Parent and Family Involvement:
A Guide to Effective Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in North Carolina Schools

New! *Toolkit Inside*
2nd Edition

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Acknowledgements

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INTRODUCTION

To School Leaders and Classroom Teachers on the Necessity of Family and Community Involvement

Research clearly connects family and community involvement to student success and shows that active, meaningful engagement from parents and others helps schools boost student achievement and produce graduates who are prepared to be productive, globally-competitive citizens. If we are to achieve our goal of graduating every North Carolina student from high school prepared for college and a career, we must stop viewing schools as the only responsible source of student success. Young people have so many influences in their lives—at home, in school, and in their communities. Failure to establish a home-school-community collaboration aimed at increasing student success puts our children's futures at stake.

The good news is that many school leaders across the state have realized the value of connecting parents and community members to what is happening in the classroom. Still, there are too many families and community members who do not feel equipped to partner with schools to create the best teaching and learning environments for children. It is not surprising that these people tend to avoid substantive involvement in critical issues such as daily attendance, teacher quality, student retention, and other areas that impact student success.

With the assistance of the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council, the Department of Public Instruction has developed a tool to help schools engage families and the community as full partners in the education decision-making process. Grounded in research on family and community involvement, *Parent and Family Involvement: A Guide to Effective Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in North Carolina Schools*, was written to inform schools and school districts on best practices in utilizing the skills and time of families and communities as they assist schools in preparing youth for post-secondary life. This guide also highlights the eight essential elements that leverage family and community involvement as a tool for improving student achievement and learning outcomes. In addition to featuring the essential elements, the guide offers a variety of easy-to-implement strategies that will not tax school budgets.

Use this resource as your guide to strengthen family and community engagement efforts in your district to boost student achievement in every school.

Please be assured that my office remains committed to supporting your awesome journey of helping young people wisely shape their future to graduate career- and college- ready while they are under the caring, guiding hand of three major influences in their lives—their family, community, and *you*.

Thank you for all you do to help all North Carolina students!

June St. Clair Atkinson

June St. Clair Atkinson
State Superintendent

The Importance of Family and Community Involvement

Introduction

Thirty years of research and a long history of federal and state legislation demonstrates the importance of parent involvement in their children's learning and development. In the *No Child Left Behind* legislation (NCLB) of 2002, the federal government for the first time offered a definition of parent involvement as a regular, two-way and meaningful communication about student learning and other school activities, including:

- assisting in their child's learning;
- being actively involved in their child's education at school;
- serving as full partners in their child's education and being included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and
- the carrying out of other activities such as those described in section 1118 of NCLB and Public Law 107-110, Title IX, Section 9109 (32).

Research shows the way. Family and community involvement can have a powerful and positive impact on student outcomes. According to *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, a research review published by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in 2002, students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, are more likely to:

- earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs;
- be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits;
- attend school regularly;
- have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school; and
- graduate and go on to post secondary education. [1]

A solid body of research finds that families of all income and education levels, and from all ethnic and cultural groups, support their children's learning at home. Families with more income and education, however, tend to be more engaged at school and have more resources to help their children at home. Supporting all families to be more involved at school and better informed about what children are learning in class must become a widely-used strategy for improving learning and addressing the achievement gap.

Programs and special efforts to engage families make a difference. Teacher outreach to families can result in strong, consistent gains in student performance in both reading and math. Effective outreach practices include meeting with families face-to-face, sending learning materials home, and keeping in touch about progress. Workshops for parents on helping their children are linked to higher reading and math scores. Schools with highly rated partnership programs make greater gains on state tests than schools with lower-rated programs.

Higher performing schools effectively involve families and the community*.* Schools that succeed in engaging families from diverse backgrounds share three key practices:

- Focus on building trusting, collaborative relationships and two-way communications among teachers, families, and community members;
- Recognize, respect, and address families' needs, as well as bridge class and cultural differences; and
- Embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared and where families are effective advocates for their children. [2]

Parent leadership and community organizing efforts improve schools*.* Parent leadership training and community organizing programs expand families' knowledge of how the system works and how to make it work for their children. Unlike school-based parent involvement, parent leadership and community organizing programs build partnerships to support schools and hold them accountable for results. These organizing efforts have lead to upgraded school facilities, improved school leadership and staffing, higher quality learning programs, new resources to improve teaching and curricula, and new funding for after-school and family support programs.

North Carolina is committed to supporting high-quality parent, family and community initiatives*.* The North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) recognizes that effective family involvement is necessary for schools to meet the SBE's Guiding Mission and Goals for the state (Appendix A). In an acknowledgment of the current research and in alignment to state and federal law, the SBE adopted the Parent/Family Involvement Policy on June 30, 2005 (Appendix B).

A report resulting from a needs assessment conducted by Edvantia's Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC) was released October 2008. This report, *Parent Involvement in the Appalachian Region: North Carolina*, resulted in one primary recommendation for the state: "Develop and implement a statewide framework for parent involvement." [3] This guide meets that recommendation as it is a step toward detailing a framework that specifies procedures and activities aimed at building parenting capacity and increasing family involvement at all levels. State Superintendent June Atkinson's Parent Advisory Committee has directed the development of this guide to help educators better leverage family involvement as a tool for improving student achievement and learning.

Finally, this guide uses the term "parent" liberally throughout. Users should construe the word to mean any adult in a child's life who has the responsibility of developing the child socially, mentally, academically, and otherwise. Ideally, users should be educators, school administrators, parent education trainers, and child advocates. In any case, they should feel more comfortable in the organizing of quality, sustained, family and community involvement programs for their school or organization.
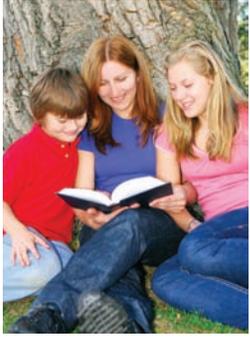
EIGHT ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Eight Essential Elements of Family and Community Involvement

Introduction

A study published in 2007 in the *Journal of Human Resources* indicates that schools would be wise to invest in parent involvement. This report points out that regular parent involvement at *home* increases student achievement at a rate equal to a $1000 increase in per-pupil spending. When parents are empowered to talk with their child about his or her interests, studies, and school classes, children succeed. The research then suggests that investing in parent involvement pays. [4]

The following sub-sections focus on determining the needs of individual schools, defining strategies that address the essential elements of parent involvement, and identifying some key resources for schools to utilize for working effectively with families and improving parent involvement.

Invest in a systematic approach to determining needs. Research supports that schools that undergo a careful analysis of data and information make better decisions about what to change and how to institutionalize systemic change. The first step to developing high-quality parent involvement initiatives is for the school to undergo a careful review of the practices, processes, and systems within a school that support family and community involvement. Schools must determine the effectiveness of current practices and revise existing plans based on the outcomes of the review. The completion of a self-assessment assists school leadership in determining needs, examining their nature and causes, and setting priorities for future action. The outcomes consequently guide the development of meaningful school, family, and community involvement plans and suggest benchmarks for evaluation.

The *School Self-Assessment of Family and Community Involvement Practices* (see Appendix C) guides school staff in a review of the eight essential elements of effective parent involvement as identified by SBE policy:
- Communication
- Parenting
- Student Learning
- Volunteering
- Advocacy and Decision-Making
- Training
- Community Collaboration
- Student Health

The self-assessment is intended to guide schools in determining the path for improvement of parent, family, and community involvement in a similar way to DPI's process for conducting a comprehensive needs assessment for schools. The school team should assess how

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effectively the school devises and implements strategies to increase effective partnerships with families and the community and how these partnerships impact student achievement.

In conjunction with other elements of conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, the school team must review artifacts and other supporting evidence to provide an accurate analysis addressing each essential element of family and community involvement and determine where the school ranks according to the following general rubric:

Leading	**Comprehensive evidence supports practices related to this indicator are fully implemented, consistently used, and routinely refined to incorporate current best practices.**
Developing	**Evidence supports practices related to this indicator are well-established and routinely used to incorporate best practices.**
Emerging	**Limited evidence supports practices related to this indicator may be initially established or inconsistently used.**
Lacking	**Little to no evidence supports practices related to this indicator are developed and implemented.**

For each of the eight essential elements of family and community involvement, the rubric provides more specific examples of practices indicating each rating.

Guidance on completing the form:
There is no prescribed method for completing the self-assessment. Schools may use different approaches. In some schools, the principal and the leadership team may complete the form at one of the regular meetings. In other schools, the form may be completed as part of a faculty meeting in order to involve all members of the school staff.
- Review each essential element of the rubric beginning with the description of Leading. Discuss each of the descriptors under each rating within the rubric to determine which ones accurately reflect the current status of the school.
- Be evaluative, rather than descriptive, and focus on outcomes in terms of family involvement improvement as it relates to student achievement.
- Be brief *(e.g. bullet points or notes in the Self-Evaluation Summary Form [Appendix C-2]).*
- Include references to where the evidence of the self-evaluation can be found based on any available evidence such as documentation, feedback from parents and staff, or school improvement plans, e.g. "increased understanding of grade-level curriculum as shown in the outcome of parent surveys."

Guiding questions for the process:
In order to guide the review process, the team may begin by discussing some overarching questions:
- What is your school's definition of family involvement?
- What does staff regularly do to build a welcoming climate?
- How does your school find a balance between an open-door policy and maintaining security?
- How does your school help parents understand school information?
- How do parent involvement efforts address the lifestyles of the families of the students?
- How does your school develop a family and community involvement plan?

Invest in a systematic approach to identifying and implementing new strategies.
It is critical that schools establish systems that provide a means for 1) ongoing evaluation of existing initiatives, and 2) identification of additional best practices in the involvement of families and communities. School administrators and school improvement teams should annually review the school's family and community involvement plan and routinely discuss the progress of improvement goals throughout the school year. School leadership must consider the best use of existing resources to ensure family and community involvement practices are aligned to the unique family and community needs of the students served.

