainment of children. The curriculum covers topics such as parent rights and responsibilities, structure and function of schools, parent/teacher conferences, understanding group process, principles of leadership, and the road to the university. www.maldef.org/psp

National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA). The National PTA provides a model for parent involvement in local schools. The Building Successful Partnerships program of the NPTA trains national board members and state leaders in how to conduct workshops on parent involvement and the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs in local schools. They have developed a Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification program. NPTA also has developed numerous family involvement tools, programs, and trainings. www.pta.org

Parent Expectations Support Achievement (PESA). PESA is a parent education program that teaches parents techniques that will improve their child's academic achievement communication with the family, and self-confidence. School districts across the United States and Europe are using PESA for their parent involvement program at school and community sites.
www.streamer.lacoe.edu/PESA

Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE). PIQE encourages and supports low-income ethnically diverse parents of elementary, middle, and high school children to take a participatory role in assisting their children's education. PIQE sessions focus on topics like home/school collaboration, motivation in school, creating a home learning environment, the school system, and college preparation. www.piqe.org

Reading is Fundamental. The Family of Readers program from Reading Is Fundamental is a family reading program that focuses on educationally at-risk children, from birth through elementary school, and their families. The program helps parents develop the skills to support their children's reading and learning while their children learn to love books. www.rif.org/about/familyofreaders

Spanish Family Literacy Project. This program, based on effective literacy practices, is designed for children ages 4-7 and their parents. The program has already taught over 700 Spanish-speaking families to teach their children to read in their native Spanish, to better prepare them to read in English. Contact: Irma Sanchez Decker, decker_irma@salkeiz.k12.or.us or 503.391.4120.

West Ed. West Ed offers Can We Talk? ¿Conversamos? Training of Trainers, which is a curriculum for parents, PTA, parent/family organizations, parent liaisons, and community leaders to train to become workshop leaders to help empower parents to participate in their children's learning and development. www.wested.org/cs/we/view/serv/29

Educational Resources

Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE). CREDE offers research briefs on family involvement in reading and literacy development (e.g., Scaffold for School–Home Collaboration: Enhancing Reading and Language Development). CREDE also offers reports on how to organize family literacy nights and practitioner briefs on building partnerships with Latino immigrant parents. www.crede.org/products/print/research_briefs/rb9.shtml

Families and Advocates Partnerships for Education (FAPE). FAPE produces fact sheets for parents about special education law in different languages and publications on improving family involvement in special education. www.fape.org/pubs

The *Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy at Penn State*. This site offers numerous and extensive links and resources on the following topics: family literacy programs, models, curriculum/instruction, evaluation, culture/government, policy and professional development. http://www.ed.psu.edu/goodlinginstitute/bibliogrpahy.htm

Harvard Family Research Project. Harvard Family Research Project offers the Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) that serves as a free network for professionals interested in issues in family involvement. Membership includes monthly updates on the latest information on family involvement in an e-newsletter that highlights promising family involvement practices in the field and issue briefs that explore the role of family involvement in out-of-school time learning. www.finenetwork.org

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). NWREL focuses on priority educational needs in the region conducts programs and projects under four Centers of Excellence, providing services in the areas of classroom teaching and learning; school and district improvement; school, family, and community; and research, evaluation, and assessment. The site offers numerous resources and links. http://www.nwrel.org/

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's National Center for Family and Community Connections with School links people with research-based information and resources that they can use to effectively connect schools, families, and communities. It emphasizes connections that directly impact student achievement in reading and mathematics, as well as connections that contribute to the students' overall success in school and in life. The center reviewed emerging findings and research to develop an online database, annual conferences and annual reports to help advance procedural knowledge and to link research findings to practice. http://www.sedl.org/connections/about/html

Professional Development

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). ASCD has developed two online training courses that cover family involvement—as a topic unto itself and as a part of creating and sustaining professional learning communities. www.ascd.org

Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP). HFRP through the Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE), offers practical ideas to incorporate into professional development workshops and conference presentations including strategies to enhance students' reading skills and home–school communication. HFRP also offers a collection of teaching cases, narratives of problematic situations in home–school relations to be used for deliberation and reflection that can be used for professional development. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/fineresources.html

National Education Association (NEA). NEA sponsors the Family–School–Community Partnership initiative that has trained thousands of educators to improve student learning through the involvement of parents, families, and communities. The training is designed for educators, parents, families, and community members together. NEA has also produced books, videotapes, and workshops on family involvement. www.nea.org/priorityschools/famschoolpartnerships.html

National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). NNPS offers a variety of professional development opportunities for leaders to help meet the requirements in the No Child Left Behind Act. www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools has developed Modules for Community and Family Involvement with Schools. There are three interactive modules, available in English and Spanish: What Do We Mean by Family and Community Connections with Schools? What Structures Can Help Schools Create Effective Family and Community Involvement That Supports Learning Outside of School? How Can Schools Involve Family and Community Members in Supporting a Child's Readiness for School? http://www.sedl.org/learning/

