

# Parents as Full Partners

Special Area: Administration

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## I. ABSTRACT

Effectively engaging parents and families in the education of their children has the potential to be far more transformational than any other type of educational reform. When it comes to parent involvement and its powerful influence, it is clear that the more extensive the parent involvement, the higher the student achievement. Where parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status or ethnic/racial background. The challenge comes in transforming knowledge into practice and practice into results. This unit will present a successful model where this knowledge has been put into practice with very impressive results.

## II. OVERVIEW

- A. This unit will address the following issues:
  - 1. Increasing student achievement through parent involvement
  - 2. Parents as full partners
  - 3. Communication with parents
  - 4. Training staff and administration in how to maximize parent resources and partner with parents
  - 5. Developing meaningful parent involvement programs

## III. RESOURCES

- A. The Parent Institute, PO Box 7474, Fairfax Station, Virginia 22039-7474. Phone: 1-800-756-5525. Information available on the Internet: <http://www.par-inst.com>
- B. National PTA. Information Available on the Internet: <http://www.pta.org>

## IV. PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- A. Benefits for Students/Parents/Schools- Appendix A
  - 1. Students- higher grades and test scores, better attendance and more positive attitudes and behavior
  - 2. Parents-more confidence in schools and greater confidence in themselves as parents
  - 3. Schools-improved teacher morale, higher student achievement and higher ratings of teachers by parents
- B. Research findings- Appendix B
  - 1. When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' educational level.
  - 2. Schools tend to see the parental role as traditional, passive and home-based, whereas many parents are interested in more active roles. Schools are often guilty of not taking the initiative to ask parents for help and of not welcoming their participation.
- C. Program Design- Appendix B
  - 1. Effective programs have strong leadership and provide instruction on parent involvement to parents and staff. This type of instruction is often lacking in educators and administrators professional training.
  - 2. When parents are treated as partners and given relevant information, they get involved even though they have been hesitant to contribute in the past.
- D. National Standards for Parent Involvement Programs-Appendix C
  - 1. Communication between home and school
  - 2. Parenting skills
  - 3. Parents in integral role
  - 4. School environment that welcomes parents

- 5. Parents as full partners in decision making
- 6. Community resources
- E. Building Parent Involvement-Appendix D
- F. How to kill parent involvement-Appendix D
- G. Parent Involvement ideas that really work-Appendix E
- H. Administration Leadership-Appendix G
- I. How to Begin
  - 1. Create an Action Team
  - 2. Evaluate current practices
  - 3. Develop a plan of improvement
  - 4. Develop a written family involvement policy
- J. Seven Peaks Elementary School Parent Involvement Policy and Program
  - 1. Seven Peaks Family Participation Policy- Appendix H
  - 2. Background and history of volunteer development
  - 3. Seven Peaks Program Design
  - 4. How to train volunteers
  - 5. Outcomes

## **V. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS**

- A. Appendix A-Parents as Full Partners in Education
- B. Appendix B-Research Findings
- C. Appendix C-National Standards for Family Involvement- National PTA
- D. Appendix D- 10 Things Any School Can Do to Build Parent Involvement
- E. Appendix E- Seventy-Five Ideas to Build Parent Involvement and Support
- F. Appendix F- 68 Parent Involvement Ideas that Really Work
- G. Appendix G- Administrative Leadership and How to Begin
- H. Appendix H- Seven Peaks Elementary School Family Participation Policy

## **VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- A. Henderson, A. (1994) *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Crucial to Student Achievement*. Washington, DC. National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- B. Epstein, J.L. (1992) School and Family Partnerships. In M. Alkin (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*. New York: MacMillan.
- C. Hamilton-Lee, M. (1988). "Home School Partnerships: The School Development Program Model." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Assn. (Atlanta, GA, August 12-16, 1988) 20 pages. ED 303-923.
- D. Selected Parent Involvement Research, by John H. Wherry, Ed.D, President, The Parent Institute. Available URL: <http://www.par-inst.com>
- E. National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs, National PTA. Available URL: <http://www.pta.org>

Appendix A

## Parents as Full Partners in Education

### **Benefits for Students**

- Higher grades and test scores
- Better attendance and more homework done
- Fewer placements in special education
- More positive attitudes and behavior
- Higher graduation rates
- Greater enrollment in postsecondary education

### **Benefits for parents**

- More confidence in the school
- Teachers have higher opinions of parents and higher expectations of their children
- Parents have greater confidence in themselves as parents and in their ability to help their children learn at home
- Greater likelihood that the parents will enroll in continuing education to advance their own education

