

# **East Providence School Department**

East Providence, Rhode Island  
[www.epschoolsri.com](http://www.epschoolsri.com)



## **District Wide Parent Involvement Policy and Informational Handbook**

Adopted by the East Providence School Committee  
Updated 5/6/2014  
Updated 5/16/2015



## Introduction

The East Providence School Department recognizes that parent and family involvement are essential to educating our students and preparing them for life-long learning. Schools, families, and the community must all be actively involved in developing strong programs and policies that support the academic success of every student in the East Providence Public Schools.

To this end, the East Providence School Department will strive to involve parents and family members of children of all ages and grade levels by developing and implementing systemic and school-based strategies and programs based on National PTA standards and indicators for successful parent/family involvement programs.

To assist the schools in the implementation of the Family Involvement Policy, the Superintendent is directed to develop a **Family Involvement Informational Handbook** that includes suggested activities. It is reviewed annually for parent feedback and will be developed and disseminated to the schools to guide them in the development of activities and strategies to promote family involvement in their schools.

### **Section 1: Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful**

**A. We will use a variety of communication tools on a regular basis seeking to facilitate two-way interaction with:**

- ◆ Newsletters
- ◆ Student planners
- ◆ School calendars
- ◆ Signage outside schools
- ◆ Informational newsletters
- ◆ Parent orientations
- ◆ Open houses
- ◆ Home visits
- ◆ Interpreters
- ◆ Translations
- ◆ Phone calls
- ◆ East Providence School Department's Web Page
- ◆ Student Progress Reports
- ◆ First Day Celebrations

- ◆ Meet the Teacher Celebrations
- ◆ Home-School Compacts
- ◆ Skyward Parent Portal
- ◆ *Skylert* Message System
- ◆ School and District Title I Events

**B. We will establish opportunities for parents and educators to share partnering information such as students' strengths and learning preferences with:**

- ◆ Individual student progress reports
- ◆ Individual Learning Plans
- ◆ Personal Literacy Plans (if needed)
- ◆ Parent/Teacher conferences
- ◆ Assist parents in acquiring techniques to support their students' learning and develop tools to help establish those areas where support is needed.
- ◆ Response to Intervention Plans (if needed)
- ◆ Individualized Education Plans (if needed)
- ◆ Performance Improvement Plans (for High School Juniors if needed)

**C. We will provide clear information regarding course expectations and offerings, student placement, school activities, student services, and optional programs with our:**

- ◆ Student Course Offering Handbook
- ◆ School Newsletters
- ◆ School/District Web pages

**D. We will provide report cards and regular progress reports to parents, and will provide support services and follow-up conferences as needed with:**

- ◆ Progress reports
- ◆ Report Cards
- ◆ On-line communication
- ◆ *Skyward* Portal

**E. We will disseminate information on school reforms, policies, discipline procedures, assessment tools, and school goals, and include parents in any related decision-making process with our:**

- ◆ Student Policy/Informational Handbook
- ◆ Mission Statements
- ◆ School Improvement Plans
- ◆ District Strategic Plan

- ◆ School Report Night
- ◆ Parent Involvement and Informational Handbook
- ◆ Parent Letters
- ◆ District Web site
- ◆ Letters to parents over the summer with school involvement committees

**F. We will conduct conferences with parents, with follow-up as needed by:**

- ◆ Each school will demonstrate an effort to reach families that are underrepresented at school conferences due to lack of transportation or child care problems, lack of confidence or time, and/or have limited literacy or limited English language skills.
- ◆ Schedule meetings with families that are convenient and offered at flexible (AM and PM) times.

