

# Best Practices for Parent Involvement in Schools

Research confirms that the involvement of parents and families in their children's education is critical to students' academic success.

The following practices, organized under six categories, are based on the State Board of Education's Parent and Family Involvement Policy, the National PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships.

## **BEST PRACTICES BY CATEGORY**

1. Create a welcoming school climate.
2. Establish effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication.
3. Strengthen families' knowledge and skills to support and extend their children's learning at home and in the community.
4. Provide families information related to child development and creating supportive learning environments.
5. Engage families in school planning, leadership and meaningful volunteer opportunities.
6. Connect students and families to community resources that strengthen and support students' learning and well-being.
7. Provide high ability services and collaboration – Counselors/Teachers and Parents.
8. Provide family engagement efforts and community participation.

## **CREATE A WELCOMING SCHOOL CLIMATE**

- Provide a personal greeting and welcome packet for all parents visiting the school, including a community services directory, important school contact information, school calendar and coupons to local businesses.
- Have teachers make personal contacts with families through e-mail, phone calls or home visits.
- Hold an open house, prior to school opening, at which families can meet their children's teachers, tour the school building and meet other parents.
- Provide transportation and child care to enable families to attend school-sponsored, family-involvement events.
- Offer translators to welcome and assist families during school activities.

## **ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-TO-HOME AND HOME-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION.**

- Provide printed information for parents on homework policies and on monitoring and supporting student work at home.
- Send home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.
- Develop electronic grade booklets so families can frequently monitor their children's progress.
- Clearly communicate school policies to all families in their home language.
- Establish formal mechanisms for families to communicate to administrators and teachers as needed (e.g., direct phone numbers, e-mail addresses, weekly hours for families to call or meet).

- Create a families “suggestion or comment” box (electronic and onsite) for families to anonymously provide their questions, concerns and recommendations.

### **STRENGTHEN FAMILIES’ KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO SUPPORT AND EXTEND THEIR CHILDREN’S LEARNING AT HOME AND IN THE COMMUNITY**

- Provide training and materials for parents on how to improve children’s study skills or learning in various academic subjects.
- Make regular homework assignments that require students to discuss with their families what they are learning in class.
- Provide a directory of community resources and activities that link to student learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students.
- Offer workshops to inform families of the high expectations and standards children are expected to meet in each grade level. Provide ways for families to support the expectations and learning at home.
- Engage families in opportunities to work with their children in setting their annual academic, college and career goals.

### **PROVIDE FAMILIES WITH INFORMATION RELATED TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND CREATING SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

- Provide workshops and materials for parents on typical development and appropriate parent and school expectations for various age groups.
- Print suggestions for parents on home conditions that support learning at each grade level.
- Partner with local agencies to provide regular parenting workshops on nutrition, family recreation or communication.
- Have school personnel make home visits at transition points such as preschool and elementary, middle and high school to help families and students understand what to expect.

### **ENGAGE FAMILIES IN SCHOOL PLANNING, LEADERSHIP AND MEANINGFUL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

- Create roles for parents on all decision-making and advisory committees, properly training them for the areas in which they will serve (e.g., curriculum, budget or school safety).
- Provide equal representation for parents on school governing bodies.
- Conduct a survey of parents to identify volunteer interests, talents and availability, matching these resources to school programs and staff-support needs.
- Create volunteer recognition activities such as events, certificates and thank-you cards.
- Establish a parent telephone tree to provide school information and encourage interaction among parents.
- Structure a network that links every family with a designated parent representative

### **CONNECT STUDENTS AND FAMILIES TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES THAT STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT STUDENTS' LEARNING AND WELL-BEING**

- Through school-community partnerships, facilitate families' access to community-based programs (e.g., health care and human services) to ensure that families have resources to be involved in their children's education.
- Establish school-business partnerships to provide students mentoring, internships and onsite, experiential learning opportunities.
- Connect students and families to service-learning projects in the community.  
Invite community partners to share resources at annual open houses or parent-teacher conferences.

### **PROVIDE HIGH ABILITY SERVICES AND COLLABORATION – COUNSELORS/TEACHERS AND PARENTS**

- School counselor and the high ability services coordinator or teacher of high ability students can plan and conduct a series of parent education opportunities that will help parents understand and support these children.
- Provide parent information regarding programs or services available for high ability and/or gifted learners in the district or region.
- Provide information about gifted children, their needs and characteristics.
- Create a guided discussion forum for parents to enhance their parenting skills and discuss social, emotional and academic needs of high ability children.

### **PROVIDE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

- Support the establishment of a parent advisory council, committee, task force or group.
- Support students and family membership in the school community.
- Invite parents of students with disabilities to participate on school decision making committees.
- Foster effective communication with families focused on student learning and developing.

## SOURCES

- National PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, retrieved Dec. 4, 2011, from <http://www.pta.org/1216.htm>.
- U.S. Department of Education, National PIRC Coordinator Center. (2010). *Transforming schools through family, school, and community engagement*.
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Communications and Outreach. (2010). *Parent power: Build the bridge to success*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Beyond Random Acts, Family, School, and Community Engagement as an Integral Part of Education Reform. (2010) Heather B. Weiss, M. Elena Lopez, and Heidi Rosenberg Harvard Family Research Project.
- <http://www.doe.in.gov/title1/resources>
- <http://www.doe.in.gov/title1/resources-families>
- <Http://www.doe.in.gov/highability>
- <Http://www.insource.org>