### **Benefits for schools and communities**

- Improved teacher morale
- Higher ratings of teachers by parents
- Higher student achievement
- Better reputation in the community

## Appendix B

# Research Findings

### Parent and Family Involvement and Student Success

- When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' educational level.
- The family provides the child's primary educational environment. Therefore, we cannot look at the school and the home in isolation from one another; we must see how they interconnect with each other and with the world at large.
- The more extensive the parent involvement, the higher the student achievement.
- Higher achievement is shown in grades, test scores, attendance is better and homework is completed more consistently.
- Students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.
- Students have higher graduation rates and greater enrollment rates in post-secondary education.
- Parent involvement programs that produce the greatest gains are well-planned, inclusive and comprehensive.
- Teachers expect more of students whose parents collaborate with the educators.
- Disadvantaged students reach levels that are standard for middle-class children in programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships. Children who are the farthest behind make the greatest gains.
- The benefits of involving parents are not confined to the early years. Instead significant gains happen at all grade levels. Middle school and high school students, whose parents remain involved, make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work and develop plans for future education. They are far less likely to drop out of school.
- The most accurate predictor of a student's school achievement is not social status or income. It has to do directly with a family's ability to create a home environment that encourages learning and the family's involvement in their children's education.
- All kinds of parents are very interested in their children's education. Teachers often think that low-income and single parents will not, or cannot, spend as much time helping their children at home as do middle-class parents with more education and leisure time. However, when teachers *help parents to help their children*, these parents can be as effective with their children as those parents with more education and leisure.
- The main reason parent involvement with the schools is so important especially for at risk children is that their home and school worlds are so different. The consequence tends to be that children embrace the familiar home culture and reject the unfamiliar school culture, including its academic components and goals.

- Parents with less than a high school education and very low incomes are likely to have low levels of contact with teachers and schools, but such parents are anxious to cooperate with teachers despite difficulties in doing so.
- Direct parent instruction of their own children at home positively affects school achievement. But parents need specific information on how to help and what to do.

### **Parent and Family Involvement and School Quality/Program Design**

- School programs that involve parents outperform identical programs without parent and family involvement.
- Schools where children are failing improve dramatically when parents are enabled to become effective partners in their child's education.
- School initiated activities to help parents change the home environment can have a strong influence on children's school performance.
- The school's practices are stronger determinants of whether parents will become involved with their children's education than are parent education, family size, marital status and grade level.
- Schools that work well with families have improved teacher morale and parents are more supportive of the teachers.
- When parents are treated as partners and given relevant information, they get involved even though they have been hesitant to contribute in the past.
- Parents are much more likely to become involved when educators encourage and assist parents in helping their children with their homework.
- Effective programs have strong leadership and provide instruction on parent involvement to parents and staff. This type of instruction is often lacking in educators and administrators professional training.
- When parents receive frequent and effective communication from the school, their involvement increase and their attitudes towards the school are more positive.
- While collaboration with families is a vital part of any reform strategy, it is not a substitute for high quality education programs.
- Parent involvement leads to feelings of ownership, resulting in increased support of schools and willingness to pay taxes to support schools.
- Schools tend to see the parental role as traditional, passive and home-based, whereas many parents are interested in more active roles. Schools are often guilty of not taking the initiative to ask parents for help and of not welcoming their participation.

Appendix C  
**National Standards for  
 Parent/Family Involvement Programs  
 National PTA**

STANDARDS	DESCRIPTION	INDICATORS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS
Standard I	Communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful.	Use a variety of communication tools on a regular basis, seeking to facilitate two-way interaction.
		Communicate with parents regarding positive student behavior and achievement, not just misbehavior.
		Disseminate information on school policies, procedures & goals and include parents in decision-making process.
Standard II	Parenting skills are promoted and supported.	Provide accessible parenting information and provide training and support to families.
		Encourage staff members to demonstrate respect for families and recognize the family's primary role in the education of children.
Standard III	Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.	Involve parents in setting student goals each year. Encourage the development of a personalized education plan for each student, where parents are full partners.
		Provide information regarding how parents can foster learning at home and inform parents of expectations at each grade level.
Standard IV	Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.	Create a climate in which parents feel valued and welcome.
		Organize an easy, accessible program for utilizing parent volunteers, providing ample training.
		Ensure that volunteer activities are meaningful and built on volunteer interests and abilities.
		Educate teachers in effectively utilizing volunteers.
		Show appreciation for parent's participation and value their diverse contributions.
Standard V	Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.	Provide accessible processes for influencing decisions, raising concerns

		and resolving problems. Treat parent concerns with respect.
		Include parents in all decision-making and advisory committees and ensure adequate training.
		Provide parents with current information regarding school policies, practices and performance data.
Standard VI	Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families and student learning.	Foster student participation in community service.
		Develop a community relations committee that offers parents opportunities to develop partnerships with local business and service groups.

