

Maryland's Plan for *Family, School, and Community Involvement*



Recommendations for Reaching Academic Success for All Students
Through Family, School, and Community Partnerships

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March 2003

Prepared by the Division of Student and School Services

Maryland State Department of Education



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FOREWORD

The Maryland Plan for Family, School, and Community Involvement addresses the importance of families, schools, and communities working together to reach academic success for all students. Parent and family involvement in education is a priority for the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the State Board of Education. Our goal is to create family-friendly schools where everyone—from teachers to parents—has the tools to promote student success. That's why family involvement makes up one-fifth of the Department's strategic plan, *Achievement Matters Most*.

Although work began several years ago on Maryland's Plan for Family, School, and Community Involvement, it is grounded in the federal No Child Left Behind legislation and in the recommendations of Maryland's Visionary Panel for Better Schools. This plan is a tool that MSDE, local school systems, schools, parents, and

community members may use to explore strategies for working together to meet the needs of Maryland children and families. The plan includes the latest research, strategies, and guidelines for involving parents and communities in building strong educational infrastructures. The collaborative techniques presented can help develop positive school-home-community relations and increase family involvement in schools.

To successfully implement the plan, all stakeholders must make a concerted effort to be involved and work together. The end result will be that students thrive, achieving in school and beyond.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy S. Grasmick". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Nancy S. Grasmick
State Superintendent of Schools



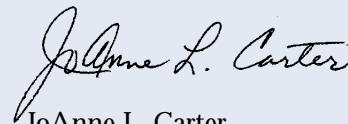
PREFACE

On October 30, 2001, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted as a resolution Maryland's Policy on Family Involvement. The policy encourages schools and local school systems to implement long-term, comprehensive programs that build on the strength of families and communities to improve student achievement. Policy development began in July 2000 with a subcommittee of the State Superintendent's Family Focus Council. The 20-member subcommittee included representatives from the Maryland PTA, public libraries, the National Network of Partnership Schools, the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, non-profit organizations, local school systems, and the Maryland State Department of Education.

In November 2001, a 10-member subcommittee was tasked with writing goals, strategies, and activities to accompany the family involvement policy. This subcommittee examined critical issues, set goals, and developed the recommended guidelines for family and community involvement set forth in Maryland's Plan for Family, School, and Community Involvement.

The Department believes that educators, families, and community members will find the information presented supports family involvement as an important component to student success. Maryland's Plan for Family, School, and Community Involvement recognizes parents are a young child's first teacher and encourages a collaborative relationship among homes, schools, and communities. The plan further recognizes that without building such relationships it is difficult, if not impossible, for students to reach their potential.

The strategies and suggested activities are to be used as a springboard for designing a family and community involvement plan that meets a school's unique needs. The Department hopes to expand and enhance its vision for school, home, and community partnerships.



JoAnne L. Carter
Assistant State Superintendent
Division of Student and School Services
Maryland State Department of Education

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The Maryland State Department of Education also acknowledges with great appreciation the following individuals who contributed greatly to this document.

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- Bob Witherspoon, Senior Research Associate, RMC Research Corporation, Region III Comprehensive Center

“Our goal is to create family-friendly schools where everyone—from teachers to parents—has the tools to promote student success.”

NANCY S. GRASMICK, STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS



MARYLAND'S POLICY ON FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

WHEREAS, the Maryland State Board of Education recognizes that parents and families are a young child's first teachers, and that when children enter school the responsibility for their education is then shared with the school and the entire community; and

WHEREAS, the Maryland State Board of Education recognizes that creating positive home, school, and community partnerships is essential to carrying out this shared responsibility successfully; and

WHEREAS, the Maryland State Board of Education recognizes that in order to accomplish the mission of Maryland's schools to successfully educate all students, the community, schools, parents, and students must work as knowledgeable partners;

NOW THEREFORE, the Maryland State Board of Education adopts this policy statement for key stakeholders in ensuring quality education for all students:

The State Board believes that schools must create an environment that is conducive to learning and supports strong comprehensive family involvement programs. Schools will strive to involve parents and family members of children at all ages and grade levels by providing and respecting a variety of types and

degrees of involvement, while recognizing the diverse needs of families in their community. Schools will inform and involve parents and caregivers in children's learning activities and academic decisions at home and in school. Further, schools will establish high levels of cooperation and coordination with other community agencies that provide services to children and families.

Parents and other family members are the child's first teachers. They will be encouraged to provide a home atmosphere conducive to learning and express to their children the importance of education. Further, parents and family members will be expected to cooperate with teachers and school administrators in matters relating to their child's education and will be encouraged to participate meaningfully in school programs, program planning, and decision making.

Schools also need the support of other members of the community, including parent organizations, public libraries, businesses, and faith-based organizations to promote effective education. Community groups will be helped to recognize that investment in education is investment in the community. Further, community groups will be encouraged to help schools develop and implement innovative programs that promote educational goals and support high academic expectations for all students.

Education is a shared responsibility.

The Maryland State Department of Education has the role of fostering wider and more substantive family and community involvement by identifying and sharing information with parents and families about effective educational programs. It will also provide information on funding sources for the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs. Further, it will develop professional development programs on family/school/community involvement for school staff and families. The Maryland State Department of Education will develop programs that nurture and support parents/families by enhancing their parenting skills and encouraging them to provide academic assistance to their children. Special efforts will be made to reach those who did not have a positive school experience or for whom English is not their native language.

The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland Department of Education will continue to support and assist schools and local school systems in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies and programs that involve all parents and families at all grade levels. It will seek to collaborate with faith-based organizations and other community agencies serving children and families to encourage parent and family involvement in the lives of children.

Adopted: October 30, 2001



“Thirty years of research and 100 years of PTA practice prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that parent involvement increases student success. Quite simply, parent involvement fuels student success, not only at school, but also in life.”

LIZ CROSBY, PRESIDENT, MARYLAND PTA, FEBRUARY 2003

BACKGROUND

Over thirty years of research demonstrate that family involvement is a powerful influence on student achievement. Children whose families are involved in education—whose parents organize and monitor their time, help with homework, discuss school with them, read to and are read to by them—tend to perform better academically than children whose families are not involved. These students earn higher grades and test scores than their peers, attend school and complete homework more regularly, are better behaved, and are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college.

YESTERDAY...

Early studies, such as those conducted in the 1960s as an outgrowth of the war on poverty, looked at ways to overcome the influence of poverty on children with parental involvement being a side, rather than key, issue. However, as the Head Start program was implemented and its effects analyzed, family involvement became an increasingly important variable. Those early studies, growing out of questions raised about combating poverty, evolved into the development of home-visiting and site-based family programs such as High Scope. A key piece of research published during the same era was James Coleman's

Equality of Educational Opportunity (1966), which accumulated a vast amount of information about schools, families, and achievement. It supported the idea that family background influenced student achievement more significantly than the school.

