

# Family Engagement: Best Practices for Attracting and Involving Parents in Your School Community

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## What Is Family Engagement?

- The shared responsibility among parents, teachers and administrators in making decisions, setting goals and achieving desirable outcomes for students.
- Any interaction that provides for two-way communication between parents and school staff.





## Overall Findings from the Research

- When families are involved at home and at school, children do better in school.
- Family engagement has the most impact when it is directly linked to learning.



## Barriers to Parent Involvement

- Different definitions of involvement
- Lack of time or resources
- Language barriers
- Different cultural expectations and beliefs



## How to Overcome these Barriers

- Have all building staff trained in welcoming families
- Explain why involvement is important for student success
- Recognize all levels of involvement



## How to Overcome these Barriers

- School events at different hours and on different days of the week
- Provide childcare or tutoring and a meal
- Information in multiple languages
- Use social and traditional media



## Use Parents to Overcome these Barriers

- Recruit parent leaders to invite others
- Recognize parent volunteers and participants
- Ask parent groups to offer no cost or low cost programs




## National Standards for Family-School Partnerships





## Is Your School Meeting the Standards?

- School of Excellence Program
  - Joint parent-administrator project
  - Includes all families
  - Survey to assess current climate
  - Customized plan to improve
  - Survey to assess progress



## Engagement is most likely when parents:


- Feel *invited* by the school and their children
- Understand that they *should* be engaged
- Feel *capable* of making a contribution





## Strategies to Bring Families into the School


- Stress the connection of involvement to academic success
- Feature student performances or participation
- Offer concrete skill building activities
- Family welcome center



## It's Not Just About "The Bake Sale" Anymore


- The research shows family engagement should be seen as a core instructional strategy
- PTA programs have changed to reflect this reality





## PTA Programs that Bring Families into the School

- Reflections™ arts program
- Family Reading Experience
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Safety at Home and Play



## PTA Programs that Bring Parents into the School

- Take Your Family to School
  - K-12 program themes
- Three for Me
- Teacher Appreciation Week





## PTA Engagement Resources

- Ohio PTA-OELMA 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading videos
- Bayer Making Science Make Sense®
- Parents' Guides
- Clave al Éxito
- Be a Learning Hero



## PTA Engagement Resources

- Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit
  - Male Involvement
  - Military Families
  - Engaging Immigrants and Refugee Families
  - Special Needs
- Every Child in Focus
- Connect for Respect







## We All Want the Same Things...

- Useful, timely information that helps us do our jobs
- Respect and understanding
- A valued role in a community
- Student success



## Keeping Parents Involved by Building a Mutually Beneficial Relationship

- Make engagement a district-wide priority
- Consistent, persistent communication with families and the community
- Build community partnerships





## Keeping Parents Involved...

- Solicit parent input on engagement programs
- Value parents' contributions and opinions
- Meaningful decision making opportunities



## Keeping Parents Involved...

- Cradle to career engagement mindset
- Define and communicate effective parent engagement at each transition
- Focus on transitions
  - Kindergarten
  - Middle School
  - High School





## Keeping Parents Involved...

- Demonstrate commitment by seeing your PTA as more than an ATM
- Build K-12 involvement with an Early Childhood PTA
- Use PTA events and meetings to build relationships among staff, parents and community



## Keep Families Involved and Everybody Wins!

- Higher teacher morale and job satisfaction
- Greater respect for teaching profession
- Improved communication between parents, teachers, and school administrators
- More community support
- Increased student achievement



## **Contact Us**

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# National Standards for Family-School Partnerships



What parents, schools, and communities  
can do together to support student success

# A New Way of Leading

## Building family-school partnerships for student success

In the 2002 research review *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp conclude that there is a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and student success, regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or parents' level of education. To put it another way, when families are involved in their children's learning both at home and at school, their children do better in school. The report also points to specific types of involvement as being especially beneficial to children's academic success.



### **Finding 1: Involvement programs that link to learning improve student achievement.**

It's simple: The more parent and community involvement activities focus on improving student learning, the more student learning improves. Learning-focused involvement activities may include

- \* Family nights on math or literacy.
- \* Family-teacher conferences that involve students.
- \* Family workshops on planning for college.