Schools must also develop professional development plans that support family and community involvement efforts. Administrators, teachers, other school staff, and family involvement leaders need to acquire knowledge, skills, and resources to work together productively to improve student achievement. When teachers and other staff believe that family empowerment and involvement are essential to student learning, effective family involvement practices are more likely to occur.

Included in this section are examples of strategies and activities that address each of the eight essential elements outlined in SBE policy on family and community involvement. The list of potentially effective practices is not all-inclusive.

COMMUNICATION - *Facilitate regular, two-way, and meaningful communication between home and school.*
- Provide professional development on effective communication skills including skills for effective verbal engagement, active listening, and empathetic responding.
- Encourage and promote a sense of care and concern for physical and emotional safety, and the health and well-being of students, staff, and parents.
- Establish systems of communication that will ensure that all information about policies, procedures, and expectations are available to all parents.
- Disseminate calendars of school activities to provide advance notice to parents.
- Provide information and guidance on:
    - selecting courses and after-school programs, and
    - understanding standards, curriculum, and assessments.
- Establish a school-wide system of sharing information that is ongoing, timely, and understandable to families throughout the year.
- Hold conferences and home visits as arranged by the district or school or as requested by parents based on student individual needs.
- Create a library of virtual tours of the school and community.
- Conduct surveys for students, parents, and communities to provide responses to school programs, policies, practices, and share information and concerns about students on an annual or bi-annual basis.
- Provide additional opportunities for parents to provide responses to classroom teachers about the academic progress of students.

PARENTING - *Promote and support responsible parenting.*
- Teach parenting skills related to health, safety, communication, and academic achievement based on the unique needs of the parents of the students in the school.
- Hold school and community-based meetings to help parents understand school needs and expectations at different levels of the educational process.
- Establish and maintain partnerships with businesses, faith-based organizations, and community agencies in order to provide training on effective parenting skills.
- Assist parents in learning how to create conditions that support learning at home.
- Help parents develop more awareness of the need for literacy and learning in the home.
- Collaborate with and support programs that assist parents with health, nutrition, economic, and other family services.

- Empower parents to understand their role in establishing their children's boundaries, rules, and expectations.
- Identify and connect families of children with special physical and learning needs with resources to facilitate appropriate services.

STUDENT LEARNING - *Inform and/or involve/train parents and caregivers in children's learning activities so that they may play an integral role in assisting student learning.*
- Provide teacher training on the value of parent involvement at home.
- Utilize parent/school contracts/compacts to support shared responsibility for student learning.
- Provide information about content knowledge, skills and expectations in all subjects and at all grade levels.
- Provide training on how students will be evaluated.
- Share information on how the school accommodates differences in learning.
- Share information on how the school addresses transitions from preschool programs to elementary education programs, middle school to high school, and high school to post graduation activities.
- Share information on the kinds of projects and assignments in place to help students meet higher academic standards.
- Provide training on how to discuss and monitor schoolwork and homework.
- Provide resources for parents that need additional support for assisting students at home.
- Provide calendars of home-school activities and events.
- Sponsor family nights with a content focus at varied times throughout the year.
- Provide parent training on how to work with their children in goal-setting and planning for college or work.

VOLUNTEERING - *Ensure that family members/caregivers are welcome in the school and seek their support and assistance in a variety of ways.*
- Create a welcoming physical environment for family members visiting schools.
- Provide training for office staff on the importance of a family-friendly school.
- Provide teacher training on the effective use of parent volunteers in the classroom in the areas of:
    o Planning for volunteers;
    o Communicating with volunteers; and
    o Organizing activities for effective volunteer participation.
- Develop parent training on how to assist with volunteer efforts.
- Establish systems of gathering feedback from families and school staff for identifying numerous ways that family members may choose to volunteer.
- Encourage parent participation in community-service, service-learning, field-trips, and project-based learning types of learning activities.
- Establish a school-wide volunteer program to encourage families, teachers, and administrators to cooperate and participate in building strong, supportive relationships.
- Establish a resource center for families and volunteers as a meeting place, work-site, or workshop area.
- Recruit parents to volunteer as patrols, monitors, proctors or other activities to assist in the learning, safety, school climate, and overall efficiency and effectiveness of school operations.
- Conduct annual surveys to identify interests, talents, availability of volunteers among families and community members.
- Sponsor volunteer recognition programs.

ADVOCACY AND DECISION-MAKING - *Include parents/caregivers as partners in decisions that affect children and their families.*

- Train staff and parents/caregivers in leadership, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and decision-making skills.
- Collaborate with independent parent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school improvement.
- Train parents/caregivers on how to help their children learn to ask for help and assistance with matters relating to health, safety, harassment, abuse, and academic assistances.
- Develop networks to link all families with school or district parent representatives, coordinators, or liaisons.
- Include parents/caregivers in the active recruitment of other parents for involvement and participation.
- Create a mechanism for identifying and encouraging parents/caregivers to serve as mentors and coaches to other parents.
- Encourage active parent organizations to set goals for the outcomes of their programs aligned to school goals.
- Have appropriate representation of parents/caregivers on various committees of school and district governance and improvement.
- Seek input, feedback and support from families by a variety of methods to get input about school and district policies, curricula and programs.

TRAINING - *Training is needed for family and school personnel. To begin assess parents' and school personnel informational needs and provide training based upon those needs.*

- Use various data sources to identify information and learning needs for staff and families.
- Provide training for school staff on vital elements of effective family involvement which may include:
  - Family, community and school partnership development, and
  - Creation of an inviting school climate that demonstrates cultural awareness.
- Provide training that empowers parents/caregivers to advocate for and ensure the success of their children. The training may include:
  - Local board and school policies;
  - Services provided through student assistance teams;
  - Pathways to promotion, graduation, and grades;
  - Pathways that lead to discipline and suspension issues.
- Create a video library for virtual training and information sharing.
- Provide training to staff and families about Internet access and safety.
- Provide training to families, community members and staff in such a way that it establishes a common set of knowledge, standards, and expectations.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION - *Collaborate with community agencies and other organizations to provide resources to strengthen school programs, families, and student learning.*

- Work with communities, organizations, local politicians, staff, and families to identify ways to reduce stress and enhance quality of life.
- Provide information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services.
- Provide information on community activities that link to learning skills and talent development opportunities, including summer programs for students.
- Coordinate service integration of school in partnership with businesses, civic, counseling, cultural, health, recreation, and other agencies and organizations.
- Provide opportunities for community service and service learning as a pathway to enhance involvement with community by students, families, and schools.
- Provide resource directories for families with information on community agencies, programs, and services.
- Work with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance students' skills and family involvement.
- Offer before and after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers.
- Partner with families and community-based entities to develop reciprocal relationships that support schools and families by disseminating information, volunteering time and talents, providing consultation and other types of support resources.
- Partner with families and community-based entities to identify ways to achieve reciprocal benefit.
- Assist local districts in the development, adoption and implementation of identified goals (within the annual school improvement plan) targeting family involvement.

STUDENT HEALTH - *Promote health awareness among families by addressing the need for health programs and student health services, which are linked to student learning.*

- Provide staff and families training about health and safety issues, programs, services, policies, and practices and how these factors impact student achievement.
- Create a directory of "who to call" about student health and safety issues.
- Train school staff and families about issues related to health and safety:
  - Health indicators, behaviors or other events that might indicate a health or safety concern;
  - Health education, prevention and intervention programs and services, and health and safety promotion programs and campaigns;
  - Internet safety, bullying, harassment, domestic violence or discrimination.
- Establish partnerships with community agencies to identify and connect family with resources, services, family health screenings, evening or after-school activities, and resource service centers.
- Provide opportunities for parents' feedback on policies and practices that may have an impact on the health and safety of their children.

Invest time in reviewing high-quality resources. Once a school has identified areas for improvement, it is wise to invest time reviewing the many available resources. The list of descriptors provides considerations for school initiatives; however, the resources suggested in this section can provide the means and methods for carrying out the activities in a way that meets individual school and community needs.

To get your team started, this section includes a list of some of the high-quality resources available to assist schools in implementing parent/family involvement strategies and activities from a practical standpoint. Many of the publications may be directly downloaded from the website. NOTE: In the electronic view of this document, click on the title linked to the web address.

- **North Carolina Parent Information and Resource Center** The Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC), Parent Partners, is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. *See Appendix D.*

- **Communities in Schools of North Carolina** Communities in Schools of North Carolina (CISNC) is an independently incorporated not-for-profit directed by its own board of directors representing both private and public interests in the state. *See Appendix D-2.*

- **NCAE Center for Teaching and Learning** The North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) has developed a catalog of professional development sessions that are relevant, practical, research based strategies that meet standards adopted by the North Carolina State Board of Education. Included are sessions that address building strong family and community partnerships. *See Appendix D-3.*

- **Promising Partnership Practices**, published by the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. The collections, since 1998, include over 600 hundred good ideas from members of NNPS to improve family and community involvement linked to school improvement and student success.

- **Engaging Parents in Education: Lessons From Five Parental Information and Resource Centers** published in June, 2007 by the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of this guide is to explain "how to" strategies that the Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) use to improve or expand their parental involvement programs in public schools.

- **Building Relationships for Student Success: School-Family-Community Partnerships and Student Achievement in the Northwest**, published by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). This publication reviews what research says about family involvement and contains practical suggestions to enlist families in children's learning.

- **Parental Involvement Under the New Title I & Title III: From Compliance to Effective Practice** published by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) program supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. This report seeks to assist schools and districts as they consider how the requirements of the law can support the development of sound, effective parental involvement plans.