## Appendix D

# 10 Things Any School Can Do to Build Parent Involvement . .. Plus Five Great Ways to Fail!

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Presentation by John H. Wherry, President, The Parent Institute, Fairfax Station, Virginia  
At the 1996 NAESP Convention, Washington, DC, March 24, 1996

### 10 Things Any School Can Do to Build Parent Involvement

1. **Help parents understand why they are so important to their children's school success.** Point out to parents how much time children spend at home vs. at school (birth to H.S. graduation 15% at school, 85% home & other). Remind parents that they are their children's first & most influential teachers—and that education training is unnecessary. Remind parents how well children mimic them, even when parents don't want them to. Help parents understand how to model the behaviors they want. Discuss in parent meetings, newsletters: •How soon children start learning. •How children copy parents. •How parents can set an example. •How to make use of "bits and pieces" of time with children. •Why parents really are children's first & most influential teachers
2. **Give parents specific things they can do to help their children.** •Parents say they don't know what to do. •Parents say they don't have time. •Specific suggestions help. Practical Strategies: Class by class, or schoolwide, decide on 3 to 5 specific things you would like parents to do at home: 1) Read to your child every day. 2) Ask about school work every day. 3) Tell your child 'I love you' every day. 4) Talk with your child and listen to what she has to say every day. Be Specific With Parents. Provide specific ideas in many ways: •Tell parents face to face. •Give them handouts. •Show them videos. •Demonstrate ideas at meetings. Parents have as many learning styles as their children. When we specifically target what we want, we often get it!
3. **Work to win parents' endorsement of your school's educational program.** Parents and educators are often different—and always will be. We share a common interest in the well-being of the children. We should respect parents' expertise. We can build respect for school expertise. Win Parents' Endorsement: •Parents and schools each bring unique strengths to the education of children. •We are a TEAM. We each have strengths, weaknesses—neither of us can do the job alone. •Respect must be the basis of our relationship. Practical Strategies: •Discuss each other's strengths at parent and staff meetings. •Discuss how we can support each other. •Share your school's educational goals—and how you plan to accomplish them.
4. **Give parents the specific information they want.** Do you know parents' top concerns? •How can you find out? •How can you stay up to date? Here are the results of over 100 opinion polls •What is being taught? •How is it being taught? •How are school funds spent? •How are school policies formed? How would parents at your school rank these topics? •Discipline •Peer pressure •Motivation •Self-esteem •Inclusion •ADD & ADHD
5. **Know how to get parents to READ what you send home.** •One sheet of paper is best. •Use 4th to 6th grade reading level. •Know the 30-3-30 Rule: 80% of the people will spend just *30 seconds* reading what you send home; 19% will spend just *3 minutes*; 1% will spend *30 minutes*. •Use the dollar bill test: A dollar bill, placed any direction, should touch some graphic element—such as: •a bullet, rule, picture, screen, boldface type, underline, different color, etc. Practical Strategies: •Learn what parents want to know. •Provide it very briefly. •Provide it frequently. •Remember—you are not talking to an audience, but a parade!
6. **Provide staff training and support for parent involvement.** •Most educators have had no such training. •Many fear parents and avoid them. •Training and support build understanding—which overcomes fear. Staff Training and Support: •Share research findings. •Jointly develop ideas the