### **Finding 2: Speaking up for children protects and promotes their success.**

Children whose parents are advocates for them at school are more confident at school and take on and achieve more. The more families advocate for their children and support their children's progress, the longer their children stay in school and the better their children do. Families should



- \* Become knowledgeable about the operations of schools and the laws that govern those operations.
- \* Be confident about their ability to work with schools.
- \* Expect only the best from their children and for their children.
- \* Join PTA.

### **Finding 3: All families can contribute to their children's success.**

Family involvement improves student success, regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or parents' level of education. For involvement to happen, however, principals, teachers, and parents themselves must believe that all parents can contribute to their children's success in school. Parents can promote their children's academic success by



- \* Teaching their children the importance of education.
- \* Finding out what their children are expected to know and to be able to do and reinforcing lessons at home.

- \* Sending their children to school ready to learn every day.

Principals and teachers must support parent involvement by

- \* Making parent involvement a priority.
- \* Recognizing and removing barriers to parent involvement.
- \* Sharing decision-making power with parents and community members.
- \* Working to understand class and cultural differences.

### **Finding 4: Community organizing gets results.**

Engaging community members, businesses, and organizations as partners in children's education can improve the learning community in many ways. For example, community partners may be able to

- \* Provide expanded learning opportunities.
- \* Build broad-based support for increased school funding.
- \* Provide quality after-school programs.



The findings presented by Henderson and Mapp provide a framework for strengthening parent/family involvement programs. PTA, working with leading experts on parent involvement and school-community partnerships, has updated its National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs to reflect recent research and improve parent and community involvement practices. The updated National Standards shift the focus from what schools should do to involve parents to **what parents, schools, and communities can do together** to support student success. To reflect this change, the standards have been renamed the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships.

## PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

**Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community**—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

**Standard 2: Communicating effectively**—Families and school staff engage in regular, meaningful communication about student learning.

**Standard 3: Supporting student success**—Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

**Standard 4: Speaking up for every child**—Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

**Standard 5: Sharing power**—Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

**Standard 6: Collaborating with community**—Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

For more information about the National Standards and PTA programs that promote family-school partnerships, visit [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org).



# National Standards, Goals, and Indicators for Family-School Partnerships

## Standard 1—Welcoming All Families into the School Community

Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

**Goal 1: Creating a Welcoming Climate:** When families walk into the building, do they feel the school is inviting and is a place where they “belong”?

- ❖ Developing personal relationships
- ❖ Creating a family-friendly atmosphere
- ❖ Providing opportunities for volunteering

**Goal 2: Building a Respectful, Inclusive School Community:** Do the school's policies and programs reflect, respect, and value the diversity of the families in the community?

- ❖ Respecting all families
- ❖ Removing economic obstacles to participation
- ❖ Ensuring accessible programming

## Standard 2—Communicating Effectively

Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

**Goal 1: Sharing Information Between School and Families:** Does the school keep all families informed about important issues and events and make it easy for families to communicate with teachers?

- ❖ Using multiple communication paths
- ❖ Surveying families to identify issues and concerns
- ❖ Having access to the principal
- ❖ Providing information on current issues
- ❖ Facilitating connections among families

## National Standards, Goals, and Indicators for Family-School Partnerships, continued

### **Standard 3—Supporting Student Success**

Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

**Goal 1: Sharing Information About Student Progress:** Do families know and understand how well their children are succeeding in school and how well the entire school is progressing?

- ❖ Ensuring parent-teacher communication about student progress
- ❖ Linking student work to academic standards
- ❖ Using standardized test results to increase achievement
- ❖ Sharing school progress

**Goal 2: Supporting Learning by Engaging Families:** Are families active participants in their children's learning at home and at school?

- ❖ Engaging families in classroom learning
- ❖ Developing family ability to strengthen learning at home
- ❖ Promoting after-school learning

### **Standard 4—Speaking Up for Every Child**

Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

**Goal 1: Understanding How the School System Works:** Do parents know how the local school and district operate and how to raise questions or concerns about school and district programs, policies, and activities? Do they understand their rights and responsibilities under federal and state law as well as local ordinances and policies?

- ❖ Understanding how the school and district operate
- ❖ Understanding rights and responsibilities under federal and state laws
- ❖ Learning about resources
- ❖ Resolving problems and conflicts

**Goal 2: Empowering Families to Support Their Own and Other Children's Success in School:**

Are parents prepared to monitor students' progress and guide them toward their goals through high school graduation, postsecondary education, and a career?