- **Taking a Closer Look: A Guide to Online Resources on Family Involvement**, produced by Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) and the Harvard Family Research Project, 2005. This comprehensive resource contains listings and links to hundreds of websites and resources on family involvement.

- **Parent involvement activities in school improvement plans in the Northwest Region**, published by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) program supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. This report addresses the outcomes of a study conducted to determine how improvement plans of Title I Schools align with the parent involvement requirements of the NCLB Act. Included with the report is a helpful checklist for review of parent involvement activities in school improvement plans.

- **Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center** developed as a resource by the Administration for Children and Families supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This website provides resources to support schools in promoting the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities.

- **The Family Involvement Network of Educators** (FINE) is an organization supported by the Harvard Family Research Project. FINE represents a national network of people interested in promoting strong partnerships between schools, families, and communities. Membership is free and includes access to information about family involvement and regular updates of new resources that strengthen family, school, and community partnerships.

- **Family and Community Engagement Survey**, published by the Intercultural Development and Research Association (IDRA). This survey can be used by teachers, administrators and parents to assess a school's effectiveness in partnering with families. Surveys are available in English and Spanish.
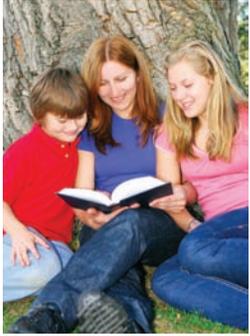
TOOLKIT FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A Toolkit for Family and Community Involvement

Overview and Directions

This toolkit for family and community involvement offers a programmatic approach to increasing family and community involvement through a two-step process. There are three components to assist users with navigating through the two-step process:

1. The *Family and Community Engagement in Schools* (FACES) Assessment,
2. The *Family and Community Engagement in Schools Action Plan* and
3. The *School-Family-Community Resource Guide*.

In the first step, users complete the *FACES Assessment*. This assessment assists schools in evaluating the level at which they incorporate the eight essential elements of family and community involvement. The results will give schools an accurate, holistic picture of their current family and community programming.

The second step is for users to complete the *FACES Action Plan*. The purpose of the FACES Action Plan is to direct attention on any missing essential element, as evidenced by the FACES Assessment. Comprehensive in nature, the FACES Action Plan focuses on *each* essential element, while folding in such components as technology, service needs of families, collaboration among stakeholders, scientifically-based materials, and periodic re-assessments. *Before* completing the plan, users should review the descriptions associated with the aforementioned components.

Used in conjunction with the FACES Action Plan, the *School-Family-Community Resource Guide* offers family/community involvement activities and strategies that include workshops, web-links, articles, and professional development. Users may also find that these activities and strategies are well-suited to address the components mentioned in the explanation of the FACES Action Plan.

Finally, to enjoy the full benefit of this toolkit, it is suggested that users access it at www.ncpublicschools.org/parents/toolkit. The toolkit may be downloaded and completed according to a user's individual timeline. An added benefit to downloading the toolkit is that users can add to it or modify it to fit the needs of their individual schools.

Skill Level of the User

The toolkit is designed to be user-friendly. While intended for school leaders, faculty and staff, a high degree of technical expertise is not needed to successfully complete the three components of the toolkit. However, at minimum, users should be comfortable with basic word programs and ways electronic tools can be modified, applied, and adapted.

Conclusion

Ever increasingly, school leaders and educators are recognizing this reality: schooling requires a partnership between schools and their families and community members. It is unlikely that *sustained* student achievement will happen without it. Otherwise schools may continue to experience difficulty raising student achievement. It is our hope that this toolkit will facilitate the growing necessity for the school-family-community partnership.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS ASSESSMENT

Essential Element: Communication

I. Assessment of Efforts and Rating Rubric

For each guiding principle, check the box in the column that most appropriately rates your current level of communication efforts with families and the community.

Guiding Principles	Leading Comprehensive evidence supports practices are fully implemented, consistently used, and routinely refined to incorporate current best practices.	Developing Evidence supports practices related to this indicator are well-established and routinely used to incorporate best practices.	Emerging Limited evidence supports practices related to this indicator may be initially established or inconsistently used.	Lacking Little to no evidence supports practices related to this indicator are developed and implemented.
1. Provide professional development on effective communication skills including skills for effective verbal engagement, active listening, and empathetic responding.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Encourage and promote a sense of care and concern for physical and emotional safety, and the health and well-being of students, staff, and parents.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Establish systems of communication that will ensure that all information about policies, procedures, and expectations are available to all parents.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Disseminate calendars of school activities to provide advance notice to parents.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Provide information and guidance: • Selecting courses and after-school programs • Understanding standards, curriculum, and assessments	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Establish a school-wide system of sharing information that is ongoing, timely, and understandable.	☐	☐	☐	☐

II. Action Plan for Communication

The following are components of a comprehensive communication plan to ensure schools, families and communities are meaningfully and equally involved in the **planning**, **dissemination**, **sharing**, and **receiving** of **information** communicated about activities or about students at the school. Therefore it is recommended that this plan be completed by school personnel in conjunction with its families and community members for a balanced representation of input and implementation among stakeholders.

1. Involvement of families and the community in the dissemination, sharing and receiving of information relative to school-related activities (including but not limited to such things as school governance, conducting parent/teacher conferences, etc.)

2. Use of technology in communicating information to stakeholders as well as receiving information from stakeholders

3. Service of the communication needs of underserved, underrepresented families

4. Collaboration among stakeholders

5. Use of scientifically-based training materials and information regarding communicating with stakeholders

6. Re-assessment of the effectiveness of communicating information across stakeholders

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS ACTION PLAN

Components	Strategy(ies)	Resources Needed	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date
1. Involvement of Families and Community				
2. Technology				
3. Service Needs of all Families				
4. Collaboration among Stakeholders				
5. Scientifically-based materials, trainings				
6. Re-assessment of Communication Efforts				

Source: New Mexico Department of Education

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS
ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN

Essential Element: Communication

Components	Strategy(ies)	Resources Needed	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date
1. Involvement of Families and Community	Develop and survey all parents/community partners to determine to whom, how and to what extent communication has occurred. Identify underrepresented families and community members (survey data)	Time to develop /compile surveys Assistance from Title I Director, School Social Worker, Family Involvement Coordinator Funding for Postage for mailing surveys, printing supplies	Family/School/ Community Engagement Team (school staff, parents, community members) Family Involvement Coordinator	
2. Technology	Utilize Connect-Ed to alert families/community of upcoming events/ information Review/edit school web page to ensure ease of use by families/ community members Develop webinars addressing identified family/community needs Designate space within school for family/ community computer access and publicize Continue paper notices sent from school to family and family to school to ensure families without technology access are informed	Connect-Ed capabilities Assistance from district technology specialist Assistance from district technology specialist Space for computer access/computers/ connectivity	Family/School/ Community Engagement Team (school staff, parents, community members) Family Involvement Coordinator	
3. Service Needs of all Families	Conduct home visits to homes or "hard to reach" families to seek information Inform families of various communication efforts available to families within the school (computer lab, webinars, webpage, etc.)	Time designated to conduct home visits Funding for travel by school staff to homes	School administration School staff	

Components	Strategy(ies)	Resources Needed	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date
4. Collaboration among Stakeholders	Develop Family/ School/Community Engagement Team Conduct dialogue sessions to identify methods of collecting and disseminating information to all stakeholders	Database of contact information for appropriate stakeholders Time and location for team meetings	School Administration School Data Personnel Family Involvement Coordinator	
5. Scientifically-based materials, trainings	Participation of selected team members for training in family and community involvement in schools Team members will share strategies learned with team and develop plan for appropriate implementation All members of Family/ Community/School Engagement Team will view "Family Engagement Webinars" from Harvard Family Research Project Team members will develop plan to implement appropriate strategies	Funding for Training (registration, fees, travel, food, substitutes for staff, etc.) Technology access for team to view Harvard Family Research Project's Webinars	School administration Title I Director School administration Family Involvement Coordinator	
6. Re-assessment of Communication Efforts	Resurvey all parents/ community partners to identify changes in original data Retake survey and Self-Report by families	Time to conduct/compile surveys Funding for postage for mailing surveys, printing supplies	Family/School/ Community Engagement Team, school staff, parents, community members) Family Involvement Coordinator	

THE SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE

Essential Element: Communication

GUIDING PRINCIPLE	RESOURCE	TYPE	TARGET	WHERE TO FIND IT
Effective communication skills for effective verbal engagement, active listening, and empathetic listening	Effective Communication Skills and Student Achievement	Workshop	Parents	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/schooltransformation/community/training
	Tips for Parent-Teacher Conferences with Bilingual Families	Information	Teachers	http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/19382
Promoting a sense of care and concern for physical and emotional safety, and the health and well-being of Students, staff, and parents	Coordinated School Health Model	Evaluation and Guidance Tool	Parents, School personnel, Community	http://www.nchealthyschools.org http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth http://hl.ncwiseowl.org http://www.wholechildeducation.org http://www.nccollaborative.org
	Tips for Helping Immigrant Families	Information	Parent Advocates, School Administrators	http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/immigration-help.html
Providing information and guidance on curriculum, instruction, and assessment in all content areas	NC Curriculum per Grade Level	Information	Parents, School personnel, Community	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum
	Assessing NC Curriculum per Grade Level	Information	Parents, School personnel, Community	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/briefs/ http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/standards
Facilitate meaningful communication between home and school	Immigrant Family Involvement	PowerPoint Presentation	Educators, Parent Advocates	http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/early learning/orlando-garcia-presentation.pdf