Home-visiting programs such as Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPO) and Parents as Teachers are still used as a method of improving the success of children through the meaningful involvement of families. Even Start Family Literacy uses a site-based approach with Parent and Child Together (PACT) time that “consists of regularly scheduled opportunities for parents and their children to play and work together. PACT activities assist adults in affirming, discovering, and expanding their parenting skills” (Levesque and Hinton, 2001).

In the late 1970s, interest in involving parents in students' education grew, and Head Start's parent programming extended to the elementary level. The federal effort, Follow Through, was designed to support and assist parents in eradicating the impact of poverty on school success. Studies of parental involvement today still show more involvement at the elementary level than secondary level, and more federal funds being directed toward elementary and preschool programming that includes parental

involvement. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 emphasizes parents' involvement in decision-making and the bulk of the Act's monies is being directed to elementary schools.

The 1980s heralded more studies confirming the importance of parental involvement in students' success. Study after study by researchers such as Benjamin Bloom, Reginald Clark, and Catherine Snow found that students from homes where parents set routines, monitored time, and clearly valued and modeled interest in academics (through reading, for example) were much more likely than their peers to progress successfully in school, regardless of socio-economic status. There was also another sphere of research occurring simultaneously that investigated how differences between school and family values may prevent sustainable and meaningful partnerships from being formed. Dr. Coleman, primary researcher investigating this divide, described it as a difference in "social capital," the value arising from social connections and skills. The U.S. Department of Education suggests schools begin to address these differences by "reaching out to parents with little formal education, addressing language differences through bilingual services for communicating both orally and in writing with families about school programs and children's progress and promoting cultural understanding to build trust between home and school" (*Family Involvement in Children's Education*, 1997). During the 1980s, James Comer's School Development Program

became a model of developing equal and mutually supportive partnerships between schools and parents. Parents are intimately involved in decision-making from the beginning, sitting on the school's improvement or management team. They serve on committees, volunteer at the school, and support school success by connecting to other families, the community at large, and teachers. More recently, Joyce Epstein's vast amount of research on families talks about blurring the divisions between school, home, and community to more effectively support student learning. Moreover, research presented in *Monitoring School Quality: An Indicators Report* (Mayer, Mullens & Moore, 2000) found that parents' involvement in setting the direction or goals for the school through shared decision-making opportunities is critical for improving schools.

Although the realization that families and communities are critical to school success for youngsters is not new, there has been a resurgence of research and focus on how very important it is and in presenting more visible outreach efforts to parents and community members. The U.S. Department of Education has released several studies in recent years such as *Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty Urban Elementary Schools* (1999), which found that high-performing schools hold many similar characteristics, including high levels of parent and community involvement. The school's outreach to parents and the community is critical, though: "Successful

partnerships would never have been established if parents did not see tangible evidence of the school's concern for their children. As the school made efforts to adapt to the needs of children, parents were willing to exert greater effort to support the school.” The U.S. Department of Education has also acknowledged parents' growing sophistication and interest in education by launching a new television program, *Education News Parents Can Use*. This is another, albeit less interactive, method of reaching out to parents to increase involvement and build partnerships.

TODAY . . .

The Maryland State Department of Education is proud to be involved in promoting the research supporting family involvement and encouraging schools to forge more meaningful partnerships with families and communities. The Maryland State Department of Education has been a member of the National Network of Partnership Schools since its inception, being the first state to sign on to the Network, as well as the United States Department of Education's Partnership for Family Involvement. At the forefront of the field, the Network has developed a way of looking at family involvement through six important, overlapping categories or types of involvement that have arisen from the research of Dr. Epstein and her colleagues. In 1998, the National PTA issued six standards for parent/family involvement programs to guide program development and provide a means for evaluating program quality based on Epstein's model.

Attention to this kind of research and promotion of family involvement has culminated in recent landmark events at the Maryland State Department of Education. Maryland's Family Involvement Policy was adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education as a resolution on October 30, 2001. The development of this policy began in July 2000 with a subcommittee of the State Superintendent's Family Focus Council. The 20-member subcommittee was excited to work on strengthening partnerships among the home, school, and community. In November 2001, a 10-member subcommittee was tasked with writing the goals, strategies, and activities that comprise this plan. The subcommittee examined critical issues, set goals, and recommended strategies for family and community involvement in Maryland schools.

As the Family Focus Council subcommittee reviewed the research and drafted recommendations, it became clear that a redefinition of “family involvement” was necessary. Schools and educators cannot be myopic, assuming that families are not involved if they are not seen being “involved” in the school building. More critical to ensuring student success are the unseen (from the school's perspective) ways that families and communities interact with and support children. Research bears this out. For example, the Prospects Study, conducted in the 1990s to evaluate Title I Schools, revealed that home-based involvement was more likely to yield

“Even in a big school, all children ought to have a friend on the faculty who sees them every day, knows their name, and who can observe them closely.”

MARY PIPHER, “THE SHELTER OF EACH OTHER,” *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP*, MAY 1998

positive results in students than if parents simply attended school functions or volunteered at the school. The Parents as Teachers National Center also conducted studies of the impact of parenting education, and they yielded similar results. Improving parents' abilities to support children's learning (ages 0-3) increases the likelihood of later school success. Higher intellectual and social skills and school achievement were found among program children than among comparison groups (Parents as Teachers National Center, 1998). These types of involvement can and should be encouraged by schools in a way that is thoughtful and respectful of families' needs.

The family involvement standards arising from Epstein's research, and further developed and adopted by the National PTA, also became a framing tool for developing recommendations for the implementation of Maryland's Family Involvement Policy. As research shows, a partnership among schools, families, and communities that focuses on encouraging family involvement is critical to success. According to Epstein, "School, family and community partnerships cannot simply produce successful students. Rather, partnership activities may be designed to engage, guide, energize and motivate students to produce their own success. The assumption is that if children feel cared for and encouraged to work hard in the role of student, they are

more likely to do their best to learn to read, write, calculate and learn other skills and talents and to remain in school" (2002). With this in mind, the subcommittee made a commitment to developing a document in which student success is a responsibility shared by stakeholders.

The Maryland State Department of Education and the Family Focus Council are dedicated to promoting and modeling meaningful partnerships among schools, families, and communities by subscribing to the following standards:

- Communicating — Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- Parenting — Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- Student Learning — Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Volunteering — Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- School Decision-Making and Advocacy — Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Collaborating with the Community — Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.



The collective strength of schools, communities, and families will manifest itself through student success.

TOMORROW . . .