- whole school can implement. •Jointly develop ideas individual staff members can implement. •Provide a steady drip of parent involvement information. •Spotlight successful staff practice. •Provide non-threatening social activities so staff can meet parents. More Strategies: •Ask staff with successful experience to talk with others. •Invite speakers to staff meetings. •Hold school workshops.
- Make telephones and note cards available to staff.
7. **Provide training and support for parents.** •Most parents have had no involvement training •Many fear educators and avoid them. •Training and support build understanding—which overcomes fear. •Share research findings—parents are interested, too. •Help parents share ideas with each other (network). •Jointly develop a list of important topics. •Provide non-threatening social activities so parents and staff can meet. •Stress the importance of what parents do every day at home.
  8. **Recognize and Reward Exemplary Parent Involvement Practice.** •Most parents and staff are starved for recognition and encouragement. •A little makes a big difference! Recognize Exemplary Practice of Staff: •The most parent phone calls. •The most home visits. •The most notes to parents. •The best idea to involve parents. •The most parent visits to class. •The most parent group members. Recognize Exemplary Practice of Parents: •The most books read aloud. •The most improved grades. •The most class visits. •The most help to teachers. •The best idea to help their child. •The most help to your parent group.
  9. **Ensure Your Success by Making a Plan** •Specifically, how will you get staff involved? •Specifically, what will you ask parents to do? We Must Have a Plan •Having a plan does not guarantee success. •Not having a plan does guarantee failure!
  10. **Adapt Ideas That Have Worked for Others.** Why try to reinvent the wheel? There are lots of proven ideas ready for you to use: •Remember the 3 Fs for success: 1) Food, 2) Families, 3) Fun. •Establish a friendly contact early in the year—In Time of Peace! •Remember to stress Two-Way communication.

#### **Five Great Ways to Fail!**

1. **Think of yourself as the main parent involvement person at your school.** School Survey Results: "Can you give me the names of any people you know who work up at school?" 10 School Secretary, 2) Custodian, 3) Food Service/Bus Driver, 4) A Veteran Teacher, 5) A Music Teacher, 6) Nurse/Coach 7) The Principal.
2. **Think of parent involvement as something that only happens when parents are in your school building.** By Far, the Most Important Involvement Happens at Home! •Reading to children. •Being seen reading. •Setting an example (for better or worse). •Showing interest in school work. •And MUCH more!
3. **Try to build positive attitudes among parents by just using newsletters, memos, newspaper articles, TV, other mass media.** Mass Media is Best for Providing Information. •All mass media—radio, TV, signs, bumper stickers—can do is reinforce attitudes that already exist! Use Face-to-Face Contact for Creating and Changing Attitudes: •Conferences. •Workshops. •Home Visits. •Class Visits. •Open House. •Even Phone Calls.
4. **Keep on thinking that children from ‘broken’ or ‘disadvantaged’ homes do not have the benefit of parent involvement.** The ‘Extended Family’ These Children Often Have is Amazing. •Mother/Father, •Grandparents, •Neighbors, •Sisters, Aunts, Uncles, •Friends. We Need to Enlist Their Support! •Children often have many people who can and will help if we will invite them to get involved—and help them know what to do.
5. **Write parents off as apathetic & uninterested after you repeatedly provide programs for them and invite them to come to school, but they don’t show up!** The Vast Majority of Parents Want to Help Their Children. We need to: •‘Walk a Mile’ in their shoes. •Respect what they now do to help their children. •Issue ‘genuine invitations.’

**In Conclusion . . .** Getting parents involved in their children's education is not just a 'nice idea' We can't DO OUR JOB without parents' help! We Know How to Make Parent Involvement Work: •In ANY school . . . •With very LITTLE MONEY . . . •Using PROVEN, TESTED IDEAS. The fact is . . . A New Day is Dawning! It is the day of parent involvement. It will help every child, in every school, everywhere . . . and we are exactly the ones who can make it happen!

## Seventy-Five Ideas to Build Parent

### **Involvement and Support**

From the pages of *Educators' Notebook on Family Involvement* newsletter

- Hold your first parent meeting at a fast-food restaurant.
- Hold a "Parent University" program right at your school.
- Provide "Fact Cards" for parents with school name, address, phone number, name of principal, school secretary, school nurse, PTA president—perhaps a refrigerator magnet.
- Establish "Take Home Tuesday" as day to send school papers home.
- Send home tape recorded messages in parents' own language.
- Provide a **short** newsletter for parents—consider *Parents Make the Difference!*
- Remember "30-3-30" in writing school newsletters.
- Remember the dollar bill rule for school newsletters.
- Write for parents at 4th to 6th grade level.
- Try Brown Bag Seminars— parenting program at work site during lunch hour.
- Use the key communicator system to control the rumor mill.
- Know **THE SECRET** to getting parents to attend meetings at school.
- Remember the 3 "F"s for success—Food, Families, Fun.
- Understand and use the 80-20 rule for parent groups.
- Take heart from the one-third rule which research has revealed for achieving improved student achievement through parent involvement.
- Use videotape to show busy parents their children in action.
- Use refrigerator notes.
- Encourage "Sunshine Calls," "Thinking of You" Calls.
- Understand the fact that teachers are more reluctant to contact parents than parents are to contact teachers. Work to overcome the problem.
- Put up parent-friendly signs at school—directing them to the office.
- Greet visiting parents as quickly as possible—perhaps use volunteers.
- Have children's work on display all over the school—every child's work, not just the future commercial artists' work.