**G. We will encourage immediate contact between parents and teachers when concerns arise with:**

- ◆ Written Communication/email
- ◆ Phone Calls
- ◆ Conferences

**H. We will distribute student work for parental comment and review on a regular basis with:**

- ◆ Assignments with scoring criteria
- ◆ Projects with scoring criteria

**I. We will translate communications to assist non-English speaking parents.**

**J. We will communicate with parents regarding positive student behavior and achievement, not just regarding misbehavior or failure with our:**

- ◆ Response to Intervention Policies and Procedures
- ◆ *PBIS (Positive Intervention Support Plans) plans*
- ◆ Student Progress Reports
- ◆ Personal phone call
- ◆ Written communication
- ◆ Open Houses
- ◆ Student planners

**K. We will provide opportunities for parents to communicate with principals and administrative staff through:**

- ◆ Open Houses

- ◆ Parent Orientations
- ◆ “First Day” Celebrations
- ◆ Meet the Teacher Events
- ◆ Phone calls
- ◆ Written Communication
- ◆ Email Communication
- ◆ Kindergarten Orientation
- ◆ Grade 6 Orientation at Middle Schools
- ◆ Grade 9 Orientation at High School

**L. We will promote informal activities at which parents, staff, and community members can interact with students at:**

- ◆ Family Nights
- ◆ Science Night
- ◆ Math Night
- ◆ Literacy Night
- ◆ Fundraisers
- ◆ Field Trips (increased yearly)

**M. We will provide staff development regarding effective communication techniques and the importance of regular two-way communication between the school and the family by:**

- ◆ Identifying areas where professional development is necessary to help teachers, administrators, and staff to work effectively with families, especially those of culturally diverse backgrounds and special education needs. e.g. parent portal training
- ◆ Providing parents with skills to communicate with teachers
- ◆ Employing our *Parenting Partners Program* at Title I Schools

## Section 2: Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning

**A. We will seek and encourage parental participation in decision-making that affects student using parent-friendly language at/on:**

- ◆ Parent/Teacher conferences
- ◆ IEP Conferences
- ◆ Guidance Counselor conferences (at the secondary level)
- ◆ Personal Literacy Plans
- ◆ Teacher Support Teams

**B. We will inform parents of the expectations for students in each subject at each grade level at:**

- ◆ Curriculum Nights
- ◆ Open Houses
- ◆ Report Nights
- ◆ On the district and school website

**C. We will provide information regarding how parents can foster learning at home, giving appropriate assistance, monitor homework, and give feedback to teachers through/with:**

- ◆ Newsletters
- ◆ Home/School Compact
- ◆ Workshops
- ◆ Instructional activities
- ◆ Instructional research projects
- ◆ By providing more specific guidelines for how to help students with their homework
- ◆ Interactive homework activities
- ◆ Curriculum (content) related websites
- ◆ Tutorial websites
- ◆ Additionally accessibility to school libraries

**D. We will sponsor workshops or distribute information to assist parents in understanding how students can improve skills, get help when needed, meet class expectations, and perform well on assignments with:**

- ◆ Parent workshops
- ◆ Newsletters
- ◆ Written communications
- ◆ Tutorial websites
- ◆ Interactive homework activities

**E. We will provide opportunities for parental involvement in setting student goals and in planning for post-secondary education careers at/through:**

- ◆ Parent/Teacher conferences
- ◆ Parent/Guidance counselor conferences
- ◆ Parent Workshops
- ◆ Career Pathway Information
- ◆ Program of Studies Book

**F. We will provide opportunities for staff members to learn and share successful approaches to engaging parents in their child's education at:**

- ◆ Professional development workshops

### **Section 3: Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are encouraged**

- A. We will encourage office staff greetings, signage near the entrances, and any other interaction with parents to create a climate in which the parents feel valued and welcome.**
- B. We will survey parents regarding their interests, talents, and availability, then coordinate the parent resources with those that exist within the school and among the faculty.**
- C. We will encourage parents who are unable to volunteer in the school building the option to help in other ways, at home or place of employment.**
- D. We will develop a system for contacting parents to assist as the year progresses.**
- E. We will provide opportunities for those with limited time and resources to participate by addressing child care, transportation, work schedule needs, and so forth.**
- F. We will show appreciation for parents' participation, and value their diverse contributions by:**
  - ◆ Acknowledging parental participation
  - ◆ Giving out parent awards
- G. We will educate and assist staff members in creating an inviting climate and effectively utilizing volunteer resources.**
- H. We will establish volunteer activities that are meaningful and built on volunteer interests and abilities.**

### **Section 4: Parenting skills are promoted and supported**

- A. We will communicate the importance of positive relationships between parents and their children by:**
  - ◆ Informing parents of current research findings investigating Parent Involvement and student success.
  - ◆ Assisting parents in acquiring techniques to support their student's development socially and academically.