The subcommittee has worked diligently to compile goals, strategies, and activities to encourage more complete collaboration among schools, families, and communities. While the subcommittee has decided to suggest goals for communities, schools, and parents, it hopes that this document will be used to inspire and guide planning of activities that suit a particular school and its community. If the sample strategies or activities do not meet the needs suggested by an internal evaluation of needs, they will need to be rewritten to meet the particular needs and goals of a school community. Stakeholders might want to consult the Measure of School, Family and Community Partnerships (Appendix B) as they develop their plans, since a good program sets the evaluation component at the onset of the project. Hopefully, the end result will remain constant: families

and communities more involved in the lives of students through a fruitful collaboration with schools, resulting in improved student achievement.

As stakeholders develop programs that respond to the specific needs of families in their school communities, bear in mind that the collective strength of schools, communities, and families will manifest itself through the success of the children.

“Recognize that developing a successful school-family partnership requires continued effort over time, and that solving one problem often creates new challenges” (*Family Involvement in Children’s Education*, 1997). When we recognize these challenges as opportunities for improvement, we quickly realize that we have the power to effect change at any point in this journey toward partnership.

“If we are serious about leaving no child behind, we must broaden our notion of accountability, accepting that the school’s impact is more modest than we wish, the family’s more robust than we have acknowledged.”

ROBERT EVANS, “FAMILY MATTERS: THE REAL CRISIS
IN EDUCATION,” *EDUCATION WEEK*, MAY 22, 2002



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 30, 2001, the Maryland State Department of Education adopted a family involvement policy. The following section of this Plan contains recommendations—complete with strategies and possible activities—for implementing the policy.

In developing Maryland's Plan for Family, School, and Community Involvement, the authors focused on successful and meaningful strategies that can be used to build partnerships.

Discussion and research reveal that the most effective strategies:

- develop stronger two-way communications with parents and families.
- implement programs and practices that strengthen families and support the further education of parents and caregivers.
- research, develop, and implement home learning activities and interactive homework.
- use volunteers in all Maryland schools and after-school programs.
- include parents and community members representative of diverse constituencies in decisions regarding academic policies and family involvement.
- encourage collaboration with community organizations, agencies, and businesses.

Time has shown that when these strategies and activities are used systematically, they work well to increase parent and community involvement in Maryland schools. Establishing links among families, schools, and communities requires specific efforts toward change in state and local school systems.

Helping focus the journey toward true partnership is Maryland's public school mission statement: *To continuously improve public education in Maryland so that each learner from birth through the completion of high school acquires the skills and knowledge necessary to become a responsible citizen and to enjoy a productive life.* To achieve this mission, schools, families, and communities must work together as informed and mutually supportive partners. Supporting the public school mission are the goals of Maryland's Plan for Family, School, and Community Involvement.

PLAN GOALS

In partnership for student success...

1. Schools and families will communicate more frequently and clearly about academic opportunities, school performance, student progress, and school-family partnerships.
2. Schools and communities will work together to support families' parenting skills and activities that prepare young children for school and promote ongoing achievement.



3. Families will support academic achievement at home by reading with children, helping them with homework, and engaging them in educational activities.
4. Parents and community members will volunteer in support of school improvement and student success.
5. Parents, schools, and community members will collaborate on educational decisions that affect children, families, and school improvement.
6. The Maryland State Department of Education, local school systems, schools, community organizations, agencies, and businesses will collaborate effectively and efficiently.

GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND ACTIVITIES

Goal 1: In partnership for student success, schools and families will communicate more frequently and clearly about academic opportunities, school performance, student progress, and school-family partnerships.

Strategy 1: MSDE will help schools and school systems develop stronger two-way communication between schools and families.

MSDE activities may include:

- 1) providing guidance to schools and districts on reporting annual progress to parents and the community.
- 2) helping secure translators or translating materials.
- 3) disseminating, in a variety of formats, materials on research-based curricula and practices that address the needs of schools and parents of children in all grade levels.
- 4) convening a workgroup to develop, publish, and distribute a glossary for families that defines common educational terms.
- 5) using a variety of communication methods (e.g., radio and cable television spots, newsletters) to welcome parents into public schools and inform them of statewide issues and special events (e.g., National Education Week, Family

Involvement Conference, Lights On Afterschool!).

Strategy 2: Using a variety of methods and user-friendly language, schools will communicate school readiness, student progress, school programs, and other pertinent information to families.

School activities may include:

- 1) ensuring that parents and visitors are met by welcome signs and with friendly greetings by staff and are provided information that actively encourages their support and collaboration.
- 2) responding promptly and positively to parents' calls, letters, and visits.
- 3) using many communication strategies (e.g., cable TV spots, newsletters, pamphlets, community bulletin boards, personal phone calls, and radio broadcasts) to publicize academic,

Where It's Happening

Don't have the homework assignment? Never fear. By using SyncMail, a sophisticated, automated voice messaging system, parents and community members in Prince George's County can check on homework assignments, get information about school-related events, and even check the cafeteria menu. SyncMail even calls out to households, delivering messages regarding upcoming parent and/or community meetings, special events, testing schedules, and other important announcements. Several schools record the messages in both English and Spanish. During the 2001-2002 school year, 233,153 school-community contacts were made using the Title I SyncMail system.

parenting, and recreational events and to encourage parents' attendance.

- 4) holding at least one parent-teacher conference per family per year, with a translator if necessary.
- 5) offering homework help via telephone, the Web, special homework clinics, public libraries, or community-based learning centers.
- 6) using varied face-to-face methods to reach parents (e.g., parent liaisons and focus group discussions) and solicit their suggestions on improving communication, programs, and school efforts.
- 7) contacting parents early in the school year to introduce teachers, explain programs and policies, and welcome their participation.
- 8) promoting school-home communication through voice mail, e-mail, or established phone hours.

Strategy 3: Schools and community organizations will co-sponsor activities that enhance communication between schools and families.

Community activities may include:

- 1) holding monthly discussions in a variety of settings and at times that allow for participation.
- 2) assisting schools in establishing effective communication systems that model those found in businesses, including Web sites, listservs, and e-mail.
- 3) co-planning and executing national awareness campaigns or events (e.g., Earth Day projects or school safety campaigns). All partners should participate in discussing the project's impact and long-range planning.
- 4) involving business partners in supporting and enhancing curriculum through project-based learning, academic challenges, or the review/evaluation of student work (e.g., Maryland Engineering Challenges, robotics competitions, Team Nutrition/Healthy Eating challenge).
- 5) posting information about events or resources on school bulletin boards and at community, faith-based, and work sites.
- 6) promoting reading through public libraries' summer reading programs, read-a-thons, and family read-ins.



Strategy 4: Parents are encouraged to communicate regularly with the school and with other parents about school programs, student progress, and useful home and school practices.

Parent activities may include:

- 1) meeting monthly with the principal to address questions or concerns.
- 2) offering support to other parents in parent discussion groups (e.g., parent support groups or coffee clubs).
- 3) encouraging parent-to-parent communication through phone trees and parent newsletters.
- 4) suggesting topics for community-based monthly discussion groups.
- 5) sponsoring academic nights for parents and students that focus on the school's curriculum.
- 6) sharing information about their child's needs, strengths, and interests with teachers.

