



# Federation of Families of South Carolina

## Parent Involvement Newsletter

September 2011

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### Does your School have a Parent Involvement Policy?

It has been said that parents are their children's first teachers. Educational research indicates that when parents are actively involved in their children's learning, student achievement is enhanced. The National Parent Teacher Association reported in 1997 that one of the most accurate predictors of student academic progress is the extent to which parents: (1) create a home environment that encourages learning; (2) communicate high but reasonable expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; (3) involve themselves in their children's education at school and in the community.

It is important to understand that the involvement of families in their children's education is not limited solely to attendance at PTO meetings or volunteering at school. What parents do at home with their children is even more important to the total educational effort and schools need to let parents know that they value both their contributions at school and their participation at home.

Parent involvement policies have become a requirement of several State and Federal Education laws including NCLB, IDEA, and the Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act (SC Code of Laws Title 59 - CHAPTER 28). A parent involvement policy explains how the school district or the school itself supports the important role of parents in the education of their children. The policy is the "plan" and requires both parents and schools to write down procedures and elements believed to constitute the most effective partnership between the school and families.

In developing a local school parent involvement policy, each school should:

- ⇒ Jointly develop with, and distribute to, parents an agreed upon written parent involvement policy,
- ⇒ Notify parents of the policy in an understandable and uniform format, and to the extent practical, in a language that the parents can understand.
- ⇒ Make the parent involvement policy available to the local community and update it periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school.
- ⇒ Hold an annual meeting, at a convenient time, to which all parents are invited and encouraged to attend. The purpose of the meeting is to:
  - Inform parents of that their school is participating in the development of the parent involvement policy;
  - Explain to parents their rights in the development of the policy; and
  - Inform parents that they can be involved in approving the parent involvement policy.
- ⇒ Offer a flexible number of meetings, such as meetings in the morning or evening. A school may provide transportation, child care, or home visits, as such services relate to parental involvement;
- ⇒ Involve parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in the planning, review, and improvement of programs for parent involvement including the planning, review, and improvement of the school parent involvement policy and the joint development of the school-wide program plan.

While clearly the most important aspect of improving parent involvement in schools is through practice,

# Suggested Parent Involvement Policy Self-Checklist

A recommended tool for administrators to develop a parent involvement policy for their districts and schools.

LEA Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

The policy should be:

- ⇒ Developed jointly with and agreed on by parents;
- ⇒ Written in an understandable format and provided in a language parents can understand;
- ⇒ Distributed to all parents; and
- ⇒ Made available to the local community and updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school.

CHECKLIST OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY COMPONENTS	YES	NO
1) The Policy describes how parents will be involved in the planning, review and improvement of the school's Parent Involvement Policy.		
2) The Policy states that an annual meeting will be held to inform parents of the school's purpose for Parent Involvement policy and to explain the requirements of the policy and their right to be involved.		
3) The Policy states that parent meetings, including parent conferences, will be held at different times during the day.		
4) The Policy states that funds may be used to pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with parent involvement activities, including transportation, childcare, or home visit expenses to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions.		
5) The Policy describes how parents will be involved in the planning, review, and improvement of the school's Parent Involvement Policy.		
6) The Policy describes how the school involves parents in the joint development of the all school policies.		
7) The Policy describes how the school involves parents in the joint development of School Improvement Plans. <i>(Applies only to Title I schools identified for School Improvement but is recommend for all schools)</i>		
8) The Policy describes how the school will provide parents with timely information about parent involvement activities and opportunities.		
9) The Policy describes how the school will provide parents with a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet.		
10) The Policy describes how the school will provide assistance to parents in understanding the State's academic content standards and student achievement standards, local academic assessments and how to monitor a child's progress and work with teachers to improve the achievement of their children.		
11) The Policy states that the school will provide, if requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible.		
12) The Policy outlines how parents, the entire school staff and students will share in the responsibility for improved student achievement.		
13) The Policy describes how the school provides materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parent involvement.		

## What Should A Policy Cover?

First and foremost, the policy must focus on improving student achievement. The research on family involvement and student achievement strongly suggests the following:

- A school that is family-friendly, warm, helpful, and welcoming to families of all backgrounds;
- Activities and programs for families that are clearly linked to improving achievement (Checklist: How will they help families understand what their children are learning, what good work for their children's age and grade level looks like, and how to help their children at home);
- Close, personal relationships between staff and families, through one-on-one and small group contact;
- Information, workshops and other activities for families on how to help their children's learning;
- Bridging cultural differences by understanding families home cultures, identifying their strengths and assets, and making sure all have chances to contribute;
- Encouraging families to be effective advocates for their children by helping them take more challenging classes and plan for post-secondary education and a career;
- Opportunities for families to volunteer or contribute both at home and at school; and
- Building the capacity of teachers, parents, and other school staff to work together through training and professional development.

No Child Left Behind Action Brief—April 23, 2004 Article

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## Keys to Encouraging Family Involvement

**Listen** - We must learn to listen for the family's interests, resources and their ability to commit time.

**Follow-up** - It just takes a minute to stay in touch with someone. It might be a phone call, note or e-mail that lets that person know you're thinking about him or her. It is the key to developing relationships. Planned follow-up offers consistency and shows that you care. It also keeps everyone on track and involved.

**Urgency** - We must strive to help families keep a sense of urgency. Time is of the essence. It is too precious to take for granted. Waiting until tomorrow does not get the job done.

**Passion** - If we are passionate and driven in our commitment to family involvement, then it will come through in our message. Passion is contagious.

**Stay Connected** - If someone commits to a type of involvement, we must be willing to take them up on their offer or they will find another place to spend their time. A list of volunteers has no value if those on the list are never contacted.

**Develop Contact Lists** - We need comprehensive lists so that we have the ability to make the right connections. As family involvement connections grow, categories of interest will begin to surface that can be useful in developing action groups based on specific focus areas or issues.

**Use Phone Trees** - We can connect one person to another by location and/or similar interests. It is one of the quickest ways to get the word out.

**Link Families through E-Mail** - If families have internet service, e-mail is a way to keep like-minded people connected and a quick way to get the word out.

"Experience has shown that language minority families do care deeply about their children's schooling. What is required is for educators to act as partners in education with these and other families, recognizing the important contributions that all families can make to the schools and to their children's success."

"E. Viol and-Sanchez; C. P. Sutton; H.W. Ware, 1991"

## Title 59 - Education

### CHAPTER 28.

#### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

The purpose of the General Assembly in Title 59-Education Chapter 28 is to (1) heighten awareness of the importance of parents' involvement in the education of their children throughout their schooling; (2) encourage the establishment and maintenance of parent-friendly school settings; and (3) emphasize that when parents and schools work as partners, a child's academic success can best be assured. SECTION 59-28-180 goes on to explain the expectations of parents and how their involvement influences student learning and academic performance.

The bookmark below is available for reproduction in full color with your school's information. To access the downloadable PDF file, please contact Jenah Cason at [jenah.cason@fedfamsc.org](mailto:jenah.cason@fedfamsc.org)



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### Parent Involvement in Their Child's Education

Parent involvement influences student learning and academic performance. Parents should:

- Have high expectations and share them with student
  - Academic success
  - Appropriate behaviors
  - Follow school rules
- Be involved from elementary through high school
- Make sure student goes to school and is on time daily
- Attend parent-teacher conferences
- Check student's homework
- Communicate with the school and teachers to build partnerships
- Attend school events and activities
- Set an example for good behavior
- Use encouraging words and encourage curiosity
- Know and support school expectations of students

SC Code of Laws: SECTION 59-28-180.  
Parent Involvement in Their Children's  
Education Act

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