

Engaging Parents as Allies

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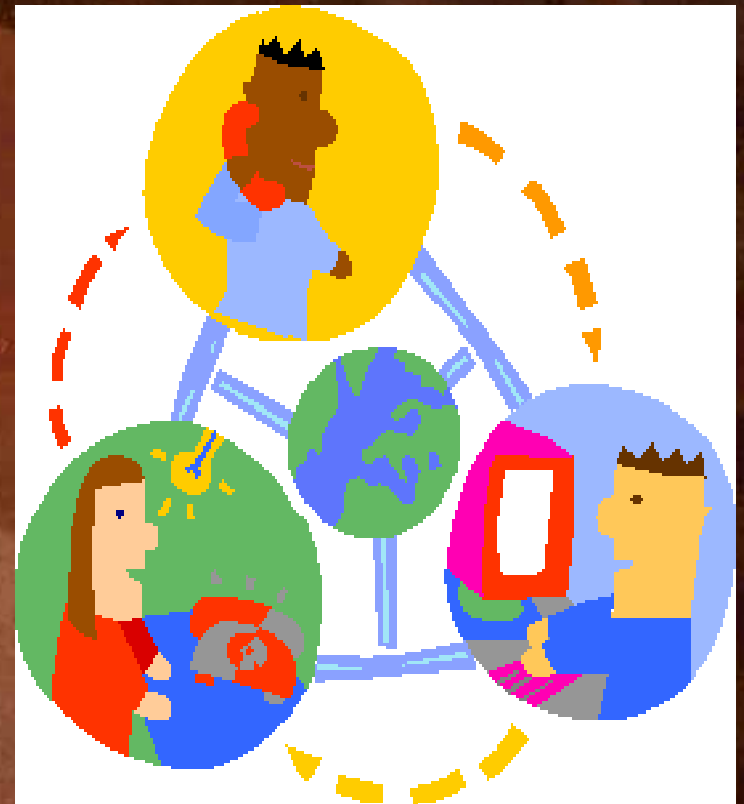
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The Power of Parents

Parents can often do things on the 'outside' that professionals can't from inside the system.

ENGAGE THEM!



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Parent Involvement by Mandate

No Child Left Behind (ESEA)

- . Title 1: Parent Involvement & Empowerment 20 U.S.C. 6318 (b) covers co-development of policy on parental participation, empowerment to be involved, and the right to frequent progress reports.

- . Parents Right-to-Know (teacher and paraprofessional qualifications and training)

- . School Report Cards & Public School Choice Options

- . Shared school/parent responsibility for student high achievement

- . reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities.

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act

- . Strengthening the role *and responsibility* of parents (in *Findings*)

- . Providing policy guidance on State Advisory Panels (Sec. 612)

- . Participating on IEP team

- . Providing Parent Education & Training Centers

- . Authorizing parents to approve or disapprove the absence of anyone required to be at the IEP meeting

Maternal Child & Health Grant

(funding Part C EHDI System)

"Form 13 – Characteristics Documenting Family Participation in CSHCN Programs"

Joint Committee on Infant Hearing

Guiding principles for family-centered practice

The Benefits of Parent Involvement*

Students

Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates

Better school attendance

Increased motivation, better self-esteem

Lower rates of suspension

Decreased use of drugs and alcohol

Fewer instances of violent behavior

Greater enrollment in postsecondary education

Teachers

Greater morale (and self-esteem)

Teaching effectiveness (proficiency) increases

Job satisfaction goes up

Communication/relations with students, parents, families, and communities improves

Community support of schools increases

Parental Involvement Helps Parents, too (*www.pta.org)

Parents

Communication/relations with children and teachers improves

Self-esteem goes up

Education level/skills increase

Decision-making skills become stronger

Attitude toward school and school personnel improves

Systems improve thru the influence of end-user (parental) quality control.
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Standards for Parent Involvement

Effective parent involvement programs include activities that are addressed by the following six standards:

- **I. Communicating** — Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- **II. Parenting** — Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- **III. Student learning** — Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- **IV. Volunteering** — Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- **V. School decision making and advocacy** — Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- **VI. Collaborating with community** — Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

* *Parent/Teacher Association of America; #BKF175.*

The familiar chorus of apathy...

PARENTS: "We didn't know about the event/meeting/opportunity."

"I'm not going to waste my time..."

"They're all paid to come to the meetings, and I'm taking vacation time plus paying a babysitter to be there!"

"If I complain, they just clam up and treat me like 'the enemy'."

"They're almost too nice... I get the feeling they're just trying to placate me."

PROFESSIONALS: "Most of the families I know just want to complain, not solve problems."

"The parents who don't show up... who don't know how to communicate with their child at home... what right have they earned to evaluate me or our program?"

"Parents don't have any idea about the pressures we're dealing with at school."



Scope of Work for the Engaged Parent:

Including, but not limited to...

- Networking and influence peddling
- Letter writing
- Fundraising
- Issues championing
- Group refocusing
- Productively ranting & advocating
- Delivering.

1. Create Meetings Conducive to Parent Participation

- . Parents can (and should) lead meetings
- . Convenient meeting times with childcare provision
- . Whatever reference materials or information the professionals have, be sure to provide to parents for review ahead of the meeting.
- . Agenda items from parents should be sought head of time.
- . First-name name tags
- . Decision-makers in attendance!



2. Think of parent leaders as trusted colleagues.



- Write parent participation into your policies & procedures
- Think of parents as 'quality control'
- Don't patronize
- Open your professional development workshops to parents
- Create an "advisory cabinet" of parents (and deaf/hh) consumers
- Invite parents to present to professionals on their perspectives...focus group
- Budget FTE for parent consult!

3. Find parents who are capable, or grow some of your own!

- . Parent leaders are capable of **effectively** representing a consigned agenda to impact/improve systems that serve children and families.
- . Parent leaders are brought 'inside' the system and authentically included in decision making.

The Keys to Effective Parent Leadership

1. Maintain the integrity of the parent perspective
2. Parents need to know the “rules of engagement” with institutions...
 - Credible Presentation
 - . From personal experience into collective experience
 - . Mastering the “Elevator-handshake”
 - . Be a parent, but be professional
 - Legal Savvy
 - . Rights and responsibilities
 - . Documentation essentials
 - Cultural & System Norms Navigation
 - . Who’s the boss?
 - . What’s the “company line” and why?
 - . Integrate within the network
3. Problem solvers get more attention than troublemakers.

Establishing trust...



- . Respect
- . Effective Communication
- . Equitable investment
- . Shared Risk-taking
- . & Shared Reward

Parent Leadership Applications

- Mentoring families with newly identified D/HH babies (Guide By Your Side)
- Advocating for individual student or full systemic improvement
- Providing thought leadership to program development and implementation
- Training professionals on sensitivity and awareness of family issues
- Providing end-user quality control oversight to services and systems

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Recommended Resources:

From Good to Great

By Jim Collins, *"Leaders in great organizations have these two qualities: modesty and willfulness."*

"Recommended Guidelines for Parent Leadership in Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Systems"

www.cdphe.state.co.us/ps/hcp/hcphom.asp

"Words of Advice"

Institute for Family-Centered Care

www.familycenteredcare.org/pdf/Resources-Winter05.pdf