- Have some place in the building that parents can call their own.
- Know why parents say they are not involved: don't have time, don't know what to do, don't know it is important, don't speak English.
- Try "Project Newborn" to contact future parents when new child is born.
- Push for written school district policies on parent involvement.
- Push for funding for parent involvement—it pays off.
- Stress training for staff—all staff—in parent involvement.
- Stress two-way communication between schools and parents.
- Work for links with other social service agencies that can help parents.
- Conduct school surveys to reveal family attitudes about your school.
- Offer parenting classes.
- Hold informal "drop in" coffee times and encourage parents to come.
- Establish and use parent advisory groups.
- Reach out to new families—again, use volunteers.
- Know that face-to-face contact works best for Hispanic parents—in fact, all parents.
- With parent volunteers: be supportive, be specific, be sensitive.
- Insist that teachers not wait until its too late to give parents bad news.
- Stress the importance of having an agenda for parent meetings.
- Here are some "Top Topics" parents seem to want to discuss:
  - How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk
  - Dealing with divorce
  - Mastering math facts
  - Talking with kids about sex
  - Helping your child survive first grade (middle school, or whatever)
  - How to handle discipline
  - Proven study skills you can teach your child
  - Liking school, loving learning
- Try a parents' Hall of Fame.
- Publish a school calendar.
- Provide time for teachers to get to know parents.

- Hold several open house programs throughout the year—Try *Visitation Days*.
- Know the four keys research tells us about making parent education programs work:
  1. **Empower parents**—encourage parents, work with them to set and carry out goals. Especially, don't assume you know what is best for parents. They know themselves best.
  2. **Focus on the needs of both parents and the child.** Parents can't help their children if they desperately need help themselves—a job, housing simple support from other adults.
  3. **Adjust to the needs of the specific parents in the program.** There is no one-size-fits-all program.
  4. **Allow plenty of time for parent discussion.** Programs should be parent dominated.
- Include student demonstrations at school meetings—not everything has to be a student "performance."
- Provide child care.
- Share with parents experiences you have had with your own children—it breaks down barriers, gets you out of your "role" and help parents see you as a fellow parent.
- At parent group meetings, never ask parents questions where there can be wrong answers.
- Recognize what parents **are** doing to help children—praise them.
- Use simple evaluation forms to get parent feedback on every meeting or event.
- Learn the tricks for dealing with angry parents—separate the parent from the argument he is making, use active listening, don't get angry, look for areas of agreement (We both want your child to do well), find a win-win solution, if necessary devise a temporary solution.
- Develop a school handbook, and get parents' help in determining its contents.
- Tap the vast parent resource pool every school has—parents who have lived overseas, who speak other languages, who have jobs that use skills schools are trying to teach children, who have hobbies that fit into the curriculum, etc.
- Get Dads out with: Projects that call on Dad's special abilities (building, painting); feature male speakers; proclaim celebrations; offer incentives (raffles, etc.).
- Try "quick notes" home—notes on the day something happens. A parent helps child with spelling test and child does better. Shoot an immediate note home to say, "It's working."
- Take parents' pictures. Tell them in advance that pictures will be taken with their child, and prepare for a crowd.
- Present a TV workshop for parents—how to control TV time.
- Sponsor a "No TV Week" for your school and enlist parents' help in finding other activities for the whole family.
- Try to provide interpreters and tell parents they will be there.
- Investigate "telephone mail" systems.
- Encourage teachers to assign homework that requires talking with someone at home.

- Ask hostile parents for their advice on something.
- Tell parents what teachers would like to tell parents if they had the chance—and ask parents what they would like to tell teachers. Then tell them!
- Put up a Welcome sign in every language spoken by students and parents at your school—get parents to help get the words right.
- Try an overnight read-in with parents, kids and local drop-in celebrities.
- Establish a friendly contact with parents early in the year, "**In Time of Peace.**"
- Focus on the strengths of families—they know their children better than anyone else. Find ways to get that information to the right people.
- Set up a parent center in your school stocked with resources to help parents.
- Consider an inservice program for staff on single-parent families—staff can help provide information and it can be a real eye-opener.
- Be very careful to monitor how your school telephone is answered. Phone impressions are lasting ones!
- Consider learning contracts involving school, parent and child.
- Work to encourage businesses to provide time for parents to attend school conferences.
- Set up a lending library of at-home learning activities.
- Remember that hard-to-reach parents can often be reached through their churches.

