



Parent Involvement Newsletter

March 2011

Federation of Families of SC

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Webinar Training Dates:

- March 31, 2011, 3-4pm
- April 1, 2011, 9-10am
- April 5, 2011, 3-4pm
- April 6, 2011, 9-10am
- April 12, 2011, 9-10am
- April 14, 2011, 3-4pm

See page 6 for registration information

Benefits of Parent Involvement

Parent involvement, the definition has evolved over the years. The research is expansive but for most schools achieving it successfully remains elusive.

The Federation of Families of South Carolina (Federation), has been awarded a grant, by SCDOE, Office of Exceptional Children, to provide training and technical assistance to educators and administrators to help schools increase parent involvement.

Why do we need it?

Research indicates that children are more successful when parents are involved.

The benefits of parent involvement are:

- Higher Test Scores
- Better grades
- Better attendance
- Higher Levels of Homework completion
- More positive student motivation
- Improved attitudes about school work

When parents are involved student behavior also improves:

- When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.
- When students report feeling support from both home and school, they have more self-confidence, feel school is more

important and they tend to do better in school.

•Student at-risk behaviors such as alcohol use, violence, and other anti-social behaviors decrease as parent involvement increases.

Difficult to engage.....

Indicator 8 in the SC State Performance Plan states the need “to increase the percentage of parents with a child receiving special education services that report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities”.

OEC State level proposed activities to address Indicator 8 are:

- 1) provide technical assistance to LEA’s with regard to increasing the numbers of Black/African American parents on the FFY 2009 survey.
- 2) provide technical assistance to LEA’s with regard to increasing the numbers of respondent parents whose children’s primary disability is multiple disabilities and developmental delays.
- 3) provide technical assistance to LEA’s with regards to facilitating parental involvement for parents with children aged 16-20.
- 4)work with LEA’s and Avatar to increase the numbers

of surveys sent to parents and with follow-up efforts to obtain increased survey numbers.

It is important to get all parents involved in their child’s education. Some populations may be more difficult to engage. Parents of children receiving special education services may need additional encouragement and communication to become involved.

How do we achieve it?

In March and April the Federation will offer webinar training to include best practices to meaningfully involve families in their child’s education and school. As part of the webinar a toolkit will be provided with resources, forms and examples to get schools and teachers on their way to



engaging families as partners. For more information on the webinar and dates see Webinar Registration information on Page 6.

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Use of Parent/Family Engagement Checklist

Administrators may use the checklist on pages 3 & 4 to determine where the strengths and needs are in relationship to parent/family engagement in schools. You may choose to distribute to staff. When compiled it will give a strong concept of staff beliefs of your schools level of parent/family engagement. Page 4 includes an extended checklist for schools to measure parent involvement in PBIS. There is also a parent survey available. When this survey was administered to staff and parents in District schools, the two populations had very different opinions of parent involvement in PBIS.

Horry County School District: Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and Parent Involvement

Parent Involvement

“Mental Health, Schools and Families Working Together For All Children and Youth: Toward a Shared Agenda”, is a concept paper, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The purpose of the paper is to encourage state and local family and youth organizations, mental health agencies, education entities and schools across the nation to enter new relationships to achieve positive social, emotional and educational outcomes for every child.

both schools, administration agreed that they still have work to do to improve parent involvement.

As a result of focus groups and surveys with parents, the team learned the following from parents:

- Parents want to be involved in their child’s educational and behavioral success, they feel the barriers are:
- Knowledge-they feel they lack knowledge or know how to be effectively involved
- Opportunity-they did not feel they had the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way
- Collaboration-they felt they were not offered the opportunity to be a meaningful partner
- Reinforcement-while they felt welcome, when they did participate they didn’t feel valued

“Too often, policy focuses on dysfunctional families when it should focus instead on what families need to function best.” Tipper Gore

A collaborative of SC Department of Education, Office of Exceptional Children; SC Department of Mental Health, School Based Mental Health Services; the Federation of Families of SC and other child-serving agencies and organizations formed a Shared Agenda partnership based on the context of this report. As a result, the group has been able to gain knowledge and funding to move this initiative forward in South Carolina with a special emphasis on family involvement. Discussions among the partners agree that family involvement is the link in this concept that needs the greatest attention. In the 2009-2010 school year, the Federation partnered with Horry County School District and the Office of Exceptional Children to develop training and tools to help schools assess and improve parent involvement.

As a result of this feedback, the team has developed a toolkit to increase family involvement in schools with PBIS. The following tools will be made available through the Federation webinars.

- A Parent Survey – This tool helps access the level of understanding and comfort with involvement that the parent feels.
- A Staff Survey – This tool helps access the perception of staff members about parent understanding and involvement.
- A description of how to interpret the survey results
- Guidance to run Parent Focus Groups – This document describes how to set up and run a focus group with parents.
- Guidance to run Staff Focus Groups – This document describes how to set up and run a focus group with staff members.
- A PowerPoint for talking to parents about PBIS
- A PowerPoint for talking to staff members about parent involvement in PBIS.