Essential Element: Parenting

GUIDING PRINCIPLE	RESOURCE	TYPE	TARGET	WHERE TO FIND IT
Parenting skills related to health, safety, communication, and academic achievement	School Connectedness	Information	Parents, School personnel	http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/Adolescent Health/pdf/connectedness.pdf http://www.jhsph.edu/bin/i/e/MCI_Monograph_FINAL.pdf http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr05/vol62/num07/A-Case-for-School-Connectedness.aspx
	Parent Engagement	Workshop	Parents	http://hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/the-effects-of-comprehensive-parent-engagement-on-student-learning-outcomes http://www.ncpta.org www.nchealthyschools.org/parent
Assisting parents in learning how to create conditions that support learning at home	Home Study Skills	Workshop	Parents	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/schooltransformation/community/training
	Helping with Homework	Workshop	Parents	www.ecac-parentcenter.org
	Helping with Homework	Information	Parents	http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/parents/ParentUniv/Pages/OnlineModulesandInformationalVideos.aspx
Helping parents develop more awareness of the need for literacy and learning in the home	Workshop	Parents	Parents	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/schooltransformation/community/training
	A Toolbox of Training Resources for Early Learning	Information	Parents, School personnel	http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~scpp/pdfs/DPI_toolbox_prototype.pdf
	Tips for Helping Children Learn to Read	Information	Hispanic Parents	http://www2.ed.gov/espanol/parents/academic/involve/2006toolkit/read-es.pdf
Empowering parents to understand their role in establishing their children's boundaries, rules, and expectations	Managing Behavior	Workshop	Parents	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/schooltransformation/community/training
	Tips for Helping Immigrant Families	Information	Parent Advocates, School Administrators	http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/immigration-help.html

Essential Element: Student Learning

GUIDING PRINCIPLE	RESOURCE	TYPE	TARGET	WHERE TO FIND IT
Utilizing parent/school contracts/compacts to support shared responsibility for student learning	A Reading Partnership Action Kit	Information	Parents, School personnel, Community	http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/CompactforReading/content.html
Training on how students will be evaluated	Preparing Your Child for Testing	Workshop	Parents	www.ecac-parentcenter.org
Discussing and monitoring schoolwork and homework	Helping your Child with Homework	Workshop	Parents	www.ecac-parentcenter.org
	A Toolbox of Training Resources for Early Learning	Workshop	Parents	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/schooltransformation/community/training
Training on working with children in goal-setting and planning for college or work	Student Planning Timeline—Your Timeline to Planning for College	Workshop	Students (12+), Parents	http://www.cfnc.org/index.jsp

Essential Element: Volunteering

GUIDING PRINCIPLE	RESOURCE	TYPE	TARGET	WHERE TO FIND IT
Training on a parent-friendly school	Developing a Family-Friendly Culture	Professional Development / Workshop	School personnel	http://www.ecac-parentcenter.org/
	Family Walkthrough Checklist	Information	School personnel, Parents, Community leaders	http://www.njpirc.org/documents/family_friendly_walkthrough.pdf
Teacher training on parent volunteers; parent training on assisting with volunteer efforts	Supporting Parent, Family and Community Involvement in Your School	Information	Teachers Parents	http://www.pacer.org/mpc/pdf/titleipip/SupportingInvolvement_article.pdf
	Guidelines for Volunteering	Information	School personnel, Parents	www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/family_tools/increasing-volunteerism/volunteer-guidelines.html
Encourage parent participation in community-service, service-learning, field trips, and project-based learning types of activities	Strategies to Involve Hispanic Families		School personnel, Parent Advocates, Community leaders	http://www.joe.org/joe/2001december/rb2.php

Essential Element: Advocacy & Decision-Making

GUIDING PRINCIPLE	RESOURCE	TYPE	TARGET	WHERE TO FIND IT
Train staff and parents in leadership, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and decision-making skills	Education Leadership Institute	Workshop	Parents	www.ncjustice.org
	Parenting	Information	Parents, School personnel	http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/parents/ParentUniv/Pages/default.aspx
	Steps to becoming Your Child's Best Advocate	Workshop	Parents	www.ecac-parentcenter.org
Train parents on how to help their children learn to ask for help and assistance with matters relating to health, safety, harassment, abuse, and academic assistance	NC Health Education State Standards, National Health Education Standards	Evaluation and Gui//dance Tool	Parents, School personnel, Community	http://www.nchealthyschools.org http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth http://hl.ncwiseowl.org http://www.wholechildeducation.org http://www.pta.org/4078.htm
		Workshop	Parents	
	Healthy Schools Institute	Workshop	School personnel	www.nchealthyschools.org

Essential Element: Training

| GUIDING PRINCIPLE	RESOURCE	TYPE	TARGET	WHERE TO FIND IT
Use various data sources to identify information and learning needs for staff and parents.	Family Survey	Information	Families	www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/teacher_tools/promoting-positive-parenting/family-survey.html
	Parent Involvement Activities in School Improvement		Teachers, School Personnel	http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/pdf/REL_2008064a.pdf
Provide training for school staff on vital elements of effective parent involvement	Why Don't They Come?	Professional Development	Teachers, School personnel	http://www.ecac-parentcenter.org
Provide training to staff and families about internet access and safety	What Parents Need to Know about Technology & Internet Safety	Workshop	Families	http://www.ecac-parentcenter.org
		Strategies	Families	http://www.pta.org/internet_safety.asp

Essential Element: Community Collaboration

GUIDING PRINCIPLE	RESOURCE	TYPE	TARGET	WHERE TO FIND IT
Working with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance students' skills and parent involvement	Effective School Partnerships	Professional Development	School personnel, Families Community	http://www.ecac-parentcenter.org/
	A Guide to School, Family and Community Partnerships	Information	School Administrators	http://www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/publications/principals-matter.htm
Partner with parents and community-based entities to identify ways to achieve reciprocal benefit.	Ways to build School-Family-Community Collaboration	Information	Families, School Personnel, Community	http://www.cesdp.nmhu.edu/toolkit/pdfs/ft_mod6.pdf http://www.pta.org/EducationNation/National_Standards.pdf
	Family & Community Partnerships (*working with migrant families*)	Webcast & PowerPoint Presentation	Parent Advocates of immigrant families, School personnel	http://www.readingrockets.org/webcasts/2003
	Family & Community Partnerships (*working with migrant families*)	Information	Community organizations	http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/29843

Essential Element: Student Health

GUIDING PRINCIPLE	RESOURCE	TYPE	TARGET	WHERE TO FIND IT
Reducing risk factors through connectedness to caring nurturing adults	US DOE and CDC Guides	Information	School personnel Families Community	http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/AdolescentHealth/pdf/connectedness.pdf
	US DOE and CDC Guides	Evaluation Tool	School Administrators	http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/drugfree/index.html
	Parents as Partners	Workshop	Parents	www.nchealthyschools.org
Coordinated School Health models strategies to systematically address school health	School Health Index, Healthy School Report Card	Evaluation & Advocacy Tools, Workshops	School personnel, Families Community	http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/CSHP/ http://www.wholechildeducation.org/ www.nchealthyschools.org
K-HS comprehensive sequential health education instruction teaches and assesses student health knowledge, skills, concepts, and their relevant application for responsible healthy decision making	National and State Health Education Standards	Information	School personnel, Families, Community	http://www.nchealthyschools.org http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth http://hl.ncwiseowl.org
	National and State Health Education Standards	Information	Teachers of early learners	http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/curriculum/primaryk3/guide4early-years.pdf
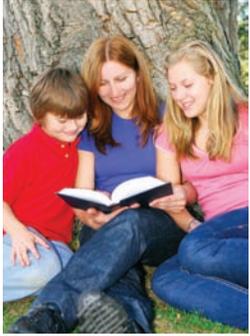
APPENDICES

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FUTURE-READY STUDENTS
for the 21st Century

The guiding mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education is that every public school student will graduate from high school, globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st Century.

Goal: NC public schools will produce globally competitive students.
- Every student excels in rigorous and relevant core curriculum that reflects what students need to know and demonstrate in a global 21st Century environment, including a mastery of languages, an appreciation of the arts, and competencies in the use of technology.
- Every student's achievement is measured with an assessment system that informs instruction and evaluates knowledge, skills, performance, and dispositions needed in the 21st Century.
- Every student will be enrolled in a course of study designed to prepare them to stay ahead of international competition.
- Every student uses technology to access and demonstrate new knowledge and skills that will be needed as a life-long learner to be competitive in a constantly changing international environment.
- Every student has the opportunity to graduate from high school with an Associates Degree or college transfer credit.

Goal: NC public schools will be led by 21st Century professionals.
- Every teacher will have the skills to deliver 21st Century content in a 21st Century context with 21st Century tools and technology that guarantees student learning.
- Every teacher and administrator will use a 21st Century assessment system to inform instruction and measure 21st Century knowledge, skills, performance, and dispositions.
- Every education professional will receive preparation in the interconnectedness of the world with knowledge and skills, including language study.
- Every education professional will have 21st Century preparation and access to ongoing high quality professional development aligned with State Board of Education priorities.
- Every educational professional uses data to inform decisions.

Goal: NC public school students will be healthy and responsible.
- Every learning environment will be inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible for student success.
- Every school provides an environment in which each child has positive, nurturing relationships with caring adults.
- Every school promotes a healthy, active lifestyle where students are encouraged to make responsible choices.
- Every school focuses on developing strong student character, personal responsibility, and community/world involvement.
- Every school reflects a culture of learning that empowers and prepares students to be life-long learners.

Goal: Leadership will guide innovation in NC public schools.
- School professionals will collaborate with national and international partners to discover innovative transformational strategies that will facilitate change, remove barriers for 21st Century learning, and understand global connections.
- School leaders will create a culture that embraces change and promotes dynamic continuous improvement.
- Educational professionals will make decisions in collaboration with parents, students, businesses, education institutions, and faith-based and other community and civic organizations to impact student success.
- The public school professionals will collaborate with community colleges and public and private universities and colleges to provide enhanced educational opportunities for students.

Goal: NC public schools will be governed and supported by 21st Century systems.