Where It's Happening

Parent-teacher conferences provide the perfect opportunity for communication among parents, teachers, and the parent involvement assistant at Lincolnshire Elementary School in Washington County. After parents of kindergarten and first-grade students attend a conference with their child's teacher, they meet with the parent involvement assistant, who provides them with activities, games, and information linked to their child's learning needs.

"Family Math Night" at Kent Island Elementary School in Queen Anne's County was not only an opportunity for teachers, parents, and students to play fun mathematical games together but an opportunity for the school to introduce the new math curriculum. Answering questions and sharing information throughout the evening enabled staff to clear up any misconceptions about the program and to give parents very simple (and fun!) methods of reinforcing learning at home. Family Works on the Eastern Shore, a federally funded Parent Information Resource Center, provided the grant funding for this event and a complementary evening focusing on reading.

Goal 2: In partnership for student success, schools and communities will work together to support families' parenting skills and developmental activities that prepare young children for school and promote ongoing achievement.

Strategy 1: MSDE will assist local efforts to strengthen families and to advance the education of parents and caregivers.

MSDE activities may include:

- 1) disseminating information on Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes that are available statewide. Information should be presented in languages and formats accessible to parents, and a variety of dissemination methods should be used.
- 2) providing schools and school systems information on nutrition, health, welfare, and other services for distribution to families.
- 3) supporting Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), Even Start Family Literacy, Parents as Teachers (PAT), and the Family Literacy Campaign.
- 4) exploring ways in which community organizations and businesses can partner with MSDE, local school systems, and

schools to improve school readiness, adult literacy and educational advancement, parenting, and awareness of community resources.

Strategy 2: Schools and school systems will implement regular, sustained programs for parents that will provide parents the skills and continuing education they need to support their children's academic success.

School activities may include:

- 1) holding workshops and sponsoring speakers that address parenting and child-rearing skills for each grade level.
- 2) providing space (in an accessible location) to higher education institutions or other organizations that offer ABE, GED, or ESL classes.
- 3) addressing parents' non-academic concerns, such as nutrition, community services, or home safety, through varied methods such as drop-in clinics, forums, and parent

education workshops.

- 4) supporting parents and families through home visits.
- 5) establishing an educational lending library for families.

Strategy 3: Schools will better understand students' families and use this understanding to enhance school programs, classroom activities, and teacher-student interactions.

School activities may include:

- 1) touring surrounding neighborhoods to help school staff better understand the community.
- 2) holding school meetings in community centers, libraries, faith-based centers, and other venues where parents gather.
- 3) establishing parent focus groups to help school staff better understand families.
- 4) involving family liaisons in staff meetings so they can express parents' concerns or present information.
- 5) asking parents and students to share their interests, assets, and talents.

Strategy 4: Schools will work with community and parent groups to teach parents how to support their child's learning.

Partnership activities may include:

- 1) encouraging parents to use the library to promote early literacy.

- 2) sponsoring a safety fair with local law enforcement to provide workshops on school, home, and community safety.
- 3) helping parents organize important papers, such as children's medical records, fingerprints, and report cards.
- 4) collaborating with cultural institutions or libraries to provide family-friendly guides to the area (this may include maps, activity packs, or guided tours).
- 5) sponsoring workshops on topics like parenting and literacy skills, behavior management, gang and drug awareness, and child and adolescent development.
- 6) holding ABE, GED, ESL and other educational classes at accessible times and locations, including in elementary and secondary schools.
- 7) distributing to parents inexpensive educational materials, such as newspapers, books, or puzzles.

Strategy 5: Parents will hold events designed to help other parents support school readiness and ongoing achievement in children.

Parent activities may include:

- 1) surveying parents to determine appropriate topics for workshops and helping to secure speakers.
- 2) writing a parent column in the school or parent newsletter or local newspaper addressing topics like encouraging children to complete their homework or chores or how to



- plan a well-balanced meal.
- 3) meeting informally at the school or in the community to allow very young children to play.
- 4) holding read-aloud and storytelling workshops to enhance literacy practices at home.
- 5) organizing a clothes swap, immunization clinic, or neighborhood watch program.

Where It's Happening

"Mother Goose on the Loose," is a whirl through rhymes and stories, complete with puppets, props, and books. Families attending the weekly Enoch Pratt event have an opportunity to introduce their children to familiar rhymes and develop early literacy skills. Parents have a chance to talk with one another about books and more in an informal setting.

"I enjoy being with other grandparents who have the same concerns that I have, such as discipline, respect for others, etc.," wrote one Windsor Hills Elementary grandparent on a

recent evaluation. Family demographics are changing at Windsor Hills Elementary and Grove Park Elementary in Baltimore City, and the schools are changing their outreach efforts to meet the needs of families. Windsor Hills' Grandparent Gatherings serve as a forum to encourage positive home-school partnerships and address the special needs of these caregivers. During the Kinship Care Support Group at Grove Park, caregivers raising children other than their own meet twice a month to share stories and strategies in a confidential setting. The event is made possible through a grant from the Department of Social Services.

“When parents talk to their children about school, expect them to do well, help them plan for college, and make sure that out-of-school activities are constructive, their children do better in school.”

ANNE HENDERSON, A NEW WAVE OF EVIDENCE, 2002

Goal 3: In partnership for student success, families will support academic achievement at home by reading with children, helping them with homework, and engaging them in educational activities.

Strategy 1: MSDE will help schools and local school systems research, develop, and implement home learning activities.

MSDE activities may include:

- 1) providing guidance on programs with home-visiting components like HIPPY, Parents as Teachers, or Even Start Family Literacy.
- 2) compiling the state's most successful practices in promoting at-home learning.
- 3) disseminating information on the effectiveness of at-home learning practices.
- 4) publishing sample at-home learning activities and handbooks to be distributed to parents.
- 5) sponsoring "interactive homework" trainings, such as those provided through Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS). These trainings teach teachers how to design homework that guides students to share what they are learning in class with a family partner.

Strategy 2: Schools will help families collaborate on homework and other academic activities.

School activities may include:

- 1) holding workshops for parents on fun, at-home learning strategies.
- 2) providing regular, accessible guidance for parents to share at-home learning.
- 3) scheduling home visits from family liaisons, trained volunteers, or teachers. Visits will focus on at-home learning that includes math activities, such as sorting silverware or graphing the growth of family members.
- 4) establishing a lending bank of at-home learning materials, such as videos, rulers, art supplies, books, and computer software.
- 5) organizing and providing transportation for guided tours to community colleges, colleges, universities, and other post-high school educational institutions.
- 6) extending library or computer-room hours for families.
- 7) working with public libraries to coordinate homework and research assignments to ensure effective use of library resources.

