

Encourage parental engagement

The research is clear and consistent: parent, family, and community involvement in education has an effect on both academic performance and school improvement. Strong school-family-community partnerships foster higher educational aspirations and more motivated students.¹

PSEA Recommendations

- Establish policies to assist and encourage parents, families, and communities to be actively involved and engaged in their public schools, including training and networking opportunities for targeted schools.
- Fund professional development programs that give educators the communications skills and knowledge needed to engage parents, families, and other caregivers in students' learning.
- Adopt state standards on parent engagement that are based on those endorsed by the Pennsylvania PTA, including standards on effective parent-community-school partnerships, and that are linked to school improvement goals.
- Provide staff development on diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and on how to communicate with all families.
- Encourage employers through incentives to allow parents to take a reasonable amount of leave to participate in school activities or other education-related activities.
- Develop school district and building-level needs assessment tools for districts that choose to use them.
- Promote exemplary models such as the federally funded Parent Information Resource Centers (PIRCs) for the benefit of school districts, Intermediate Units, Career and Technical Schools, Charter Schools, and Approved Private Schools.

Parent engagement has significant impact on student achievement

In the past, parent engagement was characterized by volunteers - mostly mothers - assisting in the classroom, chaperoning students, and fundraising. Today, that model has been replaced with a much more inclusive approach: school-family-community partnerships include mothers and fathers, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, other relatives and caregivers, business leaders and community groups – all participating in goal-oriented activities, at each grade level, linked to student achievement and school success.

The Power of a Great Education: PSEA's 20/20 Vision for the Future

When schools, families and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher-level programs. The evidence holds true for students at both the elementary and secondary level, regardless of their parents' education level, family income, or background – and the research shows parent involvement affects minority students' academic achievement across all races.²

Unfortunately, parental involvement tends to decline as students get older, with a dramatic drop once students reach middle school. We must work to maintain strong parental engagement at all age levels. The lack of parental involvement is viewed by teachers, administrators, the public, and even parents of school-age children, as one of the biggest problems facing our nation's schools.³ As one researcher notes, even the most promising reforms can be “reversed by family, negated by neighborhoods, and might well be subverted or minimized by what happens to children outside of school.”⁴

The good news is that parents respond to encouragement from teachers. The best predictor of parent involvement is what the school does to promote it, making statewide support for parental involvement in schools a valuable investment.⁵

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¹ Barton, P.E. (2003). *Parsing the Achievement Gap: Baselines for Tracking Progress*. Princeton, NJ: Policy Information Report, Educational Testing Service.

² Jeynes, W.H. (2003). A meta-analysis: The effects of parental involvement on minority children's academic achievement. *Education & Urban Society* 35(2): 202-218.

³ Education Testing Service. (2007). *Standards, Accountability and Flexibility: Americans Speak on No Child Left Behind Reauthorization*. Princeton, NJ.

⁴ Berliner, D. (2005). “Our impoverished view of educational reform.”. New York: *Teachers College Record*.
<http://epsl.asu.edu/epru/documents/EPsl-0508-116-EPRU.pdf>

⁵ Dauber, S.L. & Epstein, J.L. (1993). Parent Attitudes and Practices of Involvement in Inner-City Elementary Schools. In N.F. Chavkin, Ed. *Families and Schools in a Pluralistic Society*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.