- Processes are in place for financial planning and budgeting that focus on resource attainment and alignment with priorities to maximize student achievement.
- Twenty-first century technology and learning tools are available and are supported by school facilities that have the capacity for 21st Century learning.
- Information and fiscal accountability systems are capable of collecting relevant data and reporting strategic and operational results.
- Procedures are in place to support and sanction schools that are not meeting state standards for student achievement.

Goals approved by the North Carolina State Board of Education on September 7, 2006.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy on Family Involvement

<u>**Policy Identification**</u>
Priority: Strong Family, Community, and Business Support
Category: Parent and Family Involvement
Policy ID Number: FCB-A-000

<u>**Policy Title:**</u> Parent/Family Involvement

<u>**Current Policy Date:**</u> 06/30/2005

<u>**Other Historical Information:**</u>

<u>**Statutory Reference:**</u>

<u>**Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:**</u>

Parent/Family Involvement Policy

The North Carolina State Board of Education recognizes that parents/guardians, families, schools, and the community share the responsibility for the education of our children. Creating positive home, school, and community partnerships is essential to carrying out this shared responsibility successfully. To support the State Board's strategic priority and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's (NCDPI) efforts promoting high student performance, school administrators, teachers and parents/guardians must work as knowledgeable partners.

The State Board believes that schools must create an environment that is conducive to learning and supports strong family partnerships. Collaboration between all school personnel and parents/guardians is essential to support student learning. School personnel will encourage and involve parents/guardians of children at all ages and grade levels by providing and respecting a variety of opportunities for involvement, while recognizing and respecting the diverse needs of families in their community. The NCDPI, local school districts and school personnel, in collaboration with parents/guardians, shall establish programs and practices that enhance parent/guardian involvement and reflect the specific needs of students and their families.

Local school districts, in collaboration with parents/guardians, teachers, students, and administrators must establish and develop efforts that enhance parental involvement and reflect the needs of students, parents/guardians and families in the communities they serve. In order to enhance parental involvement, schools should promote the following essential elements:

- **Communication**. Facilitate regular, two-way, and meaningful communication between home and school. (Communication should be in a format that parents/guardians understand.)
- **Parenting**. Promote and support responsible parenting.
- **Student Learning**. Inform and involve parents and caregivers in children's learning activities so that they may play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- **Volunteering**. Ensure that parents/guardians are welcome in the school and seek their support and assistance in a variety of ways.
- **Advocacy and Decision-Making**. Include parents/guardians as partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

- **Training**. Assess the parents' informational needs and provide parent training based upon those needs.
- **Community Collaboration**. Collaborate with community agencies and other organizations to provide resources to strengthen school programs, families, and student learning.
- **Student Health**. Promote health awareness among parents/guardians by addressing the need for health programs and student health services, which are linked to student learning.

The State Board supports the NCDPI in its role to foster wider and substantive family and community involvement by:

- Identifying and sharing information with parents/guardians and families about effective educational programs;
- Collecting and disseminating information about current research, model programs, and best practices for family/school/community involvement programs;
- Providing information on effective funding sources for the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs;
- Coordinating state-level efforts to work with the private sector, foundations, and other public agencies regarding funding educational initiatives; and
- Working in partnership with higher education to address strategies for parent/family involvement in the coursework for teacher training programs.
- Working with parents/guardians to identify and access health services and programs for parents and family.

The State Board recognizes the importance of administrative leadership in setting expectations and creating a climate conducive to parental participation. The NCDPI shall develop and implement guidelines that support professional development opportunities for school personnel to enhance understanding of effective parent involvement strategies and to develop and implement practices that involve parents/guardians in a meaningful way in the education of their children.

In addition to programs at the school level, the State Board endorses each school district's development, implementation, and regular evaluation of a program(s) to involve parents/guardians using, to the degree possible, the components listed above. These partnerships are mutually beneficial. Developing cooperative efforts and linking access to resources will ensure improved academic achievement for all students, as well as quality schools.

Engaging parents is essential to improved student achievement and to realize our mission: **North Carolina's public schools will create a system that will be customer driven with local flexibility to achieve mastery of core skills with high levels of accountability in areas of student achievement.**

SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT OF PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES

1. Communication: Facilitate regular, two-way, and meaningful communication between home and school.

Leading	Developing	Emerging	Lacking
▪ District/schools provide multiple opportunities for communicating student achievement information and other information throughout the school year through multiple means including printed materials, electronic communication, phone calls, and home visits. ▪ Multiple two-way communications in the home language are used to communicate academic goals, class work, homework, and grades. ▪ School staff implements systematic efforts to maximize parent-teacher conference participation. (For example, offering multiple locations, convenient times, follow-up with parents who do not reply to first notices, opportunities for student-led conferences.) ▪ School staff offers parents opportunities to discuss school-wide achievement issues, including assessment data, at least once a semester. ▪ School staff has a systematic process for surveying parents with a response rate greater than 75% and results are shared through multiple means with parents and addressed in the school improvement plan. ▪ District and school staff provides training annually to teachers and parents on improving the communication between home and the school.	▪ School staff implements individual efforts to inform parents about academic goals, class work, grades and homework for their children in their home language. ▪ Most communications are provided in the home language to communicate academic goals, class work, homework, and grades. ▪ Conferences are scheduled twice a year for all students and include parent or advocate, student and teachers with some effort to maximize parent-teacher participation. ▪ School staff offers varied ways that parents can share information with teachers about their children's learning needs. (For example, phone and e-mail contacts, offering parent conferences, and making home visits.) ▪ School staff offers parents opportunities to discuss school-wide achievement issues, including assessment data, at least once a year. ▪ School staff has a systematic process for surveying parents with a response rate greater than 50% and results are shared with parents and addressed in the school improvement plan. ▪ District and school staff provides periodic training to teachers on improving the communication between home and the school.	▪ School staff relies on one-way communication in English to inform parents about academic goals, class work, grades and homework. (For example, newsletters, marquees, and agendas.) ▪ School staff uses informal conversation and/or a parent teacher conference to listen to parents or inform parents of students' learning needs. ▪ Parent -teacher conferences are held twice a year on school grounds and some teachers send invitations to parents. ▪ Student achievement data or achievement results are communicated informally to parents by school staff. ▪ School staff develops a survey that is sent to parents, with low response rate and results are reported in the school improvement plan. ▪ District and school staff provides limited training to teachers on improving the communication between home and school.	▪ School staff uses only one-way communication with parents to inform them about student work. (For example, student report cards and behavior reports.) ▪ Parents receive information about student's learning needs when the student is failing academically. ▪ School staff, as mandated by law, addresses data on student achievement. ▪ Optional parent-teacher conferences are offered at school and parents are notified if a teacher wants to conference. ▪ Parents have no opportunities to give feedback on school or student performance. ▪ School staff utilizes no survey. ▪ Professional development plans do not address training for teachers on improving the communication between home and school.

Evidence:

2. Parenting: Promote and support responsible parenting.

Leading	Developing	Emerging	Lacking
▪ District and school staff utilizes multiple means to identify family interests, needs, and barriers (e.g. parent feedback, annual surveys, focus groups, session evaluation forms) and provides services to ensure academic success. ▪ The school establishes and maintains partnerships with multiple organizations (e.g. faith-based organization, businesses, community agencies, etc.) in order to provide parent training sessions that focus specifically on effective parenting skills. ▪ School staff develops and implements a written plan for coordinating and conducting multiple training sessions for parents throughout the school year with provisions for translation or interpretation in a language that parents that can understand. ▪ All school staff is aware of and routinely utilizes available partnerships and resources to assist parents with family services (e.g. health, nutrition, economic, etc.) based on parent and family needs.	▪ District and school staff utilizes a survey and parent feedback to identify family interests, needs, and barriers and provides services to ensure academic success. ▪ The school establishes and maintains partnerships with some organizations in order to provide parent training on effective parenting skills. ▪ School staff develops and implements plans for conducting multiple parent training sessions throughout the school year with some sessions provided for non-English speaking parents. ▪ Most school staff is aware of and utilizes available partnerships and resources to assist parents with family services (e.g. health, nutrition, economic, etc.).	▪ District and school staff uses a survey to identify the needs of families. ▪ The school establishes and maintains a partnership with one outside organization in order to provide parent training on effective parenting skills. ▪ School staff annually conducts a parent training session that specifically addresses effective parenting skills. ▪ Some school staff is aware of and utilizes available partnerships and resources to assist parent with family services (e.g. health, nutrition, economic, etc.).	▪ No survey is used to identify family interests or needs. ▪ The school establishes no partnerships with outside organizations for the purpose of providing parent training on effective parenting skills. ▪ School staff conducts no parent training sessions that specifically address effective parenting skills. ▪ Little to no school staff is aware of the available partnerships and resources to assist parents with family services.

Evidence:

3. Student Learning: Inform and involve parents and caregivers in children's learning activities so that they may play an integral role in assisting student learning.