Strategy 3: Schools will provide teachers training in involving families in reading, homework, and curricular activities.

School activities may include:

- 1) holding workshops for teachers on promoting learning at home.
- 2) involving parents in discussions about teachers' professional development.
- 3) providing teachers professional development and follow-up support on conducting home visits.
- 4) providing teachers and parents communication training to improve parent-teacher conferences and home-school communication.
- 5) requesting from MSDE training in the "Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork" strategy.

Strategy 4: Schools will work with community organizations and businesses to encourage learning outside of school.

Partnership activities may include:

- 1) creating opportunities for students and parents to apply academic skills in non-academic settings.
- 2) holding well-publicized reading events for parents and children of all ages at public libraries and community centers.
- 3) sponsoring free or inexpensive learning activities in the

community and in museums and other cultural institutions.

- 4) bringing learning stations, such as "bookmobiles," into communities at regular times to encourage learning outside of school.
- 5) allowing flex-time or special leave for employees to attend school meetings and encouraging schools to hold meetings and events at the job site.
- 6) supporting employees as they work with teachers to provide input for curriculum support and/or providing work-based learning experiences related to the student's program of study.

Strategy 5: Parents and families will engage students in learning at home and will create home environments that support academic success.

Family activities may include:

- 1) encouraging reading by providing reading materials, maintaining a list of new words, and establishing daily family reading time, during which parents read to children or listen to children read.
- 2) attending educational events at libraries, museums, and other community or faith-based institutions.
- 3) involving children in home activities like following recipes, completing chores, counting money to pay for groceries, writing letters, playing games of skill, and establishing hobbies.



- 4) developing children's thinking and problem-solving skills.
- 5) creating home environments that foster learning (e.g., designating a regular time and place to complete homework).
- 6) expressing high but realistic expectations for student achievement.
- 7) talking with children about their plans for future education and employment and the skills they will need to attain their goals.
- 8) talking with children every day, during daily routines and family meals, and giving everyone a chance to talk and be heard.

Where It's Happening

Parents and children have an opportunity to write stories together, conduct exciting science experiments, and even visit with the Cat in the Hat during Family Fun Nights, held five times a year at Federalsburg Elementary School in Caroline County.

In Howard County, parents learn how to help their children learn how to learn through Parents as Mediators — a cognitive education program for parents. Through a series of interactive workshops, parents learn to use their own unique culture to develop cognitive skills and learning strategies in their children.

Goal 4: In partnership for student success, parents and community members will volunteer to improve schools and support students.

Strategy 1: MSDE will encourage schools to use volunteers during the school day and in after-school programs.

MSDE activities may include:

- 1) disseminating best practices on volunteering in schools.
- 2) encouraging community-based, faith-based, and parent groups to share their life experiences, talents, and time with schools to enhance children's education.
- 3) expanding its mentoring program to demonstrate ways in which organizations can volunteer in schools and mentor students.
- 4) collaborating with other organizations to promote volunteerism.

Strategy 2: Schools and school systems will identify and publicize varied volunteer opportunities to appeal to the interests, talents, and time of diverse families and community members and provide training as needed.

School activities may include:

- 1) holding volunteer fairs where parents and community members can learn about the variety of education-related

volunteer opportunities.

- 2) providing training and support to ensure volunteers participate in a meaningful capacity that supports school improvement goals.
- 3) recognizing, publicly or privately, the efforts of volunteers.
- 4) providing families transportation if it is necessary for them to be able to volunteer.
- 5) establishing a read-aloud program where students develop fluency by reading familiar texts to adult volunteers.
- 6) helping parents become strong community and education advocates.
- 7) establishing volunteer programs such as "Adopt-A-School," which provides a structured partnership that will bring focus and consistency to the school's efforts.

Strategy 3: Schools will encourage families to share their cultures, careers, and traditions.

School activities may include:

- 1) partnering with staff and parent groups to hold multicultural fairs where families share traditional customs and foods.
- 2) presenting holidays and traditions of various cultures,



particularly those reflecting the student population.

- 3) advertising career fairs and recruiting families to participate and share career options with students.
- 4) incorporating language classes or clubs into extracurricular activities, summer programs, and after-school care.
- 5) helping families present cultural or career information to students.
- 6) inviting senior citizens to share a community's history with students.

Strategy 4: Community and faith-based organizations will mobilize members to volunteer regularly at schools and community learning events.

Community activities may include:

- 1) adopting a school to support regularly.
- 2) working with schools to share the skills and talents its members can contribute.
- 3) allowing employees to spend a predetermined number of work hours volunteering at a local school.
- 4) partnering with mentoring groups such as Big Brothers/Big

Sisters to develop and implement a school mentoring partnership and to train participating employees.

- 5) recruiting organizations such as VISTA or Volunteers of America to help develop volunteer opportunities.

Strategy 5: Parent groups will work with schools to recruit parent volunteers and match them with appropriate opportunities.

Parent activities may include:

- 1) advertising volunteer opportunities at meetings and through mailings.
- 2) working with school liaisons to develop pamphlets that encourage volunteerism.
- 3) recognizing the special talents of members and other parents and matching them to opportunities.
- 4) providing direct and immediate volunteer opportunities, such as having a fold-and-stuff table at the back of an organization's meeting space, or supplying projects that volunteers can take home and return or have picked up on a specified date.

Goal 5: In partnership for student success, parents, schools, and community members will collaborate on educational decisions that affect children, families, and school improvement.

Strategy 1: MSDE will include parents and community members representing diverse constituencies in state-level decisions regarding academic policies and family involvement.

MSDE activities may include:

- 1) inviting parents and community members to serve on task forces and advisory panels that develop policies and guidelines for schools.
- 2) distributing information on educational policies and effective education in an accessible format with appropriate contact information.
- 3) seeking public input at State Board of Education meetings.
- 4) surveying parents and business partners on the quality of MSDE's academic information, outreach, and parent involvement practices.

Strategy 2: School systems will involve diverse family and community representatives in decisions regarding academic policies, school-wide plans, and family involvement.

School system activities may include:

- 1) developing family involvement policies with a team representative of parents from diverse backgrounds.
- 2) engaging a broad base of community members, including business partners, to serve on committees and task forces.
- 3) surveying parents regarding policies and school climate in languages and formats accessible to all parents.
- 4) encouraging all schools to promote parent leadership.

Strategy 3: Schools will include diverse family and community representatives on school decision-making bodies that govern academic policies, school-wide plans, and family involvement and will solicit input from the general parent and community population on important school decisions.

School activities may include:

- 1) holding school decision-making team meetings at a time and place accessible to families and community members and making minutes available.
- 2) publicizing important decisions in a variety of formats and

providing ample time for feedback.

- 3) developing home-school or reading compacts with a team representative of the parent body.