The decision was to work with schools that already had strong family involvement efforts and supports in place. Those were identified as schools with Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as well as full time school-based mental health counselors, considered best practice. Horry County School District had the largest number of schools with both PBIS and school based mental health. Two schools were identified and volunteered to work closely with this project: Daisy Elementary and Black Water Middle schools.

While both schools had strengths-based family involvement plans in place, after holding focus groups and implementing school-wide surveys of teachers and parents as well as observation of

The Horry County School District– Parent Involvement in PBIS was funded by a grant from the SCDOE, Office of Exceptional Children.

Parent/ Family Engagement Checklist

Circle the number to the right of each question that you believe most closely describes your belief of parent/family engagement in your school.

School: _____ Date: _____

TASK	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Climate				
1. There is a process for assessing how welcomed, valued, and satisfied parents are in and with the school.	4	3	2	1
2. There is a plan for addressing ways to help families feel welcomed and valued.	4	3	2	1
3. There is a plan for training all staff to work collaboratively and respectfully with families.	4	3	2	1
4. Plans for addressing ways to help families feel welcomed and valued address diverse and at-risk families (for PBIS schools include those with students in the universal, targeted and intensive levels of PBIS).	4	3	2	1
Parent Involvement in Learning Activities at Home				
5. There is a process for assessing parents' opinions about their own involvement in learning activities at home.	4	3	2	1
6. There is a plan or set of activities for helping families to support their child's learning at home.	4	3	2	1
7. The plan includes activities for helping diverse and at-risk families, (for PBIS schools include those with students in the universal, targeted and intensive levels of PBIS).	4	3	2	1
Communication with Parents/Families				
8. There is a process for assessing parents' opinions about how well schools communicate with them.	4	3	2	1
9. There is a plan for communicating with families in varied and helpful ways.	4	3	2	1
10. The plan includes activities for communicating with diverse and at-risk families (for PBIS schools include those with students in the universal, targeted and intensive levels of PBIS).	4	3	2	1
Parent/Family Involvement at School (Volunteering, Assisting)				
11. There is a process for assessing parents' opinions about how they can support schools through their involvement at school.	4	3	2	1
12. There is a plan for how parents can be involved in supporting learning at school through volunteering and assisting.	4	3	2	1
13. The plan for parental involvement in school activities addresses how diverse and at-risk families (for PBIS schools include those with students in the universal, targeted and intensive levels of PBIS).	4	3	2	1
Parent/Family Involvement in Decision-Making				
14. There is a process for assessing parents' opinions about the extent to which they are encouraged to participate in decision-making committees and activities (e.g., leadership teams).	4	3	2	1

15. There is a plan for encouraging and supporting parent participation in decision-making committees and activities.	4	3	2	1
16. The plan for parental participation in decision-making committees and activities addresses how diverse and at-risk families (for PBIS schools include those with students in the universal, targeted and intensive levels of PBIS)..	4	3	2	1
17. There is a process for assessing parents' opinions about the extent to which they can provide input to school personnel about matters of importance including discipline that is taken seriously.	4	3	2	1
18. There is a plan for gathering and incorporating parents' input about matters of importance including discipline that is taken seriously.	4	3	2	1
19. The plan for gathering and incorporating parents' input about matters of importance including discipline addresses how diverse and at-risk families (for PBIS schools include those with students in the universal, targeted and intensive levels of PBIS).	4	3	2	1

Parent Involvement in Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Please circle the number that best describes your level of agreement with the following statements:	Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Mildly Dis-agree	Strongly Dis-agree
Families are informed and kept apprised of school wide systems and practices that acknowledge/reward positive behavior.	4	3	2	1
Families are informed and kept apprised of school wide systems and practices that teach behaviors to their child/children.	4	3	2	1
Communications with families regarding their youth are strength based and positively stated.	4	3	2	1
The school develops and implements practices to increase parental involvement in PBIS.	4	3	2	1
Parents feel comfortable talking with their child's teacher about behavior in the classroom.	4	3	2	1
Parents feel comfortable talking with their child's principal about behavior in the classroom.	4	3	2	1
Parents feel the PBIS helps their child be successful at school.	4	3	2	1
Parents feel the PBIS helps their child be successful on the bus.	4	3	2	1
Our school makes data based decisions on parent involvement in PBIS.	4	3	2	1
The parents of our students have a positive attitude towards PBIS.	4	3	2	1

Student Achievement Improves with Parent/School Partnerships

“At all grade levels, the evidence suggests that school policies, teacher practices and family practices are more important than race, parent education, family size, marital status and even grade level in determining whether parents continue to be part of their children’s education. No matter what the demographics, students are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, have better social skills, graduate and go on to post-secondary education when schools and families partner.”

Research indicates:

- Low-income African American children whose families maintained high rates of parent participation in elementary school are more likely to complete high school.

- Low-income African American children with mothers involved in their education showed more self-control in unruly and disorganized classrooms than children whose parents did not provide support.