Leading	Developing	Emerging	Lacking
▪ School staff involves all stakeholders, and utilizes multiple resources to explain standards and rights as defined under Developing. Parents with barriers to learning are individually assisted. ▪ All stakeholders are engaged in regular systematic communication about the academic progress of all students in school and district. ▪ School staff utilizes proficient student work with scoring guides to demonstrate academic expectations to parents and students, and updates the displays regularly. ▪ School staff systematically develops parent leaders who contribute regularly to other parents' understanding and who help meet other parent learning needs. ▪ School staff develops and implements a written plan to offer parent training sessions to help parents develop skills in supporting their children's learning and the school improvement efforts.	▪ Parents have multiple opportunities to learn about and discuss: • North Carolina standards and expectations for all students. • The school's curriculum, instructional methods, and student services. • The school's decision-making process. • Their children's learning and development, along with legal and practical options for helping their children succeed, such as participation in PEP and/or IEP process. • Community resources to support learning. • Opportunities to participate in school, district, and state school improvement efforts, such as forums, committees, and surveys. ▪ School staff makes systematic use of written communications (for example, newsletters, Web sites, bulletin boards) to help parents understand their own children's academic progress and the progress of school. ▪ School staff routinely utilizes student work samples to demonstrate academic expectations to parents and students. ▪ Parent leaders regularly work with all parents to develop ways to improve parent understanding of learning issues. ▪ School staff offers parent workshops or meetings with convenient locations to help parents develop skills that support their children's learning and the school improvement efforts.	▪ School provides open house and family nights for some parents to learn about: • North Carolina standards and expectations for all students. • The school's decision-making process, including opportunities for parents to participate on councils and committees. • Their children's learning and development, along with legal and practical options for helping their children succeed, such as participation in PEP and/or IEP processes. • Community resources to support learning. ▪ School staff provides parents with information about their child's academic progress and the progress of the school. ▪ School staff exhibits some student work in communicating expectations to parents. ▪ School staff offers targeted parent workshops and meetings to help parents develop skills to support their child's learning. ▪ School staff relies on the parent organizations to provide learning opportunities for parent leadership.	▪ School provides one open house a year and offers some written materials about: • North Carolina standards and expectations for all students. • The school's curriculum, instructional methods, and student services. ▪ School staff provides parents only with information mandated by requirements for reporting student achievement. ▪ Some student work of various levels is exhibited in the classroom. ▪ There is little or no development of parent leaders. ▪ School staff offers some information to parents to learn how to support their child's learning.

Evidence:

4. Volunteering: Ensure that parents/guardians are welcome in the school and seek their support and assistance in a variety of ways.

Leading	Developing	Emerging	Lacking
▪ District and school culture audits or surveys are conducted each year with all stakeholders and response rate is at least 75%. ▪ Student/family feedback data on school welcoming and engagement efforts is retained in a useable confidential format and can be retrieved for district or school assistance to families. ▪ The school implements a school-wide volunteer program to encourage parents, teachers, and administrators to cooperate and participate in volunteer efforts that include plans for training parents. ▪ All school staff participates in professional development plans for training on the effective use of parent volunteers in the classroom and in other school activities (e.g. planning for volunteers, communicating with volunteers, organizing activities for effective volunteer participation). ▪ The school develops and implements plans to routinely recognize and promote volunteer efforts on the part of school staff and parents.	▪ Administrators and school staff engage in practices to welcome and actively seek the participation of parents of most new students to encourage early relationship building. ▪ All parents are asked for feedback on school's efforts to welcome and engage parents, and the feedback is used to improve school's efforts. ▪ The school implements a school-wide volunteer program that encourages parents to participate in volunteer efforts which include plans for training parents. ▪ Most school staff participates in some training on the effective use of parent volunteers in the classroom and other school activities. ▪ Volunteer efforts on the part of staff and parents is recognized and promoted annually.	▪ Relationships with parents of new students are informal, occasional or accidental, and information is provided if requested. ▪ Staff occasionally asks for feedback on school's efforts to welcome and engage parents, in an informal or casual way with no regular data collection. ▪ Parents are invited to attend school activities related to their own child. ▪ Limited school staff participates in training on the effective use of parent volunteers in the classroom and other school activities. ▪ Parent volunteer efforts are recognized as part of a formal district-wide recognition program.	▪ School staff has limited involvement with parents of new and at-risk students. ▪ Student/family feedback is not included in any assessment of the school's efforts to welcome and engage parents. ▪ No formal volunteer program is implemented. ▪ No training is provided for school staff on the effective use of parent volunteers. ▪ Parent volunteer efforts are recognized only an informal basis.

Evidence:

5. Advocacy and Decision-Making: Include parents/guardians as partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

Leading	Developing	Emerging	Lacking
▪ The school implements a decision-making system to ensure that parents and community stakeholders authentically participate in the planning and implementation of school and district improvement activities. Parent participants appropriately represent all student populations in the school. ▪ School staff implements systematic steps to discuss, monitor and share successful strategies for meeting individual learning needs with all parents and advocacy groups. ▪ School staff collaborates with stakeholders in developing policies and procedures to resolve issues and complaints, tracking the outcomes, and using the information to identify needed improvements. ▪ The school implements professional development plans for parents and staff to be trained to serve as educational advocates or to access trained educational advocates for students to meet their academic goals. ▪ School staff actively seeks partnerships with parents and other advocates for specific student populations (e.g. ESL, Migrant, students with disabilities, etc.) to improve the way school meets student learning needs.	▪ An appropriate representation of parents and community stakeholders for the school participate in the planning and implementation of school improvement activities. ▪ School staff shares and monitors successful strategies for meeting individual learning needs with all parents and advocacy groups. ▪ School staff understands and provides parents with clear, complete information on the established policies and procedures to resolve issues and complaints. Outcomes are used to identify needed improvements. ▪ School staff ensures that parents and community members are well informed about how to become an educational advocate or how to access an educational advocate when needed. ▪ School staff cooperates with and provides training for parents and other advocates for specific student populations (e.g. ESL, Migrant, students with disabilities, etc.) and the strategies needed to improve academic achievement.	▪ Parents and community stakeholders are members of the school improvement team. ▪ Some parents are involved in informal conversation with school staff to address their child's individual learning needs. ▪ The school has a policy and a process to resolve issues or complaints and outcomes are sometime tracked and reported. ▪ School staff knows which students have a parent or another adult who can advocate for them regarding their academic goals and learning needs. ▪ School staff identifies students needing targeted strategies for academic improvement strategies and parents are informed.	▪ The school improvement team includes no parent representatives or insufficient parent representation of the student population. ▪ School staff informs parents of students' academic progress. ▪ Teachers handle parent complaints but outcomes are not tracked or reported. ▪ School staff does not include parent or advocate input when making decisions about student academic goals or learning needs. ▪ Some teachers provide additional strategies for their students, but parents are not routinely informed.

Evidence:

6. Training: Assess parents' and school personnel informational needs and provide training based upon those needs.

Leading	Developing	Emerging	Lacking
▪ School culture audits or surveys are conducted each year with all stake-holders and response rate is at least 75%. ▪ School staff collaborates with parents and community members to develop and implement a written parent involvement plan that addresses parent communication (e.g. newsletters, progress reports, school calendars, etc.), and parent activities (e.g. Doughnuts for Dads, Open House, Fall Festival), but focuses primarily on parent training on how to support children's learning, school, and district improvement efforts. ▪ The school implements comprehensive professional development plans to provide all training for staff on the vital elements of effective parent involvement, such as family, community and school partnership development, creating an inviting school climate, and cultural awareness. Plans are based on stakeholder feedback and individual teacher needs. ▪ Parents are included in the planning and development of training sessions as described under Developing. Parent training sessions are offered at various times and locations to enhance opportunities for participation. ▪ Parent and staff training sessions are evaluated, results are shared with all stakeholders, and results are used to determine additional training needs. ▪ The school reserves and utilizes sufficient resources (e.g. funds, staff, time) specifically for providing appropriate staff and parent training.	▪ School culture audits or surveys are conducted each year with all stakeholders, and the response rate is at least 50%. ▪ School staff implements a written parent involvement plan developed by the school improvement team that includes parent communication, parent activities, and parent training on how to support children's learning. ▪ The school implements professional development plans on an annual basis to provide some required staff training on the vital elements of effective parent involvement such as family, community and school partnership development, creating an inviting school climate, and cultural awareness. ▪ Parents are provided with multiple opportunities to participate in training sessions on • North Carolina Standard Course of Study • Services provided through student assistance teams • State and local assessments • Promotion and graduation requirements • Literacy and math • Goal-setting and high expectations for student achievement ▪ Sessions are evaluated and results are used by the school improvement team to determine additional training needs. ▪ The school utilizes sufficient resources for providing appropriate staff and parent training.	▪ School culture audits or surveys are conducted each year and teachers encourage parents to respond. ▪ The school implements a written parent involvement plan that addresses parent communication and activities for parents to attend, but provides little to no opportunity for parent training. ▪ Some school staff participates in professional development on the vital elements of effective parent involvement, but on a voluntary basis. ▪ Parents are provided with training on an annual basis at the school only for items required by state and local policy. ▪ Evaluations are conducted and maintained on file. ▪ The school reserves a limited amount of resources for providing staff and parent training.	▪ School culture audits or surveys are not provided. ▪ The school has no written parent involvement plan. ▪ The school has no formal professional development plan for providing training for staff on the vital elements of parent involvement. ▪ Little to no parent training is provided on an annual basis. ▪ The school reserves no resources for providing staff and parent training.

Evidence:

7. Community Collaboration: Collaborate with community agencies and other organizations to provide resources to strengthen school program, families, and student learning.