- ❖ Developing families' capacity to be effective advocates
- ❖ Planning for the future
- ❖ Smoothing transitions
- ❖ Engaging in civic advocacy for student achievement



## National Standards, Goals, and Indicators for Family-School Partnerships, continued

### Standard 5—Sharing Power

Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

**Goal 1: Strengthening the Family's Voice in Shared Decision Making:** Are all families full partners in making decisions that affect their children at school and in the community?

- ❖ Having a voice in all decisions that affect children
- ❖ Addressing equity issues
- ❖ Developing parent leadership

**Goal 2: Building Families' Social and Political Connections:** Do families have a strong, broad-based organization that offers regular opportunities to develop relationships and raise concerns with school leaders, public officials, and business and community leaders?

- ❖ Connecting families to local officials
- ❖ Developing an effective parent involvement organization that represents all families

### Standard 6—Collaborating with Community

Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

**Goal 1: Connecting the School with Community Resources:** Do parent and school leaders work closely with community organizations, businesses, and institutions of higher education to strengthen the school, make resources available to students, school staff, and families, and build a family-friendly community?

- ❖ Linking to community resources
- ❖ Organizing support from community partners
- ❖ Turning the school into a hub of community life
- ❖ Partnering with community groups to strengthen families and support student success

# The Power of Partnerships Family Survey

Dear Families,

The best way to make sure every student in our school succeeds is to build a strong partnership between families, the school, and the community. The survey below gives you the opportunity to tell us what our school is doing well to support this partnership and what we can do better.

If you would like to help tally and analyze the results, please let us know.

—The Family Involvement Action Team

<Provide the names and contact information of the team members here.>

## Welcoming All Families into the School Community

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. When I walk into the school, I feel the school is inviting and that this is a place where parents “belong.”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The school’s policies and programs reflect, respect, and value the diversity of the families in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Students at the school are treated fairly no matter what their race or cultural background.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I feel welcome at PTA/parent group meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Communicating Effectively

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5. The school keeps all families informed about important issues and events.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The school makes it easy for families to communicate with teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The school communicates with families in multiple ways (e.g., e-mail, phone, website).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I can talk to the school principal when I need to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. My child’s teacher communicates with me on a regular basis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. It’s easy to get a translator if I need one.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Continued on next page*

## The Power of Partnerships Family Survey, continued

### Supporting Student Success

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. My child's teacher keeps me well informed about how my child is doing in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I understand the academic standards my child is supposed to meet and how the curriculum is linked to those standards.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. My child's teacher and the school give me useful information about how to improve my child's progress.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. All students are challenged to do their best.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Speaking Up for Every Child

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
15. If the school can't help me, they will connect me to someone who can.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I understand the rules and requirements for student dress, language, and behavior.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. The school keeps me informed of my rights under federal and state laws and policies and helps me exercise those rights as needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I feel empowered to advocate for my own child's and other children's success in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Sharing Power

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19. The school consults with me and other families before making important decisions (e.g., changes in curriculum, school policies, dress code).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. The school provides opportunities for families to develop relationships and raise concerns with school leaders, public officials, and business and community leaders.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Collaborating with Community

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
21. The school connects students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and community improvement initiatives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Your name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_



## Enroll to Become a **National PTA School of Excellence** Today!

At a **National PTA School of Excellence**, families feel welcomed and empowered to support student success, and PTA is a key partner for continuous school improvement.

### What does it take to become a National PTA School of Excellence?

- 1. Enroll** your PTA between **April 1** and **October 1, 2015** at **PTA.org/Excellence**. You will receive the *Getting Started Guide*, which describes the program components, including your first steps to gather feedback from families and set goals with your school partner.
- 2. Survey** your school community and share the results with National PTA by submitting a Family-School Partnership Scan.
- 3. Receive** a customized *Roadmap to Excellence* containing recommendations that respond to your specific results from the Family-School Partnership Scan.
- 4. Complete** the National PTA School of Excellence application before **June 1, 2016**.
- 5. Celebrate your excellence!** All National PTA School of Excellence recipients will receive a toolkit to support celebration activities.

### Achieve excellence and qualify for National PTA's highest honor!

When designated a National PTA School of Excellence, you will automatically be considered for the **Phoebe Apperson Hearst Award**. A Hearst Award recipient will receive:

1. A visit from our National PTA President
2. On-stage recognition and award presentation at the National PTA Convention and Exhibition
3. \$2,000 to use on future family engagement strategies

**Enroll today at [PTA.org/Excellence](http://PTA.org/Excellence)**