- Latino youth who are academically high achieving have parents who provide encouragement and emphasize the value of education as a way out of poverty.

Henderson and Berla, 1997; Joyce Epstein; Karen Mapp, Family Involvement equals Student Success No Matter Background



Developing a successful school-family partnership must be a whole school endeavor, not the work of a single person or program.

(U.S. Department of Education, 1997)

Family Involvement: Critical to Success for Special Needs Children

A primary focus of this Parent Involvement project is to address the Office of Exceptional Children (OEC) State Performance Plan indicator 8, regarding parent involvement, “to increase the percentage of parents with a child receiving special education services that report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities”.

The APR, FFY 2008, reports an increase to 36%. 13,240 surveys were mailed to parents of children with disabilities. The response rate was 1,404, or 10.6%, indicating approximately 433 parents responded positively.

Among families of children with disabilities, family involvement varies across disability categories. The State Annual Performance Rate (APR) indicates one of the most underrepresented populations in responses were parents of students with learning disabilities (LD). Survey response data indicates that parents of students with an emotional disturbance (ED) responded at the same rate as those of students identified as LD. Both populations of parents’ responses were 0.010 with responses from parents of students in other disability categories as high as 0.032. Data indicates that youth with emotional disturbances (ED) are the least likely to receive help with homework, and their families, the least likely to

participate in three of four types of school-based activities; school meetings, events, and volunteering. Negative youth behavior is related to lower levels of family involvement at school and at home. Students with emotional/behavioral disabilities also had the highest dropout rate. Many students identified with LD, as their primary disability also have a high incidence of emotional/behavioral difficulties. The dropout rate for students identified as LD is 35 percent, exceeded only by the dropout rate for students identified as ED, which was 61.2 percent. The total of these two categories of special education students in SC reported by the Office of Exceptional Children (OEC) in 2009 is 49,847 or 55% of all special education students. Based on the percentages reported in the APR, these categories comprise the largest number of parents of students in special education that potentially would not be involved in a partnership with the school to increase their child’s academic or behavioral success. This research indicates a great need to address parent involvement with parents of students identified in these special education categories in South Carolina.

Harvard Family Research Project- Family Involvement Research Digest, 20052

US Department of Education- OSERS 23rd Annual Report

betterhighschools.org-May 2007



Webinars Include Best Practice in Parent/Family Involvement

The Three Tier Model for Family Engagement is one of the best practice approaches for Parent/Family Involvement that will be shared on the upcoming webinars providing schools with information to increase parent involvement. The webinars will include a toolkit of materials to aid increased parent involvement. This information will be provided as a train the trainer opportunity.

Webinar Registration Information:

Register online for the upcoming Parent Involvement in Education webinars provided by the Federation of Families of South Carolina, through a grant provided by the SC Department of Education, Office of Exceptional Children.

Select date and time of webinar, type link into your address browser to register :

*March 31, 2011, 3-4pm ;<https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/652187510>

*April 1, 2011, 9-10am; <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/784666390>

*April 5, 2011, 3-4pm; <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/989505182>

*April 6, 2011, 9-10am; <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/532624398>

*April 12, 2011, 9-10am; <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/553691846>

*April 14, 2011, 3-4pm; <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/539358062>

Or go to www.fedfamsc.org to view Family Involvement newsletter and cut and paste the link.

We Need You!

The Federation of Families of SC seeks to identify schools who will participate with us to document the benefit of increased parent involvement efforts by your school. You will be asked to organize two focus groups, one of teachers and one of parents. Federation staff have been trained and will facilitate the groups. Each school will also be asked to distribute a pre/post survey to parents and staff.

How will this help your school?

- The current parent involvement assessment used in the state does not provide useful information at the school level.
- Your school will have individual school data beyond the broad research based information.
- Your school will have school specific data of your strengths and needs to increase parent involvement from both parent and school perspective.

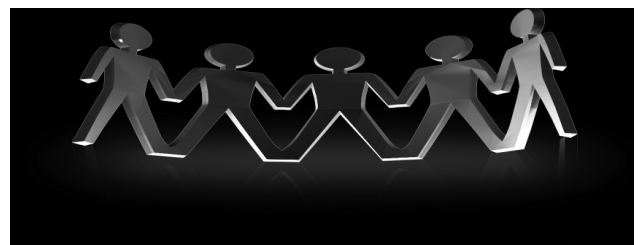
For more information contact Diane Flashnick or Crystal Bivens at the Federation of Families of SC.

Parent Involvement or Parent Engagement

Involvement is defined by the Miriam Webster Dictionary, “to enfold or envelope”, engagement, “to interlock with, to mesh”.

When you “involve” parents the ideas tend to come from the school. When you “engage” parents, ideas tend to be elicited from parents and staff in the context of developing trusting relationships.

“Learning First Alliance”, Larry Ferlazzo



For more information or technical assistance contact us at 866-779-0402 or in Columbia, 772-5210:

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