—This handout from a presentation by John H. Wherry, Ed.D., President, The Parent Institute, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474. For information about publications and services (U.S. and Canada) call toll-free: 800/756-5525. The Parent Institute publishes the *Educators' Notebook on Family Involvement* newsletter for school staff (from which all ideas for this presentation have been taken), the *Parents make the Difference!* and *Parents STILL make the difference!* newsletters for schools to distribute to parents, as well as booklets and videotapes for parents. Copyright ??1996, The Parent Institute. Permission to reproduce, including this source information, granted.

## 68 Parent Involvement Ideas That Really Work

### Appendix F

1. Know **THE SECRET** to getting parents to attend meetings at school—make sure they know they're **genuinely** invited.
2. Establish a friendly contact with parents early in the year, "**In Time of Peace.**"
3. Insist that teachers not wait until it's too late to tell parents about potentially serious problems. Early contact helps.
4. Ask teachers to make at least two positive phone calls to parents each week. Add a phone line or two if needed. Parent communication is a cost-effective investment.
5. Remember the 3 "F"s for success—Food, Families, Fun.
6. Focus on the strengths of families—they know their children better than anyone else. Find ways to get that information to teachers, other school staff.
7. Learn how to deal with angry parents—separate the parent from the argument he is making. Use active listening. Don't get angry. Look for areas of agreement, "We both want your child to do well." Find a win-win solution. If you're not sure about a parent suggestion say, "I'll certainly keep that in mind." If necessary, devise a temporary solution.
8. Provide a **brief** parent newsletter. One sheet of paper is best.
9. Remember "**30-3-30**" in writing school newsletters. Eighty percent of people will spend just **30 seconds** reading it. Nineteen percent will spend **three minutes**. One percent will spend **30 minutes** (your mother).
10. Remember the dollar bill rule for newsletters. A dollar bill placed anywhere, at any angle, on any page should touch some element of graphic interest—headline, box, screen, bullets □, **bold type**, picture—or it's too dull for most people to read.
11. Develop written policies encouraging parent involvement. If it's not in policy, the message is we don't care much about it.
12. Write for parents at 4th to 6th grade level. Use a computer to check the reading level.
13. Know why parents say they are not involved: 1) Don't have time, 2) Don't know what to do, 3) Don't know it is important, 4) Don't speak English.
14. Take heart from the "one-third rule." Research says if you can get *one-third* of a school's parents involved, you can begin to make significant improvement in student achievement.
15. Be aware that teachers are more reluctant to contact parents than *vice versa*. Solution: get parents and teachers together—just as people—in comfortable social situations.
16. Stress two-way communication between schools and parents. "One-way" isn't communication.
17. Conduct school surveys to reveal family attitudes about your school.
18. Use "key communicators" to control the rumor mill. Keep those to whom others turn for school information well informed, especially the three "**B**"s—barbers, bartenders & beauty shop operators.
19. Use simple evaluation forms to get parent feedback on every meeting or event. If we ask, they will tell us what they want.
20. Try "quick notes" home—notes the day something happens. A parent helps the child with a spelling test and the child does better. Shoot an immediate note home to say, "It's working!"
21. Take parents' pictures. Tell them in advance that pictures will be taken with their child, and prepare for a crowd.
22. Encourage teachers to assign homework that requires talking with someone at home.
23. Ask teachers what they would like to tell parents if they had the chance—and ask parents what they would like to tell teachers. Then exchange the information! Great program.
24. Put up a "Welcome" sign in every language spoken by students and parents at your school—get parents to help get the words right.