Strategy 4: Schools will regularly provide family and community members with substantive information so that they can serve as knowledgeable partners in educational decisions.

School activities may include:

- 1) providing information sessions on various areas of the curriculum (e.g., a new reading series, the adoption of a comprehensive school reform model) at times and places accessible to family and community members.
- 2) developing and distributing to parents a glossary of educational terms.
- 3) highlighting through the school newsletter at least one specific educational issue being addressed by the school improvement or decision-making team.
- 4) inviting school board members or candidates to the school to address parents and teachers.
- 5) encouraging families to visit classrooms to see programs in action.
- 6) inviting business partners representative of the career majors, pathways, academies, and/or smaller learning communities that exist within the school to help students connect academics to careers.

Strategy 5: Community and faith-based organizations will encourage member awareness of and advocacy for educational issues.

Community activities may include:

- 1) dedicating a portion of regular meetings to review changes in school policy or upcoming events such as school board elections.
- 2) advocating for educational issues on a local, district, state, or national level through sponsorship of members.
- 3) inviting school board members or candidates to attend and speak at meetings as appropriate.

Strategy 6: Families are encouraged to participate in school- and district-level decision-making and to advocate for positive educational policies that strengthen schools, partnerships, and student learning.

Parent activities may include:

- 1) operating an advocacy table at meetings and events to increase awareness of educational policies, events, and political participation.
- 2) nominating representatives to attend and report on proceedings of decision-making meetings at the school, district, and state levels.
- 3) framing questions on educational policy and preparing to



- discuss them with appropriate persons at the school and district levels.
- 4) sharing opinions and comments about educational policies through the editorial page of a newspaper or at town meetings.
 - 5) partnering with schools to visit local and state lawmakers to voice concerns or opinions when laws have direct impact on schools.

Where It's Happening

As an effort to promote sustained parental and community involvement in educational decisions, Montgomery County Public Schools formed diverse study circles of parents and community members that met over four weeks to discuss solutions to closing the achievement gap. As Silver Spring parent Valerie Ervin expressed to the Montgomery County Board of Education, "A dialogue about the 'Achievement Gap' brought together many from our community who have historically had no voice...It became evident that our community found power in our collective voice."

Representatives of school systems, public libraries, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, parent-teacher associations, interdepartmental offices, national organizations, and many others serve on Maryland's Family Focus Council. The Council, established by State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick, is charged with advising on, advocating for, and helping develop programs and policies that encourage effective home-school partnerships. The state's Family Involvement Policy and Maryland's Plan for Family, School, and Community Involvement are a direct result of the Council's collaborative efforts.

Goal 6: In partnership for student success, the Maryland State Department of Education, local school systems, and community organizations, agencies, and businesses will collaborate effectively and efficiently.

Strategy 1: MSDE will support and assist schools and school systems in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies and programs that involve all parents and families and encourage collaboration with community organizations, agencies, and businesses.

MSDE activities may include:

- 1) facilitating school compliance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and state requirements for parental involvement.
- 2) sharing information on funding sources for collaborative programs.
- 3) working with community organizations to collate services provided into a resource publication to be disseminated to schools and families.
- 4) collaborating with school systems, schools, families, and community members to create professional development modules on family-school-community involvement for school staff.

- 5) evaluating progress in implementing the family involvement policy and its effectiveness.

Strategy 2: Schools will work with community partners to implement programs that promote school-family partnerships and student success.

School activities may include:

- 1) holding information nights for community leaders, businesses, and organizations to describe the school's strengths and needs as a basis for potential partnering.
- 2) collating information about community resources (e.g., health and welfare agencies, libraries, after-school activities, and cultural events) for dissemination to parents and providing "hotline" numbers for easy access to information.
- 3) offering students' artwork for display in local businesses and community organizations.
- 4) recognizing, publicly and/or privately, the support of community partners.

Where It's Happening

On the upper Eastern Shore, enthusiasm for reading grows through a “Partners in Print Program” that meets once a month. The program is funded through the school system’s Title I office. Parents and children are guided through an interactive reading activity. Parents then make the activity to reuse at home while children extend learning in a related pursuit.

Over 350 participants attended the “What Kids Need to Succeed” Parenting Conference in Harford County in 2001. The full-day conference featured a keynote speaker, fair, exhibit hall, and workshops on topics such as “Internet Safety at School and Home” and “Strong Communication Builds Strong Relationships.” The conference was developed through a partnership between the Healthy Communities Initiative in Harford County and the local school system, with the YMCA offering childcare and Harford Community College hosting the successful event.

- 5) providing screenings and referrals for the health, welfare, and learning needs of students.
- 6) organizing community service activities for students to support the community.

Strategy 3: Community members will work with schools to improve family involvement, school programs, and services that contribute to student learning.

Community activities may include:

- 1) developing and sponsoring family literacy nights, reading fairs, or used book sales with public libraries.
- 2) sponsoring career fairs with local businesses.
- 3) co-planning and providing tutoring for students at faith-based institutions and other community venues.
- 4) sponsoring school clean-up days to make the physical environment more conducive to learning.
- 5) working with students and their families to provide needed services through local health and welfare agencies.
- 6) partnering with schools to identify community action or service projects with which students and staff can help.

Strategy 4: Parents are encouraged to use community organizations and agencies to improve student achievement.

Parent activities may include:

- 1) sharing information about positive experiences at local businesses, institutions, and agencies through a “Parent Recommendations” column in the school newsletter.
- 2) participating in school events by serving on planning committees, completing evaluations, and offering suggestions for events.
- 3) working with community organizations to plan community-based learning events.
- 4) using community services to strengthen their skills and resources and the learning potential of their children.

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GLOSSARY

ABE (Adult Basic Education)

An education program, designed for adults out of school and youth ages 16 or older who are currently functioning below the eighth-grade level, to improve competency in reading, writing, speaking, problem-solving, or computation.

Achievement Matters Most

Maryland's new plan for public schools that sets goals in the areas of achievement, teaching, testing, safety, and family involvement in schools.

Advisory Panel

A group of people convened to provide advice or support to an organization or project.

Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act

An Act passed by the Maryland General Assembly in spring 2002. The Act increases funding to public schools, directs more funding to students with special needs, and gives school systems greater freedom in how funds are spent. In exchange for these funds, each school system must develop a plan to improve achievement for all its students. School systems must also establish full-day kindergarten programs for all children and pre-kindergarten programs for children from low-income families.

Comprehensive School Reform Model

A systematic approach to schoolwide reform that incorporates every aspect of the school, from curriculum and instruction to school management, through the implementation of research-based programs used to raise student achievement.

Big Brother/Big Sister Association

A one-to-one, nonprofit mentoring organization that matches caring adults to children who need mentors.

Educational Policy

A definite course or method of action selected from researched alternatives that will guide and determine present and future decisions.

ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act)

A federal Act from 1965 that was recently reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. (See NCLB for more information.)

ESL (English as a Second Language)

A program designed to help improve the English skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) of children or adults for whom English is not the primary language.

Early Head Start

A federal program to promote healthy family functioning that provides high-quality child and family development services to low-income pregnant women and to infants and toddlers, birth to age three.

Even Start Family Literacy

A federally-funded family literacy program intended to improve the educational opportunities of children and adults by integrating early childhood education and adult education for parents into a unified program.

Family Focus Council

A council established in April 2000 by State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick to advise on programs and policies that encourage effective home-school partnerships. Council membership consists of faith-based, university, and community organizations, parent groups, local school representatives, and local business leaders.

Family Literacy

The passing of knowledge from one generation to another through coordinated services comprising four components — parent and child interactive activities, parent education, adult education or ESL, and early childhood education — that use a family-focused approach.

GED (General Educational Development) Diploma

A diploma earned by a person who has dropped out of high school but has successfully passed all of the five general tests in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. The diploma signifies readiness with the specific knowledge and skills required for post-secondary education and training.

Head Start

A federal program for low-income preschool children and families, including children with disabilities, that provides comprehensive services. Services include early childhood education, child health and development, nutrition, and family support.

HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters)

A home-visiting/school-readiness strategy that recognizes parents as their child's first and most important teacher. HIPPY helps parents work with their three-, four- and five-year-old children at home. Supported by easy-to-use activity packets, home visits, and group meetings, parents learn how to prepare their children for success in school and beyond.

Home-Visiting

A strategy for primary service delivery that uses professionals, paraprofessionals, or volunteers to support children and their families, primarily in their homes. This strategy promotes child development, child health, and family well-being and connects families to their communities, thereby enabling them to access needed resources and services.

Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Education Centers (Judy Centers)

Partnerships between local school systems, local agencies, and community-based organizations for the purpose of improving young children's school readiness. Judy Center services include quality early childhood education, health, and family support services.

Lights On Afterschool!

An annual celebration of the programs and activities a community or school sponsors beyond the school day or year.

MOM'S Club (Mothers Offering Mothers Support)

A national nonprofit organization of primarily stay-at-home mothers (and their children) who meet on a regular basis to provide information and support to one another.

Mom's Morning Out

A planned meeting for mothers to meet one another and provide support—not affiliated with the national organization MOM'S Club.

NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001)

Also known as public law 107-110, the Act expands and reforms programs included in ESEA. It calls for stronger accountability, expanded options and choice for parents, improved teacher quality, research-based teaching methods, flexibility in spending, and involvement of parents.

Parents As Teachers (PAT)

A family education and support program that begins prenatally and extends to age five. This early prevention program is based on the beliefs that parents are the first and most influential teachers of their children and that the early years lay the foundation for children's success in school and in life.

Parent Liaison

A trained person responsible for providing support to parents and for facilitating communication between families and the school.

Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)

A not-for-profit association of parents, educators, students, and other citizens who are active in their schools and communities.

Readers From Birth

A program encouraging parents to begin reading to children at an early age by providing free books each year to new parents until their children are school-aged. Established by Preston Elementary School in Caroline County.

RSVP (Retired Seniors Volunteer Program)

A national organization encouraging retired seniors to participate in community life through volunteerism.

School-Wide Plan

A comprehensive plan to use Title I and other federal funds in ways that positively impact all students in a school.

The Family Works

Maryland's Parent Information and Resource Center, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Its activities are statewide in scope, with the majority of funding directed to the needs of urban and rural communities.

TIPS (Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork)

Interactive homework designed by the classroom teacher to encourage students to talk to someone at home about what they are learning in school.

Visionary Panel for Better Schools

A group of parents, teachers, administrators, college professors, policy makers, and national education experts that reviewed Maryland's school reform efforts and made recommendations for improvement. The Panel's recommendations are the backbone of Achievement Matters Most.

VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)

A national organization placing individuals with community-based agencies to help find long-term solutions to problems caused by poverty.

RESOURCE DIRECTORY

The following organizations can help you learn more about student achievement and school improvement. You may access the various Web sites directly or through SAILOR, Maryland's free Internet service, at one of more than 200 local public libraries, or ask your librarian for assistance.

Maryland State Department of Education

200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
410-767-0600 or 888-246-0016
410-333-2275 (FAX)
410-333-3045 (TTY/TDD)

www.marylandpublicschools.org
press releases, program information, and more

www.mdk12.org
information on instruction, school improvement teams,
and more

www.msp.msde.state.md.us
school achievement data

www.research.umbc.edu/~ira/
adult education and literacy services

Maryland Higher Education Commission

839 Bestgate Road, Suite 400
Annapolis, MD 21401
410-260-4500 or 1-800-974-0203
for general information

410-260-4565 or 1-800-974-1024
for financial assistance information
410-260-3200 (FAX)
800-735-2258 (TTY)
www.mhec.state.md.us

Maryland PTA

5 Central Avenue
Glen Burnie, MD 21061
410-760-6221
410-760-6344 (FAX)
www.mdpta.org

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE)

3929 Old Lee Highway, Suite 91-A
Fairfax, VA 22030-2401
703-359-8973
703-359-0972 (FAX)
www.ncpie.org



National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University
3003 N. Charles Street
Suite 200
Baltimore, MD 21218
410-516-8800
410-516-8890 (FAX)
www.partnershipschools.org

The Family Works

610 East Diamond Avenue
Suite 100
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
301-840-3214
1-877-WE-RFMLY
301-840-8933 (FAX)
www.thefamilyworks.org

U.S. Department of Education

400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202
1-800-USA-LEARN
202-401-0689 (FAX)
1-800-437-0833 (TTY/TDD)
www.ed.gov
general information
www.nochildleftbehind.org

APPENDIX A

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The materials listed below are available on the Web at www.marylandpublicschools.org. You may also call 888-246-0016 or fax your request to 410-333-2275 for hard copies of the materials.

- A Parent's Guide to Achievement Matters Most (handbook)
- Maryland's Family Involvement Policy (brochure)
- Education--A Family Affair (brochure)
- Take 15 for the Family (assorted materials)
- Testing in Maryland: A parent's guide to the Maryland School Assessment
- Maryland High School Assessments: A message to parents from the State Superintendent of Schools
- Maryland School Performance Report--an annual report on state and local school system performance
- Fact Sheets--a series of one-page information sheets
 - Maryland Network of Partnership Schools
 - Maryland High School Assessments
 - Maryland Model for School Readiness
 - Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act
 - School Reconstitution

The following materials are available through the United States Department of Education. You may access it at www.ed.gov/pubs/parents or by calling 1-877-433-7827 or faxing

301-470-1244. You may also call 1-800-USA-LEARN to reach EDPubs or to ask a question or get general information.

