

How principals can **INVOLVE PARENTS** in student learning and school success



***Why?* Why Involve Parents and Families?**

Research proves why -- when parents are involved at school, children do better and stay in school longer. When parents are involved at schools, schools as a whole turn around. Studies show that what a family does is more important to student success than family income or education.

***How?* How to involve Parents and Families:**

1. Go where you need to be: actively recruit parents' support.
2. Get to know each other informally as well as at special school events.
3. Speak the same language (use interpreters when needed; don't use educational jargon but parent friendly language).
4. Share information and get feedback regarding class expectations, student placement, school activities, student services, and optional programs.
5. Survey your parents. Find out what they need to get involved. (Washington State PTA has a sample should you need one.)
6. Form an "action team" to integrate parent involvement consideration and outreach in your school system, activities, and culture.
7. Have in-service or professional development training for all staff (teachers, administrative staff, bus drivers, custodians) explaining the whys and hows of parent involvement. (WSPTA, or WSPTA / OSPI / Partnership for Learning offer trainings.)

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Some Specific Suggestions

- Post welcome sign for visitors and parents in all languages spoken by your school community.
- Work with parents to develop a parent handbook that has the “regular” rules and regulations, but also include curriculum information/grade expectations according to standards and assessments with ways parents can help student achievement.
- Hold parent-teacher, and when appropriate, student-parent-teacher conferences early or before school starts to establish expectations of all parties. Parent-teacher conferences that follow with “grade” reports are based on ongoing relationships with involved families.
- Encourage teachers to schedule home visits when needed.
- Work with your PTA or parent group to have family “fun” learning nights. NOTE: If your school does not have a parent group, help form one. WSPTA has information regarding local PTA or PTSA formation.
- Publicize times when administrators, teachers, and support staff are available for parent visits, with procedures for contacting them.
- Use e-mail and/or voice mail to insure two way communication, in addition to “one way” newsletters. Communication can include homework assignments and expectations. Questions and feedback opportunities should be part of your system.
- Find ways to reach out to parents who are sometimes “hard to engage,” such as single working parent families, English as a second language parents, and even children with no apparent significant adult in their lives. Some strategies can be found on the WSPTA’s Parent Outreach web-page: www.wastatepta.org/resources/parentoutreach.htm
- Encourage parents to have home study areas and times.

What are the benefits?

- Consistent parent involvement improves communication and relations among parents, teachers, and administrators.
- Schools have more support from families and better reputations in the community.
- School programs that involve parents outperform identical programs without parent and family involvement.
- Schools in which children are failing improve dramatically when parents are enabled to become effective partners in their children’s education.

Website Resources

Washington State PTA
National PTA
Partnership for Learning
Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships

www.wastatepta.org
www.pta.org
www.partnership4learning.org
www.csos.jhu.edu