25. Have handy a ready reference list of helpful materials parents might use to help them cope with student problems. Better yet have a lending library.
26. Set up a parent center in your school stocked with resources to help (and lend to) parents.
27. Offer parenting classes—with videos and lots of handouts.
28. Know the facts about the changing structure of the family—and consider how schools can cope to best help children.
29. Consider an inservice program for staff on facts about single-parent families—it can be a real eye-opener.
30. Breakfast sessions at school draw busy parents like crazy.
31. Be very careful to monitor how your school telephone is answered. Phone impressions are lasting ones!
32. Provide “Go to the Office” slips for teachers to give students who do something good. Student takes slip to principal who compliments child, writes note to parents on the slip (or calls parents), sends it home.
33. Be aware that parents are looking for a school where their children are likely to succeed—more than a school with the highest test scores. Show parents that you care.
34. Send a school bus filled with staff around the school neighborhood to meet and welcome students. parents just before school starts.
35. Solicit parent volunteers at the Kindergarten Registration Day program. Make it easy to sign up when parents are most enthusiastic.
36. Don’t make judgments about parents’ lack of interest in their children’s education. You’ll probably be wrong. “Walk a mile in their shoes” and understand that what looks like apathy may be exhaustion.
37. Try day-long parent academies with short repeated workshops on topics such as building self-esteem, language development, motivating children, encouraging reading, discipline, talking with kids about sex, dealing with divorce, etc. Test weekdays vs. weekends.
38. Provide training and lots of school information for parent volunteers. They are powerful goodwill ambassadors.
39. Invite parents to fill out interview forms detailing child’s special qualities—interests, abilities, accomplishments. Teachers can use information to write story about child to read at school program, post on bulletin board.
40. Investigate “voice mail” systems to keep parents up-to-date on homework, school activities.
41. Find ways to provide positive reinforcement to parents. Everyone responds well to recognition.
42. Involve parents in goal-setting for their children. It promotes working as a team.
43. Use research findings that one of the best ways to get parents involved is to simply **ask them**, and also tell them **what you’d like them to do**.
44. Give parents specific suggestions about how they can help their children. Many just need to know things like: “Read aloud every day.” “Turn the TV off during homework time.”
45. Try a short student-written newsletter for parents about what students have been learning. (You still need your own parent newsletter. You cannot fulfill your obligation to communicate by delegating the job to students.)
46. Help parents understand *why* excessive TV hurts children—TV robs them of needed play, exercise, reading practice, study time, dulls critical thinking, encourages obesity through snacking.
47. Understand the diversity of single parent families. Living with one parent can be wonderful for some children, destructive for others
48. Offer school sponsored sessions on single parenting.
49. Help parents understand that student *effort* is the most important key to school success, not just *ability*.
50. Encouraging (and assisting) parents to network among themselves to solve common problems builds parent support.

51. Provide some parent education classes at the workplace. Convenience works for 7-11 stores and it also works for schools.
52. Try providing “Good News Postcards” for teachers to write short positive note about students and mail them home. One thousand postcards cost less than \$200 to mail.
53. Ask parents’ help in developing questions for a school “audit” to see if your school is family friendly.
54. Invite parents to a program about helping children do well on homework and eliminating things that distract them. Most have never had such information.
55. Ask parents to fill out a “Contact Sheet” listing home and work addresses and phone numbers—and the best times to be contacted in either place.
56. Have children write personal notes to their parents on school papers, surveys, invitations to school programs, etc. Watch parent response rates soar!
57. Help all school staff understand the central role they play in building parent attitudes, support and involvement—secretary, custodian, food service staff, bus driver, librarian, aides, everyone
58. Try sending home “Resource Bags” filled with games, videos, reading materials and instructions on specific activities parents can do with children at home. They’re very popular.
59. Having problems getting parents involved with a child who’s having discipline or other problems? Try videotaping class sessions. Showing the “candid camera” tape to parents and children works wonders.
60. Make sure all staff know the top things parents report they want to know about school: 1) How they can be involved with their child’s education, 2) How they can spend more time at school, 3) How to talk to teachers, other school staff, 4) How to help their child at home.
61. Try holding “non-academic” social events to draw parents to school to see students’ work.
62. Try an evening Curriculum Fair to give parents a better understanding of what’s being taught.
63. Try a “Family Math Night” to inform parents about the math curriculum through math games.
64. Try “refrigerator notes.” Ask students to “Take this note home and put it in the refrigerator.” That gets attention!
65. Know that parents are also looking to schools for help in dealing with non-academic problems (child care, raising adolescents, advice on drugs, sexual activity). Providing help can build parent support.
66. Understand one key reason for parent non-involvement: **Lack of information.** One memo won’t do. Try letters & notes & signs & calls & newspaper & radio & TV. Repetition works & works & works.
67. Transition Nights (or days, or afternoons) for parents and students getting ready to go to a new school help answer questions, relieve anxieties, build involvement and support.
68. Want to get parents out for school meetings? Make children welcome by offering child care.

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—These ideas from a presentation by John H. Wherry, Ed.D., President, The Parent Institute, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474. The Parent Institute publishes the *Educators’ Notebook on Family Involvement* newsletter for school staff (from which all ideas for this handout have been taken), the *Parents Make the Difference!* newsletter for schools to distribute to parents of elementary grade children, the *Parents STILL Make the Difference!* newsletter for parents of secondary school children, as well as booklets and videos for parents. For information about publications and services call toll-free: 1-800-756-5525. Copyright © 1996, The Parent Institute. Permission granted for reproduction of this material if this credit message is included.

