Effective Parent Engagement Leads to Student Success

Imagine a city where 100% of parents are effectively engaged in their children’s education!

"Parent engagement must be a top priority to increase academic achievement by Denver’s children. The City is committed to collaborating with our teachers and our school administrators in a concerted effort to ensure that all Denver parents are actively engaged in their children's education."

— Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper

The research is clear. Parents play a key role in ensuring the academic achievement of their children. Thirty years of research confirms that when families are involved in their children’s education, children earn higher grades and receive higher scores on tests, attend school regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviors, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education than students with less involved families.

(Family Involvement in Children's Education, U.S. Department of Education)

Studies show that, regardless of the economic, ethnic, or cultural background of the family, parent involvement in a child’s education is a major factor in determining the child’s success in school.

— National PTA 2002

Parent involvement is a critical link in closing the achievement gap, and helping all children succeed.


The Complexities of Parent Involvement

Effectively engaging parents in the education process is no easy task. According to the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher 2004-2005, “Principals, like new teachers, are most likely to say that communicating with and working with parents is the biggest challenge that teachers face.”

Effectively engaged parents feel welcomed and valued in their schools. Parents are made equal partners in the education process by being given meaningful ways to improve the achievement of their children and being empowered with information about their children’s progress.

The Denver Public Schools recognizes the need to effectively engage parents in the education process and is developing and implementing systemic changes to enhance and sustain parent engagement at all levels. To advance the District’s strategic plan, a Parent Empowerment Council (PEC) composed of parent representatives from across the district was established to advise the district on strengthening parent engagement.

“With 100% parent participation, coupled with our current district reform efforts, we will transform public education in our city, making Denver Public Schools a premier school district that provides world class education to every student.”

— Michael Bennet, Superintendent, Denver Public Schools

“With 100% parent involvement in the Denver Public Schools, our children would benefit from a community of adults who support them and know that there is no limit to what they can accomplish.”

— Michelle Moss, Vice President, Denver Board of Education
Eight DPS Parent/Family Liaisons were hired in 2006 as part of a collaborative initiative between the City and County of Denver and Denver Public Schools. The Liaisons’ mission is to build partnerships between DPS schools, families and communities, and to create learning environments and school cultures that result in academic achievement. The Parent Family Liaisons created standards and rubrics for family and school engagement that address two content areas: communication and student achievement. The Standards were approved by the DPS Board of Education and are available to all schools. The Parent/Family Liaisons use the Standards as a resource to work with schools regarding best practices for Parental Engagement. Standards can be viewed at http://parentguide.dpsk12.org, the web-based parent guide developed by the Liaison’s to meet the needs of families.

Collaborating to Advance Parent Engagement

In fall 2007, the Mayor’s Office for Education and Children partnered with the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition, DPS Parent Empowerment Council and Parent Liaisons, and Denver Human Services Family to Family Practice to co-sponsor a district wide Parent Leadership Institute. Over 500 parents, staff, and community members took part in this day-long event focused on giving school teams tools and strategies to improve and sustain parent engagement within their school communities. Workshops were held in both English and Spanish. Parent Leadership Institute evaluations were extremely positive, noting a high commitment from parents for expanded involvement in their children’s education, at home, within their schools, and within their communities. Educators were empowered to build meaningful relationships with parents and recognize and value the various ways parents can be involved. The DPS Parent Liaisons are reporting that parents that attended the Parent Leadership Institute feel empowered to become more involved in their children’s school. There is a sense of excitement as more and more parents become involved in school and district committees and parents continue to request additional training.

“Parents need to feel that teachers, administrators and the superintendent truly believe parent engagement is crucial to the success of every student. The Parent Leadership Institute provided parents with invaluable information, training and resources. It is imperative that the district continues to provide this type of support.”

— Marlene De La Rosa, DPS Parent Empowerment Council Chairperson

Make a Pledge – Take the Challenge!

What Schools Can Do:

- Make parent engagement a priority in your school.
- Engage parents in meaningful ways.
- Encourage parents to express their concerns and include them in decision-making processes.
- Create a school climate that welcomes, values and respects families.

What Parents Can Do:

- Stay informed about your child’s progress by communicating frequently with your child’s teacher.
- Be an advocate for your child. Be assertive, direct and positive when dealing with issues at the school or district level.

For more information contact:
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