- Helping Your Child Series
 - Helping Your Child Become a Reader
 - Helping Your Preschool Child
 - Helping Your Child With Homework
 - Helping Your Child Through Adolescence
 - Helping Your Child Succeed in School
- Proven Ideas From Research for Parents: A Child Becomes a Reader
- Parent's Guide to the Internet
- Testing for Results: Helping Families, Schools, and Communities Understand and Improve Student Achievement
- Frequently Asked Questions and Answers for Families and Communities
- Partnership for Family Involvement in Education
- Parents' Tool Box
- What to Know & Where to Go: Parents' Guide to No Child Left Behind
- Parents' Guide to No Child Left Behind: Supplemental Services
- The Achiever--a newsletter that contains news about public and private organizations.

APPENDIX B

MEASURE OF SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

*Karen Clark Salinas, Joyce L. Epstein, &
Mavis G. Sanders, Johns Hopkins University,
Deborah Davis & Inge Aldersbaes, Northwest
Regional Educational Laboratory*

This instrument is designed to measure how your school is reaching out to involve parents, community members, and students in a meaningful manner. The measure is based on the framework of six types of involvement developed by Epstein (1995). At this time, your school may conduct all, some, or none of the activities or approaches listed. Not every activity is appropriate at every grade level. The selected items show that your school is meeting challenges to involve all families in many different ways that will improve the school climate, strengthen families, and increase student success in school. Your school may be conducting other activities for each type of involvement. These may be added and rated to account for all major partnership practices that your school presently conducts.

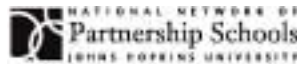
Directions: Carefully examine the scoring rubric below before rating your school on the six types of involvement. As you review each item, please circle the response that comes closest to

describing your school. A score of 4 or 5 indicates that the activity or approach is strong and prominent. A score of 1, 2, or 3 indicates that the activity is not yet part of the school's program, or needs improvement. The results provide information on the strength of current practices of partnership, and insights about possible future directions or needed improvements in your school's partnership program.

Scoring Rubric:

- 1 – Never:** Strategy does not happen at our school.
- 2 – Rarely:** Occurs in only one or two classes. Receives isolated use or little time. Clearly not emphasized in this school's parental involvement plan.
- 3 – Sometimes:** Occurs in some classes. Receives minimal or modest time or emphasis across grades. Not a prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.
- 4 – Often:** Occurs in many but not all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.
- 5 – Frequently:** Occurs in most or all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A highly prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

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Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

I. PARENTING: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

Our School	Rating				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on child development.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provides information, training, and assistance to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Produces information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Asks families for information about children's goals, strengths & talents.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools & to help schools to understand families.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Provides families with information/training on developing home conditions or environments that support learning.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Respects the different cultures represented in our student population.	1	2	3	4	5
Other Type 1-Parenting activities:	1	2	3	4	5

_____	1	2	3	4	5

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II. COMMUNICATING: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

Our School	Rating				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Reviews the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Develops communication for parents who do not speak English well, read well, or need large type.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Has clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Conducts a formal conference with every parent at least once a year.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Conducts annual survey for families to share information and concerns about student needs & reactions to school programs, and their satisfaction with their involvement in school.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Conducts an orientation for new parents.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Sends home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Provides clear information about the curriculum, assessments, achievement levels, and report cards.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Contacts families of students having academic or behavior problems.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Develops school's plan and program of family and	1	2	3	4	5

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Our School	Rating				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Trains teachers, staff, and principals on the value and utility of contributions of parents and ways to build ties between school and home.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Builds policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about their curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can help.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Produces a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Provides written communication in the language of the parents.	1	2	3	4	5
Other Type 2-Communicating activities:	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

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III. VOLUNTEERING: Recruit and organize parent help and support.

Our School	Rating				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Conducts an annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers, in order to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provides a parent/family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and other things that affect their children.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Creates flexible volunteering and school events schedules, enabling parents who work to participate.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Trains volunteers so they use their time productively.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Recognizes volunteers for their time and efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Schedules school events at different times during the day and evening so that all families can attend.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Reduces barriers to parent participation by providing transportation, childcare, flexible schedules, and addresses the needs of English language learners.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Encourages families and the community to be involved with the school in a variety of ways (assisting in classroom, giving talks, monitoring halls, leading activities, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Other Type 3-Volunteering activities: _____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

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IV. LEARNING AT HOME: Provide information to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

Our School	Rating				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Provides ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Makes parents aware of the importance of reading at home, and asks parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Assists families in helping students set academic goals, select courses, and programs.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.	1	2	3	4	5
Other Type 4-Learning at Home activities:					
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

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V. DECISION MAKING: Include parents in school decisions to develop leaders and representatives.

Our School	Rating				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Has active PTA, PTO, or other parent organization.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Includes parent representatives on the school's advisory council, improvement team, or other committees.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Has parents represented on district-level advisory council and committees.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Involves parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in the planning, review, and improvement of programs.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Involves parents in revising the school/district curricula.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Includes parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Develops formal networks to link all families with their parent representatives.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Includes students (with parents) in decision-making groups.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Deals with conflict openly and respectfully.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Asks involved parents to make contact with parents who are less involved to solicit their ideas, and report back to them.	1	2	3	4	5
Other Type-5-Decision Making activities:					
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

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VI. COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

Our School	Rating				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
1. Provides a community resource directory for parents and students with information on community services, programs, and agencies.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Involves families in locating and using community resources.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Works with local businesses, industries, and organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Provides "one-stop" shopping for family services through partnership of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Opens its building for community use after school hours.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Offers after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Solves turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities to occur.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Utilizes community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks, and museums, to enhance the learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5
Other Type 6-Collaborating with Community activities:					
_____	1	2	3	4	5
_____	1	2	3	4	5

A. What major factors have contributed to the success of your school's family and community involvement efforts?

B. What major factors have limited the success of your school's family and community involvement efforts?

C. What is one of your school's major goals for improving its program of school, family, and community partnerships over the next three years?

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- Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, (76): 701-712.
- Salinas, K. C., Epstein, J. L. & Sanders, M. G. (1997). Starting points: An inventory of present practices of school-family community partnerships. In J. L. Epstein, L. Coates, K. C. Salinas, M. G. Sanders, & B. S. Simon. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (pp.122-125). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Yap, K. O. & Enoki, D. (1995). In search of the elusive magic bullet: Parental involvement and student outcomes. *The School Community Journal*. 5(2), Fall/Winter 1995: 97-106.

NOTES

- For information on the National Network of Partnership Schools at John Hopkins University, visit the Network's web site: www.partnershipschools.org, or call 410-516-8818.
- For information about NWREL's services, call 800-547-6339 ext.568, or visit the web site: www.nwrel.org.





www.marylandpublicschools.org