Appendix G

## Administrative Leadership

**Strong leadership is vital to the development of an effective parent involvement program.**

- One of the most significant challenges to conducting an effective parent involvement program is the lack of instruction on parent involvement that educators and administrators receive in their professional training.
- The principal or program director plays a critical role in making parent and family involvement a reality. The climate of the school is created, to a large extent, by the tone set in the office of administration. If principals collaborate with parents, educators will be more likely to follow suit.
- Often there is a misperception that partnering with parents, particularly in the decision-making process, will diminish the principal's authority. Yet, the top management models in America are open and collaborative, encouraging subordinates to share their concerns and engaging workers in cooperative problem solving. Such an approach will not erode the principal's authority, but can lead to better decisions in schools.
- Long-term progress in family-school partnerships requires systematic, all-inclusive solutions and consistent leadership support.
- When parent involvement becomes a mutual program goal, and parents, educators and administrators work together as a team to develop a plan for reaching the standards, substantial progress results. The principal provides the leadership; the program standards provide the vision.

## How to Begin

Belief in the importance of parent involvement is a necessary foundation, but the following steps outline a process for developing and maintaining growth in this vital component of education.

1. **Create an Action Team**  
Involve parents, educators and administrators in reaching a common understanding and in setting mutual goals to which all are committed.
2. **Evaluate Current Practice**  
Review the current status of parent involvement. Survey staff and parents to gain a clear understanding of the current situation.
3. **Develop a Plan of Improvement**  
Identify first steps and priority issues. Develop a comprehensive, well-balanced plan.
4. **Develop a Written Parent/Family Involvement Policy**  
A written policy establishes the vision, common mission and foundation for future plans.
5. **Secure Support**  
For optimal success, keep stakeholders aware of the plan and willing to lend support to its success. Stakeholders are those responsible for implementation, those who will be affected, and

those outside the program who have influence over the outcome.

6. **Provide Professional Development for staff**  
Effective training is essential. Provide the staff with opportunities to interact with the issue, work together and monitor progress.
7. **Evaluate and Revise the Plan**  
A parent and family involvement program merits a process of continuous improvement and a Commitment to long-term success.

# SEVEN PEAKS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FAMILY PARTICIPATION POLICY

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ School Year: \_\_\_\_\_

## Purpose:

- To provide an excellent educational experience for all students by promoting a partnership between the parents and Seven Peaks Elementary School.
- To provide support services needed by the school.
- To more evenly distribute the work necessary to operate the school at a reasonable cost.
- To hold parents accountable for the education of their child by being a full participant in the elements spelled out in this document.

## Requirements:

1. Orientation: Keeping families well informed and involved is very important to the staff at SPES. Each family is required to participate in two orientation sessions. The first session will be in September and the second in January or February.

2. Volunteer Hour Responsibility:

Kindergarten	30 hours
1 <sup>st</sup> through 8 <sup>th</sup> grades	40 hours
Family	50 hours

At Parent Orientation there will be job lists available. It is your responsibility to sign up for job(s) that interest you and to record your hours in the volunteer hour book located at the office window. Half of the hours should be completed and recorded prior to January 15, 2003. The remainder must be completed by the end of the school year.

3. Truancy/Punctuality: you are expected to get your student(s) to school on a regular basis and assure that they are on time and pick them up on time as well.
4. Fundraisers: It is expected that each family will participate in the major fundraisers in some capacity.
5. Parent/Teacher Conferences: It is expected that each family will participate in the parent teacher conferences as required by their individual teachers.
6. School Website and family Folders: It is expected that each family will keep themselves informed on school issues through the school website. Families should get in the habit of checking the website on a regular basis. Secondly parents should check their family folder located in the hallway at school for additional information. At Seven Peaks, we recognize that it is the responsibility of the parents and students to keep themselves informed as to functions, homework, activities, etc.
7. Homework: parents understand and support the student's responsibility to complete assigned homework.
8. Code of Conduct: parents understand that students must abide by the Code of Conduct.

**Final Statement:**

In signing this, we are agreeing with the expectations and will meet our obligations set forth in this policy. We understand that failing to comply with this policy may determine whether our child can continue at Seven Peaks.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mother's/Guardians Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Father's/Guardian's Signature