Research and Recommendations on Health Issues and Parent Involvement and Engagement in Student Academic Success

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Parent Involvement versus Parent Engagement

To create the kinds of school-family partnerships that raise student achievement, improve local communities, and increase public support, we need to understand the difference between family *involvement* and family *engagement*. One of the dictionary definitions of *involve* is "to enfold or envelope," whereas one of the meanings of *engage* is "to come together and interlock." Thus, involvement implies *doing to*; in contrast, engagement implies *doing with*.

Encouragement of parent involvement via fund-raisers, projects, etc. without an effort or goal to create partnerships have proven to not achieve results. "Almost all the research says that any kind of increased parent interest and support of students can help. But almost all research also says that family engagement can produce even better results – for students, for families, for schools, and for their communities" (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009).

Some parent involvement programs that pay for parents to participate or offer store discounts for parents who visit school parent centers may work for short term to motivate people to show up for a meeting but do little to stimulate more cognitive challenging work that should be priority, i.e. "to ask children about their school day or assist them with their homework". "When incentives are gone, everyone is worse off than before".

Parental Engagement

Parent engagement in schools is defined as parents and school staff working together to support and improve the learning, development, and health of children and adolescents. Parent engagement in schools is a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage parents in meaningful ways, and parents are committed to actively supporting their children's and adolescents' learning and development. This relationship between schools and parents cuts across and reinforces children's health and

learning in multiple settings – at home, in school, in out-of-school programs, and in the community. (CDC link to Parent Engagement)

Engaging parents in their children's school life is a promising protective factor. Research shows that parent engagement in schools is closely linked to better student behavior, higher academic achievement, and enhanced social skills. Parent engagement also makes it more likely that children and adolescents will avoid unhealthy behaviors, such as sexual risk behaviors and tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use.

Efforts to improve child and adolescent health have typically addressed specific health risk behaviors, such as tobacco use or violence. However, results from a growing number of studies suggest that greater health impact might be achieved by also enhancing protective factors that help children and adolescents avoid multiple behaviors that place them at risk for adverse health and educational outcomes.

A school striving for family involvement often leads with its mouth—identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute. A school striving for parent engagement, on the other hand, tends to lead with its ears—listening to what parents think, dream, and worry about. The goal of family engagement is not to serve clients but to gain partners.

National Requirements: (SEC. 1117. SCHOOL SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION) (Parent Involvement Link)

Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) Information about how this law supports parental involvement is in the rule making process. To keep updated on the roll out of ESSA, go to the website.

School Parental Involvement Policy

(1) General Policy- Each school served under this part shall jointly develop with, and distribute to, parents of participating children a written parental involvement policy, agreed on by such parents that shall describe the means for carrying out the requirements of subsections (c) through (f). Parents shall be notified of the policy in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, provided in a language the parents can understand. Such policy shall be made available to the local community and

updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school.

(2) Special Rule- If the school has a parental involvement policy that applies to all parents, such school may amend that policy, if necessary, to meet the requirements of this subsection.

(3) Amendment- If the local educational agency involved has a school district-level parental involvement policy that applies to all parents, such agency may amend that policy, if necessary, to meet the requirements of this subsection.

(4) Parental Comments- If the plan under section 1112 is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, the local educational agency shall submit any parent comments with such plan when such local educational agency submits the plan to the State.

(c) Policy Involvement- Each school served under this part shall —

1. convene an annual meeting, at a convenient time, to which all parents of participating children shall be invited and encouraged to attend, to inform parents of their school's participation under this part and to explain the requirements of this part, and the right of the parents to be involved;
2. offer a flexible number of meetings, such as meetings in the morning or evening, and may provide, with funds provided under this part, transportation, child care, or home visits, as such services relate to parental involvement;
3. involve parents, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of programs under this part, including the planning, review, and improvement of the school parental involvement policy and the joint development of the schoolwide program plan under section 1114(b)(2), except that if a school has in place a process for involving parents in the joint planning and design of the school's programs, the school may use that process, if such process includes an adequate representation of parents of participating children;
4. provide parents of participating children
   (A) timely information about programs under this part;
   (B) a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet; and
   (C) if requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions

relating to the education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible; and

5. if the schoolwide program plan under section 1114(b)(2) is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, submit any parent comments on the plan when the school makes the plan available to the local educational agency.

National Requirements Continued

(5) State plan shall describe how the State educational agency will support the collection and dissemination to local educational agencies and schools of effective parental involvement practices. Such practices shall:

- be based on the most current research that meets the highest professional and technical standards, on effective parental involvement that fosters achievement to high standards for all children; and
- be geared toward lowering barriers to greater participation by parents in school planning, review, and improvement experience.

National School Lunch Program – Child Nutrition Program Requirements (Other Operational Issues 19.14 Texas Department of Agriculture – July 2013)

Regulations require schools to promote activities to involve students and parents in the NSLP. Such activities may include menu planning, enhancement of eating environment, program promotion, and related community support activities. The type of parent and student involvement is left to the discretion of the individual school. In this way, the school is given flexibility to plan and implement a program to meet its individual needs. Since involvement of students and parents in the NSLP is a requirement, schools must document all activities. Refer to Section 26, Residential Child Care Institutions, for additional information regarding student-parent involvement in the NSLP."

A suggested form for documenting the parent involvement activities is included at the Texas Department of Agriculture website. This is auditable during an administrative review of the CN program. (Square Meals Link)

Additional State Requirements:

Texas Education Code, Chapter 28, Section 28.004 related to membership in the local school health advisory council, requires a majority of the members

to be parents of students enrolled in the district and not employed by the district to ensure local values are reflected in the health education instruction.

Texas Education Code, Chapter 38, Section 38.013 requires that the Texas Education Agency shall make available to each school district one or more coordinated health programs designed to prevent obesity, cardiovascular disease, oral diseases, and Type 2 diabetes in elementary school, middle school, and junior high school students. Each program must provide for coordinating:

(1) health education, including oral health education;
(2) physical education and physical activity;
(3) nutrition services; and
(4) parental involvement.

Resources and References:

Organizations:

There are numerous organizations and references to resources that support and offer information and to achieve parent involvement & engagement.

- Center for Health and Healthcare in Schools
- Texas PTA
- National PTA
- The Whole Child
- We Can!
- Coalition Building
- Connecting Community to the Classroom
- Parent Center
- US Department of Education
- ESC 16

CDC (Centers for Disease Control) - Recommended resources on parental engagement:

- Adolescent & School Health Information:
  - Parent Engagement Strategies
  - Parent Engagement
  - Positive Parenting
  - Parent Engagement Overview

- Positive Parenting Practices:
  - Parent Engagement Administrators
  - Parent Engagement Teachers
  - Parent Engagement Parents
  - Parental Monitoring Factsheet
  - Fathers Influence
  - Parents Influence
  - Talking Teens

ASCD: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development-References

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Recommendations

- Provide local SHACs with support to achieve national regulations on parental involvement to improve academic success;
- Encourage *parent engagement* to promote academic success and student health; and
- Provide *best practices and recognize efforts of* parent engagement programs and provide resources to local SHACs for parent engagement programs that are specific to health issues

External links to other sites appearing here are intended to be informational and do not represent an endorsement by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). These sites may also not be accessible to people with disabilities. For information about any of the initiatives listed, contact the sponsoring organization directly. For comments or questions about this publication, contact the School Health Program at 512-776-7279 or by email at schoolhealth@dshs.texas.gov. *Copyright free. Permission granted to forward or make copies in its entirety as needed.*