- ◆ Providing access to and coordinate community and support services for children and families.
- B. We will link parents to programs and resources within the community that provide support services to families.**
  - C. We will support policies that recognize the variety of cultural traditions and religious diversity.**

## **Section 5: Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families**

- A. We will provide a process for addressing issues and/or concerns, appealing decisions, and resolving problems with our/by:**
  - ◆ Student Policy and Informational Handbook
  - ◆ Encouraging the formation of parent groups to identify and respond to issues of interests to parents.
  - ◆ Working closely with all parent groups (e.g. PTO, PTA) in supporting parent and family initiatives that support academic achievement.
- B. We will include parents on decision-making and advisory committees, and provide training for such areas as policy, curriculum, budget, school reform initiatives, safety, and personnel related to:**
  - ◆ School Improvement and Action Planning
  - ◆ School policies, practices
  - ◆ Both student and school performance data.
  - ◆ Student Informational Handbook
  - ◆ Development and annual evaluation of Parent Involvement Policy and Informational Handbook
  - ◆ Title I Information
- C. We will encourage parents to participate as partners when setting school goals, developing or evaluating programs and policies, or responding to performance data.**
- D. We will encourage active parent participation in the decisions that affect students such as student placement, course selection, and individual personalized education plans.**

**E. We will treat parental concerns with respect and demonstrate genuine interest in developing solutions by:**

- ◆ Inviting parents to help create a plan to deal with individual student problems/issues.

**F. We will promote parent participation on school district, state, and national committees and issues.**

## Appendix A

### **What is *No Child Left Behind*?**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is a landmark in education reform designed to improve student achievement and change the culture of America's schools. With the passage of *No Child Left Behind*, Congress reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA)* – the principle federal law affecting education from kindergarten through high school. In amending ESEA, the new law represents a sweeping overhaul of federal efforts to support elementary and secondary education in the United States. Every state will test all students in grades three through eight and grade eleven on what they know in math and reading, and students in grades four, eight, and eleven will be tested in science, too.

## **Appendix B**

### **What is a Title I School?**

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) targets federal funds to high-poverty communities to provide compensatory educational services to low-achieving students. These funds are distributed by a poverty-based formula to approximately 90 percent of the school districts in the nation.

Parent involvement has always been an integral part of Title I. Under the new Law, *No Child Left Behind*, one of the new purposes of Title I is to ensure that funds are used to promote parent involvement. Parents should take full advantage of the opportunities for involvement that the law provides.

Every district receiving Title I money is required to:

- ◆ Develop with parents a written parent involvement policy that is then distributed to parents and made available to the local community.
- ◆ Convene an annual meeting of parents to inform them of the policy and their right to be involved.
- ◆ Offer flexible parent involvement meetings, if necessary, with Title I money to provide child care, transportation, or home visits.
- ◆ Involve parents in an organized and ongoing way in the planning, review, and improvement of school programs.
- ◆ Develop with parents a Home-School Compact that outlines actions to be taken to improve individual student academic achievement.
- ◆ Increase opportunities for parent involvement in the school by helping parents understand academic content standards and state achievement standards and assessments.
- ◆ Provide materials and training for parents, teachers, pupil services personnel, and other staff to foster greater parent involvement.
- ◆ Integrate activities with other programs: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), English as a Second Language (ESL), etc.

## References:

### Research Findings

([www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org), 2013) Family School Partnerships  
(*Dreambox Blog* 2013) How Parental Involvement Affects Student Achievement;  
(Henderson A. & Berta N: *The Evidence Grows* (1981);  
*The Evidence Continues to Grow* (1987); and *A Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement* (1995). An analysis of more than 85 studies.