Leading	Developing	Emerging	Lacking
▪ Stakeholders help plan district and school survey content regarding school performance as it relates to their child. ▪ At least 75% of organizations surveyed respond to district stakeholder surveys. ▪ Stakeholder survey data is consistently used to plan school improvement efforts and to evaluate their effectiveness. ▪ School staff networks and partners with community leaders and organizations to build parent understanding of academic expectations, school strategies, and student achievement results. ▪ District/school staff, parents and community stakeholders identify and utilize sufficient community resources to meet students' and parents' learning needs. ▪ School staff uses multiple strategies to involve community leaders to assist in parent education on issues directly related to student achievement. ▪ School leadership ensures all stakeholders are aware of community-based learning opportunities that are linked to student-specific needs.	▪ District stakeholder surveys are developed by school staff and used in conjunction with any surveys developed by the district. ▪ At least 50% of the organizations surveyed respond to district stakeholder surveys. ▪ Stakeholder survey data is used to plan school improvement efforts. ▪ School leadership regularly shares information on student achievement and involves business and community leaders in school improvement efforts. ▪ The school has identified the available community resources and shared the information with all staff. ▪ School staff partners with community leaders and organizations to build parent understanding of academic expectations, school strategies, and student achievement results. ▪ School staff offers and publicizes community-based learning activities, such as tutoring linked to the curriculum, for all students and parents.	▪ District stakeholder surveys are developed by the district office. ▪ Fewer than 50% of the organizations surveyed respond to district stakeholder surveys. ▪ Stakeholder survey data is sometimes used to plan school improvement efforts. ▪ Employer-partners adopt practices to promote and support parent and volunteer participation in students' education. ▪ School staff sometimes provides community organizations with information about academic expectations for parents who use their services. ▪ School staff maintains a resource directory on some agencies, programs and services that provides services for students.	▪ Stakeholder surveys are not utilized to enhance collaboration with community partners. ▪ There is no process in place to include stakeholder survey data in school improvement planning. ▪ School leadership rarely invites employers to support adult participation in education. ▪ School staff rarely provides general information to the community about academic expectations of students. ▪ School staff rarely updates a resource directory or communicates with local agencies or programs that provide learning services.

Evidence:

8. Student Health: Promote health awareness among parents/guardians by addressing the need for health programs and student health services which are linked to student learning.

Leading	Developing	Emerging	Lacking
▪ The school has established a systematic process for reviewing and revising school improvement plans based on milestones established throughout the school year to sufficiently address health and safety issues for students. ▪ The school develops a professional development plan in collaboration with community stakeholders, parents, and staff to provide staff and parent training on required health and safety issues (e.g. blood-borne pathogens), as well as behaviors or other events that indicate a health or safety concern. ▪ School staff implements a systematic process to actively seek and establish partnerships with community agencies to identify and connect parents with resources, services, health screenings, evening or after-school activities, and resource service centers. ▪ The school implements a written parent involvement plan developed in collaboration wit community stakeholders, parents, and staff to provide parents with training on health and safety issues such as gang awareness, bullying, domestic violence, and internet safety. ▪ The school implements a system for actively seeking parent and community feedback on policies and practices that may have an impact on the health and safety of students. ▪ The school offers specific health services to students.	▪ The school utilizes stakeholder surveys and other data to development school improvement plans that sufficiently address health and safety issues for students outlined with measurable goals for improvement. ▪ The school implements a professional development plan to provide staff and parent training on required health and safety issues (e.g. blood-borne pathogens), as well as others such as behaviors or other events that indicate a health or safety concern. ▪ School staff utilizes multiple community partnerships to identify and connect parents with resources, services, health screenings, evening or after-school activities, and resource service centers. ▪ The school implements a written parent involvement plan that provides parents with training on health and safety issues, such as gang awareness, bullying, domestic violence, and internet safety. ▪ The school effectively informs parents and community stakeholders of district and school policies and practices that may have an impact on the health and safety of students.	▪ The school improvement plan addresses health and safety issues for students with measurable goals, but may not be based on current stakeholder feedback. ▪ The school provides required professional development to staff and parents on health and safety issues on an annual basis. ▪ School staff maintains a directory of community partnerships that is readily available for staff use. ▪ The school implements a written parent involvement plan with limited strategies for addressing the health programs and student health services linked to student learning. ▪ The school provides limited written communication to parents on school policies and practices that may impact the health and safety of students.	▪ The school improvement plan addresses minimal health and safety issues with few to no measurable goals. ▪ School staff participates in professional development on health and safety issues on an incidental or voluntary basis. ▪ School staff rarely updates or utilizes a directory of community partnerships. ▪ The school has no written parent involvement plan with strategies addressing the health programs and student health services linked to student learning. ▪ The school provides no formal process for communicating to parents on school policies and practices that may impact the health and safety of students.

Evidence:

SELF-EVALUATION SUMMARY

Essential Element	Rating from Rubric	Action(s) Needed	Next Steps
Communication			
Parenting			
Student Learning			
Volunteering			
Advocacy and Decision-Making			
Training			
Community Collaboration			
Student Health			

RESOURCE OVERVIEW
North Carolina Parent Information and Resource Center

The North Carolina Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC), Parent Partners, has provided services to families and educators in Title I schools, schools in urban areas and to NC's lowest performing school since 1985. The PIRC is a multi-level training and information project designed with parents, parent groups, schools and community participants in mind.

Each month PIRC offers, Parent Partners E-PIC, an electronic bulletin that features quick facts and information concerning parent and family involvement. Each month PIRC focuses on a topic and addresses parent involvement issues a one page, easy to read format to share information school staff, parents and other educators.

The center offers parents, parent groups, schools, and community groups a variety of workshops and trainings on topics to include:

Reading
- Reading and Your Child
- Helping a Child who is an English Language Learner with Reading

No Child Left Behind
- No Child Left Behind & Title 1
- Supplemental Services under No Child Left Behind

Home / School Engagement
- Developing a Family Friendly Culture in Schools
- ESP – 123: Effective School Partnerships are as easy as 1-2-3!
- Encouraging Family Involvement in Secondary Schools
- Positive Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Tips for Improving Home-School Communication for English Learning Families
- Helping Your Child with Homework

Parenting
- Bring the Village Home
- Just for Dads
- Middle School Mania
- Coping with Common Behavior Problems
- Growing up Safe: Parent's Guide to School & Community Safety

The PIRC also offers a series of workshops for Spanish speaking families.
All workshops in Spanish last approximately one hour and can be scheduled by calling Paula at 1.800.962.6817 extension 22. Sessions in Spanish include:

- No Child Left Behind
- Helping Your Child Become a Good Reader
- Effective School Partnerships
- Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Involving Dads
- Discipline
- Middle Mania
- Cultural Diversity

- Self Esteem
- EOG Testing
- Violence Prevention
- How to Succeed in School
- Summer Activities
- Parent Involvement

To enable Spanish-speaking families to better support the academic achievement of their children, the Parent Information and Resource Center has developed some valuable parent resources for districts and schools to use at open houses, workshops or for school's parent resource centers. Booklets, handouts, and materials can be ordered *free* by emailing Paula Hutchison at phutchison@ecacmail.org. Featured in the December E-PIC are the following items available in Spanish:

- *Spanish Basic Information Packet*
- *Spanish NCLB Packet*
- *Toolkit for Hispanic Families*-US Dept. of Education
- *Helping Your Child Series of booklets* – US Dept. of Education
- *A Guide for Parents, How Do I Know a Good Early Reading Program When I See One?*
- *Put Reading First; Helping Your Child Learn to Read - A Parent Guide Preschool through Grade 3* – National Institute for Literacy
- *Questions Parents Can Ask...About Reading Improvement*
- *Questions Parents Can Ask...About School Choice*
- *Questions Parents Can Ask...About Supplemental Educational Services*
- *Practical Reading Ideas for Families* – adapted from The Texas Reading Initiative

All of PIRC's resources and services are provided free of charge and are available to you by calling 704-892-1321 or our toll-free number 1-800-962-6817. You may also email at parentpartners@ecacmail.org.

RESOURCE OVERVIEW
Communities in Schools of North Carolina

Since 1989, Communities in Schools of North Carolina (CISNC) has assisted communities in replicating the CIS process of coordinated service delivery, supports the thirty-one local CIS organizations across the state, and advocates for children, youth, and their families. CISNC provides regional and on-site training and technical assistance, builds partnerships with state agencies and organizations to benefit young people, and serves as a resource and information center for local communities concerned about youth at risk of school failure.

Communities in Schools is the nation's largest stay-in school network, serving just over one million youth in 154 communities across the United States. CIS is providing the link between teachers and the community – by bringing caring adults into the schools and community sites to meet children's needs. This link gives children the much-needed opportunity to focus on learning and their future. CIS National assists CISNC with training, technical assistance and network opportunities.

Through our focus on the strategic goals approved by the State Board of Education, CISNC supports the state's Plan for Excellent Schools. Local CIS programs have this information and use it as a guide when they create their annual operations plans. Furthermore, CISNC is represented on the School Improvement Panel.

The resources and people that CIS connects with the schools are often already in place in the community. But are they in the right place? Such resources are usually found outside the school building...across town...open during business (and school) hours only. Communities in Schools is the connector, bringing a team of caring adults into the school building to help kids prepare for life. What do children need from the community?

The solution to student underachievement and our school dropout problem requires a commitment from all community members – parents, social service providers, businesses, civic organizations, local government and educators. Accordingly, CIS brings resources, services, business partners, parents, and volunteers into our public schools and after-school sites across North Carolina.

WHAT is Communities in Schools (CIS)?

CIS brings hands in need together with hands that can help. CIS is a process that connects community resources with students and their families at schools and other community sites to ensure that youth stay in school, learn needed skills, and are prepared to enter the world of work or post-secondary education upon graduation.

WHY do we need CIS?

Too many young people are failing in our public schools today, and consequently, leave school without the skills needed to succeed in life. During the 2005-2006 school year, 20,000+ students dropped out of North Carolina's public schools. 47% of prison inmates in North Carolina are school dropouts. Schools alone cannot solve the complex and diverse problems faced by today's youth.

HOW does CIS work?

CIS supports the development of collaborative community strategies for improving the way existing programs and services serve students and families. Students' school failure is the result of multiple stresses, most often from factors outside of school. The CIS process enlists, coordinates and facilitates the delivery of already existing community resources to the school site. Within a school, CIS works with repositioned service providers (from many agencies and organizations) and school personnel so that they function together as a team to deliver their services in a personable and accountable manner. In this way, they effectively and efficiently meet the needs of students and their families.

WHO initiates CIS in a community?