U.S. Department of Education. U.S. Department of Education offers online professional development courses. The course on No Child Left Behind Basics for Teachers and Principals addresses the basic premises of the law and provides tools and follow-up activities to assist educators understand the law from the perspectives of parents and teachers. www.paec.org/teacher2teacher/nclbbasicsforprincipalsandteachers.html

Reports

A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement. This report presents research findings related to three areas: (1) impact of parent and community involvement on student achievement; (2) effective strategies to connect schools, families, and community; and (3) parent and community organizing efforts to improve schools. www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/fam33.html

A Shared Responsibility: Recommendations for Increasing Family and Community Involvement in Schools . This report highlights best practices and strategies for increasing family and community involvement, as well as includes policy and leadership issues.
http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/familylit/mpac/

Building Relationships for Student Success: School–Family–Community Partnerships and Student Achievement in the Northwest. This report highlights effective family involvement practices at high poverty, high minority schools in Oregon and Montana.
http://www.nwrel.org/partnerships/cloak/booklet2.pdf

The Case for Parent Leadership. This report offers research, examples of successful parent leadership programs, tools and quizzes and practical advice to promote the kind of parent involvement that will have a sustained impact on student learning.
http://www.parents.ksaplus.com/framesplpubs.html

Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After School. This is an after school program guide by Harvard Family Research Project.
www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources/families/index.html

Selected Parent Involvement Research. This document details the current family involvement research. The data are offered in bullet points, making it useful for presentations.
http://www.parentinstitute.com/educator/resources/research/research.php

Taking a Closer Look: A Guide to Online Resources on Family Involvement. A one-stop source, the Harvard Family Research Project has compiled and categorized an enormous amount of family involvement information.
http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~hfrptest/projects/fine/resources/guide/guide.html

Toolkits

Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Annie E. Casey Foundation offers the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Schools toolkit that provides information and resources to help schools work in partnership with families and communities. www.aecf.org/initiatives/mc/sf

Colorado Department of Education. The Colorado Department of Education has developed Strengthening Parent Involvement: A Toolkit, which includes as a series of tools, handouts, and resources. http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/pi_parent_school_partnerships.htm

OELA Parent Involvement Toolkit. The OELA Parent Involvement Toolkit has been developed as a ready-reference and guide to assist the parents of English language learning students to become more effectively involved in the educational process. This toolkit has evolved from the National

Education Goals and from the No Child Left Behind Law.
www.ncela.gwu.edu/oela/summit2004/cd/parent_toolkit.pdf

Running Start Toolkit. The Chalkboard Project is an independent nonprofit group aimed at improving education in Oregon schools. Chalkboard project has created Running Start, a two-part toolkit aimed at improving student achievement among Oregon's most at-risk youth.
www.chalkboardproject.org

SES in Action: A Toolkit for Parents and Community Leaders . Although growing numbers of children from low-income families are getting free tutoring through the Supplemental Educational Services (SES) program – part of No Child Left Behind – large numbers of eligible students have not yet signed up. Early evidence suggests that families in many districts don't know about SES, are receiving confusing or limited information about their tutoring options, or need help choosing the best provider for their child. This guide is intended to help community leaders build excitement and understanding of SES, with sections on: (1) SES basics; (2) taking action; and (3) resources.
www.ecs.org/html/Document.asp?chouseid=6314

Turning Points Transforming Middle Schools: Creating Partnerships, Bridging Worlds, Family and Community Engagement. This document offers a family involvement framework, tools and strategies. http://www.turningpts.org/pdf/Family.pdf

Video Resource List

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). The ASCD has produced several professional development videos on working with families— How To Create Successful Parent- Student Conference, How to Make Homework More Meaningful by Involving Parents during conferences, in the classroom, and in homework. www.ascd.org

George Lucas Educational Foundation. The George Lucas Educational Foundation website has a section for parents. Included are articles, research summaries, video clips and resources, and a section on "what's working," as well as interviews with school professionals about how to build partnerships with families. www.glef.org/php/keyword.php?id=225

Iris Media. Iris Media has develops research-based video educational tools. 7 Secretos Escolares (7 Secrets of School Success) is a culturally appropriate Spanish-language video and educational kit (available with English subtitles) that helps schools serving Hispanic students and families to improve homework strategies to raise student achievement. Working with Parents who have Cognitive Limitations teaches school staff how to recognize when a parent might have cognitive limitations, develop a respectful relationship with parents, communicate more effectively, and support the parents' self-determination. www.lookiris.com

National Association of Elementary School Principals. The National Association of Elementary School Principals developed The Apple of Your Eye: Helping Your Grandchildren, which offers advice on how to make the most of time with grandchildren, right and wrong ways to praise, asking questions that help children learn, and encouragement. Also of interest to raise parents' involvement, The Complete Guide to College Applications.
http://www.nassp.org/s_nassp/store_front.asp?CID=3&DID=3

Sunburst Communication. Sunburst Communication created two videos and related materials, Help Your Child Succeed in Schoo*l* (creating a homework plan, setting goals, staying on task, handling excuses) and Good Discipline, Good Kids (focuses on positive discipline strategies to present or remediate undesirable behaviors). Contact info: (800)431-1934

Chapter 16

Notes and Bibliography

Notes and Bibliography

Notes from Chapter 1

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