Research shows that **family involvement** promotes student success. Students with involved parents are more likely to

- Earn higher grades and pass their classes,
- Attend school regularly and have better social skills,
- Go on to postsecondary education.

When families, schools, and communities work together,

- Student achievement improves,
- Teacher morale rises,
- Communication increases,
- Family, school, and community connections multiply.

### *Parent Involvement and Student Success*

- When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' educational level.
- The more extensive the parent involvement, the higher the student achievement.
- When parents are involved in their students' education, those students have higher grades and test scores, better attendance, and complete homework more consistently.
- When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.
- Students whose parents are involved in their lives have higher graduation rates and greater enrollment rates in post-secondary education.

- Different types of parent /family involvement produce different gains. To have long-lasting gains for students, parental involvement activities must be well-planned, inclusive, and comprehensive.
- In programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships, student achievement for disadvantaged children, not only improves, but also can reach levels that are standard for middle-class children. In addition, the children who are farthest behind make the greatest gains.
- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the learning institution.
- Student behaviors, such as alcohol use, violence, and antisocial behavior decrease as parental involvement increases.
- Students are more likely to fall behind in academic performance if their parents do not participate in school events, fail to develop a working relationship with their child's educators, or keep up with what is happening in their child's school.
- The benefits of involving parents are not confined to the early years; there are significant gains at all ages and grade levels.
- Junior and senior high school students, whose parents remain involved, make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, and develop realistic plans for their future. Students whose parents are not involved, on the other hand, are more likely to drop out of school.
- The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to 1) create a home environment that encourages learning; 2) communicate high, yet reasonable expectations for children's achievement and future careers; and 3) become involved in their children's education and in the community.

### *Parent Involvement and School Quality*

- Schools that work well with families have improved teacher moral and higher ratings of teachers by parents
- Schools where parents are involved have more support from families and better reputations from the community.
- School programs that involve parents out perform identical programs without parent and family involvement.
- Schools where children are failing improve dramatically when parents are enabled to become effective partners in their child's education.
- The school's practice to inform and involve parents are strong determinants of whether inner-city parents will be involved with their children's education, family size, marital status, and even student grade level.

### *Parent Involvement and Program Design*

- The more the relationship between parents and educators approaches a comprehensive, well-planned partnership, the higher the student achievement.
- For low-income families, programs offering home visits are more successful in involving parents than programs requiring parents to visit the school. However, when the parents become involved at school, their children make even greater gains.
- When parents receive frequent and effective communication from the school or program, their involvement increases, their overall evaluation of educators improves, and their attitudes toward the program are more positive.
- Parents are much more likely to become involved when educators encourage and assist parents in helping their children with their schoolwork.
- Effective programs are led by a team of administrators, educators, and parents, and have access to financial resources.
- When they are treated as partners and given relevant information by people with whom they are comfortable, parents put into practice the involvement strategies they already know are effective, but have been hesitant to contribute.
- One of the most significant challenges to conducting an effective program is the lack of instruction on parent and family involvement that educators and administrators receive in their professional training.
- Collaboration with families is an essential component of a reform strategy, but it is not a substitute for high-quality education programs or comprehensive school improvement.

While student success largely relies on factors like study habits, school attendance, test-taking abilities and more, research is showing that parental involvement also has a large impact on student achievement in the classroom. In fact, according to the Academic Development Institute, parents who get involved with their child's education tend to demonstrate good parenting skills, volunteer their time in the school, communicate with faculty and take an active role in school-related decision-making.

The Harvard Family Research Project concluded that parental involvement is associated with higher student achievement. They found that student success was higher in a variety of areas including standardized test scores, grades and teacher ratings. Students are also more likely to enroll in higher-level programs, pass their classes, attend school regularly, have better social skills and move onto post-secondary education. The types of parental involvement that had the greatest

impact on student success were reading and communicating with one's child, as well as holding parental expectations.