Communities invite a state CIS representative to present CIS strategies to community leaders. Interested communities then identify a "local liaison" who continues to introduce CIS concepts while soliciting input and support from community stakeholders. During this process, the local liaison is guided by a steering committee and community leaders. The introductory process adapts the CIS strategy to meet local needs and leads to the formation of a permanent governance structure. The CIS state office trains and works with the local liaison and serves as a continuous resource to the steering committee.

To Learn More About Us... Read our Newsletter!

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RESOURCE OVERVIEW
North Carolina Association of Educators Center for Teaching and Learning
Creating Strong Family-School-Community Partnerships

A significant challenge in public education is the continued need to build family and community partnerships. Research informs us that partnerships that increase involvement of parents and the community are essential to insure that students achieve to their maximum potential. Schools realize that the job of educating students cannot be achieved by schools alone; collaboration between schools, families, and community agencies must be forged in order to close the achievement gap.

Although parent and community involvement has always been a cornerstone of our schools, that involvement has usually been directed and guided by the schools. For the most part, "involvement" has focused on fundraising initiatives, volunteering, and supporting school activities. We now understand that new roles for families and the broader community must include decision-making, school governance, and supportive home learning activities.

Unfortunately, the need to increase family and community support comes at a time when many families and communities are under siege due to changing demographics and income gaps. It is also a time when the public has demonstrated a growing dissatisfaction with public schools. Despite the resurgence in parent involvement and a wealth of materials and resources, parent involvement is still more lip service than reality. This is especially true for poor families and families often referred to as the "hard to reach."

The challenges of public education require collaboration within the Association and partnerships with families and the broader communities in the process of educating children. The involvement of parents, school employees, and community leaders is essential to making these connections. We have observed that when school employees, parents, human services providers, policy makers, businesses, and other community leaders join hands, students benefit tremendously.

The Family-School-Community Partnerships (FSCP) training enables the Association to examine the attitudes, actions, behaviors, and work to insure that partnerships are mutually beneficial and rewarding to all participants. Participants who engage in this training seriously understand that partnership building is not a quick fix and that long, hard work is essential to ensure success. Establishing and committing to family-school community partnerships is a process, not an event.

Module 1 - Overview of the FSCP Training
It covers the research that supports the belief that improved student achievement results from increased family, school, and community partnerships. Even if you, as a trainer, are limited to an hour, we recommend that the research section be introduced into the presentation. Research supports what many school personnel and parents believe; family-school-community partnerships benefit students.

Module 2 - Examples and Strategies of Community Partnerships is recommended to help schools identify successful strategies for developing a comprehensive program, as well as assessing their own school or district setting and identifying current practices or activities that either enhance or deter partnerships. Participants will be introduced to the different types of involvement identified in the research.

Module 3 - The Hard to Reach - was developed because some school personnel seem overwhelmed with legislation that requires the achievement gap be closed. These schools are struggling with how to engage parents and families in the education of their children. Understanding that some families do not recognize the importance of their involvement, this module's purpose is to help schools understand and reach out to the "hard to reach." It is important, however, to recognize that not only parents may be considered "hard to reach." Module 3 also addresses some of the ways schools and teachers may need to work to create a more welcoming environment to overcome the challenges of being "hard to reach."

Module 4 - Closing the Gap was written to directly address specific strategies and practices to assist in closing the achievement gap. If participants have been working on partnerships for some time and are well grounded in the research, then Module 4 may be used in isolation. This module focuses on effective two-way communication and introduces some successful programs for involving families and communities in supporting learning for both adults and children.

Module 5 - Developing a Plan is intended for use by a group that has already reached a sound level of understanding about the strengths and weaknesses of their current partnerships. It is appropriate for the group that is ready to engage in some serious planning to develop a joint plan of action to improve their family, school, and community partnerships. It is strongly recommended that this module be used *only after* participants have been trained in at least Modules 1, 2, and 3. This training and manual cannot meet the total needs of any school or district for training in how to improve family, school, and community partnerships. It can, however, provide a good start and serve as an excellent resource for such efforts. The manual includes content and processes that were identified in the research literature as important components for enhancing family, school, and community partnerships.

Why MegaSkills© ?
According to Dr. Dorothy Rich, MegaSkills© founder, MegaSkills© are your inner engines of motivation for long lasting achievement. MegaSkills© are catalysts that help parents and children to learn to apply what is learned.

Why teach MegaSkills© in the classroom and or in Parent Workshops?
- The planned curriculum covers more than the basics. Basics are important – but not enough in our complex society.
- Help build character in our children. Helps children develop a new appreciation for learning.
- Helps families assist their children and/or guardians. Provides tips to parents/guardians on how to support their children in school.
- These essential skills are timeless – enhancing life-long learners.
- The parent/guardian packets help parents/guardians to understand how to cope with various learning styles.
- The curriculum for Essentials has everything planned for the teacher – no new wheels to invent.

The MegaSkills© Essentials Source Book is for classroom, after-school, tutorial, mentoring and summer programs. The curriculum guide's foundation is academic development and character education. To find out more about training your school, call Angela Farthing at 1.800.662.7924 or email her at angela.farthing@ncae.org.

HOW SCHOOLS CAN OVERCOME OBSTACLES TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Roadblock: Some parents believe they have talents but don't know whether they are needed or how to contribute to the school or the PTA.

Detour: Don't wait for parents to offer to help; seek them out. Suggest a few different but specific options or ways they could volunteer. Create a list of specific volunteer actions that are needed from parents. Ask all parents/caregivers what they would like to do in the school. Discuss and form realistic expectations to more effectively use parents' many talents.

Roadblock: Many parents are unfamiliar with the system and therefore do not know what their rights are or how they can become involved.

Detour: Create a simple, short parent handbook covering school rules, procedures, policies, and where to find answers to questions. Use pictures or visuals as much as possible. Include names and numbers of contact people who can answer questions in specific areas. Include pictures and names of school administrators, staff, teachers, PTA officers, and other contact people.

Roadblock: Parents without adequate resources often feel overwhelmed. Families suffering from economic stress must address their own needs for food, clothing, and shelter before they can see clearly how to become more involved in their children's education.

Detour: Ask the parent or guardian about their situation and listen to them. Assign a "buddy" who understands the situation or language to help connect the family to the school. Provide information to help parents access and secure the health and social services they need for themselves and their families. Work out agreements with social service and health agencies to provide services at the school through school-based clinics or near the school in community-based clinics. Develop and distribute to parents a directory containing information on available services and resources in the community and how to access them. Meet the families' personal needs, then help the parents become involved in the education of their children.

Roadblock: Child care may not be offered at meetings or school functions. Parents may be discouraged from brining their children to events.

Detour: Find an available room and available caregivers for child care at meetings. Ask members of the school's parent organization, community members, school service clubs, or other parents to volunteer to provide child care on a rotating basis. Hire high school or college students in child development classes or child-care professionals in the community to provide child care and, if appropriate, charge parents a nominal fee. Adhere to state-mandated child/adult ratios to provide safe, quality care.

Roadblock: Parents who don't speak English may not understand newsletters, fliers, or speakers at meetings.

Detour: Provide printed materials that are sent home and passed out at meetings in all languages spoken by the families in the school. Identify and help secure interpreters and translators for workshops and meetings. Hold group activities and social times in the same room as English-speaking families and then have

parents of the same language break off into smaller groups in different rooms for more in-depth discussion. Bring all parents back together at the end of the meeting and have a bilingual reporter for each group share what was discussed.

Roadblock: Parents with disabilities may find it difficult or feel uncomfortable attending and contributing at meetings.

Detour: Simply ask the person about their situation and listen to their responses. Consider whether your school is accessible for everyone and hold meetings or events in a space that is accommodating to parents with disabilities. Provide someone to sign for deaf or hearing-impaired parents, if requested.

Roadblock: Lack of transportation or access to parking at the school keeps parents from visiting or attending school activities.

Detour: Work with the school to make a block of spaces in the parking lot for visitors "only." Bus parents to special evening events following regular bus routes or have group stops for pickups and drop-offs. Form carpools to provide transportation to parents without cars. Hold events in community locations that are easy to get to and are near public transportation. Provide a home visit or a phone call to inform parents who could not attend as a way to keep them involved.

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Source: Adapted from the © 2000 - 2010 PTA | http://www.pta.org/pta_permissions_policy.asp

FACTS ABOUT FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The evidence from research is clear and consistent: families have a major influence on their children's achievement. The successful outcomes of parent/family involvement happen regardless of parents' level of education, socioeconomic status, or ethnic/racial background.

Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University says: "There are many reasons for developing school, family, and community partnerships. The main reason to create such partnerships is to help all youngsters succeed in school and in later life."

When parents are involved, students have:
- 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, and
- fewer instances of violent behavior.

The more intensely parents are involved, the more beneficial the achievement effects. In fact, family participation in education is twice as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status.

Parents contribute to student achievement by:
- reading to their children,
- having books available,
- taking trips,
- guiding TV watching, and
- providing stimulating experiences.

Families whose children are doing well in school tend to do the following:
- Establish a daily family routine for studying.
- Monitor out-of-school activities.
- Model the value of learning, self-discipline and hard work.
- Express high but realistic expectations for achievement.
- Encourage children's development/progress in school.
- Encourage reading, writing and discussions among family members.

Parent involvement components are required in the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). When schools, families, and community work together, here's how EVERYBODY WINS!
- Teachers feel better about teaching.
- Families are more invested in working with schools to support teaching and learning.
- Parents, teachers, and school leaders communicate more regularly about student progress.
- The broader community becomes more invested in supporting public education.
- And most importantly, students experience greater success in school.

Source: Michigan Education Department
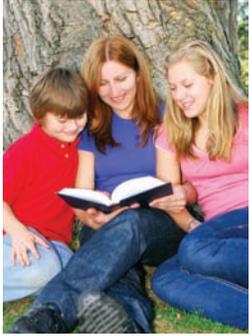
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