

Executive Summary

Parental Engagement TAG Group Recommendations

Committee Members:

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SB 191 Statutory Language

(b.5) ON OR BEFORE MARCH 1, 2011, TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE BOARD CONCERNING THE INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, TO THE EFFECT THAT PARENTS SHOULD ACT AS PARTNERS WITH TEACHERS AND PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Brief Introduction

In 2001, the Maryland Parent Advisory Council adopted one of the most inclusive parent involvement policies in the country and the Fall of 2003 the Council convened again to strengthen the policy to emphasize the need for an organizational structure at the state, school system, and school levels – that supports family and community involvement.

At the end of two years of research, the M-PAC recommendations were vetted through a series of public forums held in all 24 local school systems, then the final report *A Shared Responsibility* was approved by the Maryland State Board of education.

After reviewing the recommendations and research of M-PAC, the SCEE Parental Engagement TAG Group thought it would serve as a great resource for recommendations for the Colorado State Board of Education. Given the fact the M-PAC research validates the National PTA Standards and takes it to the level of the organizational structure of our education system as a whole, Colorado could benefit from over 4 years of work, including the research, invested in these recommendations. Thus the following recommendations reflect a lot of the content of *A Shared Responsibility* with additions and adjustments to reflect the state of Colorado.

These recommendations are presented in five themes: communication, leadership, training, partnership, and accountability. The purpose of the categorization was to provide structure to the

recommendations. It is important to note that the recommendations are not prioritized. Each recommendation builds on the other, thereby resisting attempts at ranking.

**More in-depth details of the rationale and research for each recommendation can be found in our attached original report.

Recommendations

I. Communications

Recommendations

To improve parents' ability to be involved in schools, **the Colorado Department of Education should...**

- Communicate — using varied methods, media, resources, and languages — the rights and responsibilities of parents to develop and respond to education policy, procedures, and practices at the state, local school system, and school levels.

local school systems and schools should...

- Hold regular, meaningful parent/teacher conferences that address the full range of issues affecting student achievement.
- Use varied methods, media, and languages, regularly provide parents information on their rights and responsibilities, on grading and discipline policies, and on the importance of meaningful parent involvement.
- Use varied methods, media, and languages, provide parents curriculum and program information by grade and suggest steps for improving individual student achievement. A committee of parents and educators should review the information to ensure that it is understandable to all parents.

II. Leadership

Recommendations

To build the leadership and organizational structure necessary to support family and community involvement in schools, **the Colorado State Board of Education and/or Colorado State Department of Education should ...**

- Initiate and/or support legislation that would place at least two parents with a child attending a Colorado public school on the State Board of Education.
- Ensure the establishment of an organizational structure that includes personnel at the state, local school system, and school levels. This structure will oversee leadership, training, monitoring, and support for family and community involvement and partnerships.
- Encourage local school systems to establish parent involvement advisory groups to advise their local boards of education on parent involvement concerns, practices, and research. These groups would also communicate board policies, parent involvement strategies, and research to parents and communities.
- Provide parents with information regarding education leadership roles and responsibilities in the current state education system and how to effectively communicate through this system to address any concerns or issues.

III. Training

Recommendations

To increase the amount and effectiveness of family and community involvement in schools, **the Colorado State Department of Education should...**

- Assess local school system's parent and community involvement training needs, and then provide school systems appropriate technical assistance, training, resources and mentoring.
- Encourage local school systems to include family and community involvement measure in their local assessment of training needs.
- Work with local school systems, colleges, and universities to develop and offer coursework on family involvement that is a requirement for all undergraduate education students seeking teaching certification in Colorado
- Have available training programs and resources for educators specifically designed to help them with assisting parents to facilitate learning at home that is tied to classroom instruction and academic courses.

the Colorado State Board of Education should...

- Encourage local boards of education to support parent and community involvement training school-based staff, teachers, administrators, parents and community members.

Local schools systems should...

- Provide or ensure that schools provides job-embedded staff training that addresses issues related to individual student needs, family advocacy, cultural proficiency, and - to ensure a family-friendly atmosphere in the school – parent involvement and customer service skills.
- Provide or ensure that schools provide training for parents and community members on leadership and effective involvement with schools. To maximize access to training, it should be offered at schools, at additional sites that are convenient to the community, and on the Web.
- Provide or ensure the parents are trained on their rights and responsibilities

IV. Partnership

Recommendations

To encourage and support schools' partnerships with families and communities, **the Colorado State Department of Education should...**

- Encourage all committees and task forces at the state, local school system, and school levels to offer an opportunity for participation to at least two parents (or 25% of the membership with a child attending a Colorado public school.
- Encourage public schools to collaborate with community agencies to provide in schools such services as wellness centers, health care (physical and mental), social services, and childcare.

- Develop programs and incentives for more effective communications and partnerships (parent and community, including businesses) at the state, local school system, and school levels.

V. Accountability

Recommendation

Although there is some monitoring of parental engagement in Colorado schools and districts tied to laws and requirements, it is currently based on “random acts of engagement.” These “random acts” are used in isolation of each other or separate from an organized framework in which the activities for family engagement should be planned and linked to the school’s improvement plans and other school goals. Random activities are difficult to measure and if they are not linked to children’s learning, the outcomes can show increased numbers of participation, but the effectiveness of individual events are not measurable over time.

To support and measure the effectiveness of family and community involvement in schools, the Colorado State Board of Education and/or Colorado State Department of Education should...

- Adopt a Family Involvement Policy Resolution similar to that of the Maryland State Board of Education into the Code of Colorado Regulations. Require local school systems develop family involvement policies aligned with the state regulation.
- Develop a set of survey questions — that could stand alone or be incorporated into existing local school system survey instruments — to assess annually the effectiveness of parent and community involvement policies and practices. Input from local school systems and advocacy and community groups must be sought in the development of the survey. This survey information should be used to design and modify parent/family involvement activities detailed in each local school system’s Master Plan and annual update.
- Establish benchmarks — in collaboration with local systems and advocacy and community groups — for local school systems and schools to use in measuring the effectiveness and progress of their parent and community involvement policies and practices. Once these benchmarks are established, progress should be reported in the Colorado School Performance Report.
- Encourage local school systems to factor parent and family involvement into the annual performance evaluations of school administrators and staff
- Provide resources and templates that are designed to effectively measure and/or track teachers partnerships with parents as it relates to assisting with parents children with their academic success in the classroom
- Require transparency in the monitoring of parental engagement and results for public review
- Enhanced current Title I monitoring of parenting engagement to include all schools, with a strong emphasis on supporting parents with the academic success of their students. Currently schools put more emphasis on parents volunteering time and fundraising and use those activities to measure “parent engagement”. These activities do not directly impact student achievement.

Summary

When parents, families, educators, and community members view themselves as mutually accountable for improving student achievement, they can work together as real partners and have a tremendous affect on education reform. Gaining the knowledge, skills, resources and confidence to succeed is key to the success of these partnerships. National standards and policies are already in place to provide directions and insight on how to do this work. More than enough research states that parental engagement cannot be ignored when addressing education reform and closing the achievement gap. Full implementation of these recommendations is fundamental if Colorado is to increase the quantity and quality of family and community involvement in public schools.