**SEDL: The National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools**

<http://www.sedl.org/connections/>

[\*The School-Family Connection: Looking at the Larger Picture - A Review of Current Literature\*](#) (PDF file: 1.3MB) In SEDL's latest review of family involvement literature, *The School-Family Connection: Looking at the Larger Picture, A Review of Current Literature* surveys thirty research reports and meta-analyses published between 2005 and 2008. These studies explore a wide range of family involvement programs, challenges, needs, strategies, and contexts—ways to *get out of the box* and increase school-family connections. This review of the literature provides greater clarity about creating partnerships among schools, families, and community groups. Most importantly, these studies provide insight into the *how* and *why* of programs adopting contextually driven approaches rather than limiting efforts to those activities that are convenient to school staff, time, and facilities. The document contains 1) an overview of new literature, 2) a matrix of the trends across the studies, 3) an explanation of the types of research studies included in the review, and 4) detailed descriptions of each of the included reports.

[\*Readiness: School, Family, and Community Connections\*](#) (PDF file: 940K) The fourth research synthesis focusing on family and community connections with schools, *Readiness: School, Family, and Community Connections* describes 48 research studies on the contextual factors associated with children's readiness. In particular, this synthesis explores children's abilities as they make the transition to kindergarten, factors associated with these abilities, and implications of these factors on children's later success. It also discusses the effectiveness of a variety of early childhood or preschool interventions that include a family or community focus.

[Print copies are available](#) from the SEDL Store.

[\*Diversity: School, Family, and Community Connections\*](#) (PDF file: 840K) is the third in a series of reports to help local school, community, and family leaders obtain useful research-based information about key educational issues. This synthesis focuses specifically on three categories: race or ethnicity, culture (including

language), and socioeconomic status. The report also explores barriers to involvement for minority and low-income families, strategies that have been used to address those barriers, and recommendations that local educational leaders can adapt to address their specific needs. It is based on a review of over 64 studies.

[Print copies are available](#) from the SEDL Store.

[\*A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement\*](#) (PDF file: 1.2 MB)

This review of the research examines the growing evidence that family and community connections with schools make a difference in student success. It is a synthesis of 51 studies about the impact of family and community involvement on student achievement, and effective strategies to connect schools, families and community. This publication is the second in the series of annual research syntheses by SEDL's National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, and the fourth in the series of *Evidence* publications authored or co-authored by Anne T. Henderson. [Print copies are available](#) from the SEDL Store.

[\*A New Wave of Evidence Key Findings\*](#) (PDF file: 28k)

This short handout lists the eight key findings from *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement*. It cites specific studies supporting each key finding, and provides a full reference list for those studies.

[\*A New Wave of Evidence Family and Community Engagement Self-Assessment\*](#) (PDF file: 12k)

Developed by Dr. Karen Mapp, co-author of *A New Wave of Evidence* and Lecturer in Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, this simple tool can help you assess where your school or school district is in relation to the report's recommendations. It is designed to be used as a supplement to presentations or discussions about *A New Wave of Evidence*.

[\*Emerging Issues in School, Family, & Community Connections\*](#)(PDF file: 531K) is the first in a series of research syntheses that will examine key issues in the field of family and community connections with schools. The issues highlighted in this synthesis represent critical

areas of work in family and community connections with schools where clarification, agreement, and further development are needed, as well as promising new directions that are emerging. It is based on a review of over 160 publications. You may also view this document in [HTML format](#). [Print copies are available](#) from the SEDL Store.

**Ways Families and Communities  
Can Help Children Succeed in Our Schools**

- ◆ Join the School Improvement Team
- ◆ Talk to your child about homework
- ◆ Display student artwork at your workplace
- ◆ Talk with your child about school activities
- ◆ Let your school know you are available to help
- ◆ Organize a parent workshop
- ◆ Take your child to the library
- ◆ Establish daily “quiet time” at home for study
- ◆ Praise your child’s efforts
- ◆ Participate in educational task forces and advisory councils
- ◆ Offer your conference room for teacher meetings or retreats
- ◆ Adopt a school
- ◆ Conduct mock interviews to help students experience the work environment
- ◆ Attend school programs
- ◆ Accompany students on field trips or other extracurricular activities
- ◆ Attend school committee meetings
- ◆ Participate in your child’s school PTO or PTA