

## Parent Involvement

### What's Inside...

- ◆ The most important role
- ◆ Effective partnerships
- ◆ Impact on students

In this complex world, it takes more than a good school to educate children. And it takes more than a good home. It takes these two major educational institutions working together.



### Why Get Involved?

When parents are involved in their child's education, we see:

- \* Higher grades & test scores
- \* Better attitude & behavior
- \* Better school attendance
- \* More homework completion
- \* Less chance of special education placement
- \* Greater likelihood of high school graduation
- \* Better chance of enrolling in postsecondary education
- \* Increased self-esteem, motivation and adult success

All parents want their children to become successful, caring adults. Similarly, many parents want to be involved with their child's education. Sometimes, however, they don't know where to start, when to find the time, or how to go about making positive connections with the school.

Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) believes that for children and youth to be successful from birth through adolescence, there must be an array of learning supports around them. These learning supports include families, early childhood programs, schools, out-of-school time programs and activities, higher education, health and social service agencies, businesses, libraries, museums, and other community-based institutions. These are components that lead to academic and personnel success.

### Ways to participate in your preschool and school-age program:

- **Volunteer in the classroom**—Moms and dads (and other family members) who assist at preschool/school have the pleasure of seeing firsthand all the fun, growing and learning that goes on.
- **Talk positively to your child** about teachers, counselors and the benefits of an education.
- **Encourage reading, writing** through trips to the library, writing notes to family members, keep books, magazines and newspapers in your home, suggest your child keep a journal, read with and to your child from infancy on.
- **Home environment**—you can assist at home by ensuring your child is rested, has a good breakfast, arrives to school on time. Assist your child in homework completion by providing a space and structured setting for them. Limit TV time, ask what they did at school, praise and encourage your child and “Celebrate your child's success.”
- **Keep a notebook**—Take notes on your child's development and record special anecdotes the way teachers often do. Share your notes with your child's teacher informally and during parent-teacher conferences. Your notebook will help you see your preschooler's many accomplishments throughout the year!
- **Try a new way of recycling**—Teachers can almost always use discarded material such as plastic containers, spools, paper towel tubes, old greeting cards, wrapping paper, dress-up clothes and even used small appliances.
- **Stay in touch**—Check in with your teacher often to find out what she needs, attend open house.



In addition to these suggestions, many preschools want or even require parents to participate in occasional clean-up days, serve on advisory boards, and so on. Whatever ways you choose, try to make time to get involved.

SOURCE: Ellen Booth Church

## Communication is the foundation of effective partnerships

Parents (or other responsible family members) and schools should communicate regularly and clearly about information important to student success. Schools should inform families about standards and how they relate to the curriculum, learning objectives, methods of assessment, school programs, discipline codes, and student progress. Sharing information can be accomplished through the usual means of newsletters, handbooks, parent-teacher conferences, open houses, as well as home visits, homework "hot lines," the Internet, e-mail, and voice mail. Translations should be made available, if needed, to ensure non-English speaking parents are fully informed. Personal contact, whether by telephone or in person, is the best way to promote two-way communication.



### Schools should create an environment that welcomes participation

Signs that greet families warmly at the school door, the central office, and the classroom should be in the languages spoken by the community. A school-based family resource center providing information, links to social services, and opportunities for informal meetings with staff and other families also contributes to a family-friendly atmosphere.

### Educators can guide families in parent-child activities

Teachers can suggest parent-child activities that are coordinated with the curriculum. Other learning activities may include interactive homework, skill practice, enrichment games, or other activities that support their education. Educators also play an important role informing families about state standards and school expectations for student learning.

### Schools can provide cultural education for staff and parents

Schools should provide professional development opportunities for teachers and other staff in the cultural and community values and practices that are common to their students and their families. Strengthening the school-family partnership with professional development for all school staff as well as parents and other family members is an essential investment.

SOURCE: [www.ncpie.org](http://www.ncpie.org)



**School-age children spend 70% of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside of school.**

### Partnerships just don't happen

It is up to the teacher to let parents know about the program's philosophy and how a partnership can develop between them. It will help them know what to expect and how important a role they play in making childcare/preschool a positive experience for their children.

## “Show me how this helps teachers teach and children learn.”

**Parental involvement lifts teacher morale.** Schools and teachers benefit from parental involvement because involved parents develop greater appreciation for the challenges that teachers face in the classroom. Teacher morale is improved. Communication between home and school helps a teacher to know a student better, which in turn allows the teacher to teach the student more effectively. Communication also helps to dispel any mistrust or misperceptions that may exist between teachers and parents.

### Impact on Students

**Parents should stay involved in their children's education from preschool through high school.**

Parental involvement can make a positive difference at all age levels. Parental involvement tends to be the greatest with young children and tends to taper off as children get older. Studies have shown, however, that involvement of parents of middle and high school students is equally important. In high school, for example, a parent's encouragement can influence whether a child stays in school or drops out. Similarly, a child may consider going to college more seriously when parents show interest in the child's academic achievements and talk with the child about the benefits of a college education.

**Training helps parents of disadvantaged children get involved.**

Parents of minority or low-income children are less likely to be involved in their children's education than parents of non-disadvantaged children. If they receive adequate training and encouragement, however, parents of minority or low-income children can be just as effective as other parents in contributing to their children's academic success. One of the purposes of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is to get parents of under-achieving children involved in their education. Parent involvement for some students can significantly impact the need or not for special education services.

**Parental involvement in a child's education is an advantage that money cannot buy.**

All parents, regardless of economic status, race, or primary language, can do simple things like asking a child about school or attending a parent-teacher meeting. Being involved in your child's education not only helps your child to achieve more academically, but it also lifts teacher morale and provides you with the satisfaction of making a difference in your child's education.

<i>National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs</i>	
Standard I	Communicating—Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
Standard II	Parenting—Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
Standard III	Student learning—Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
Standard IV	Volunteering—Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
Standard V	School decision making and advocacy—parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
Standard VI	Collaborating with community—Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

SOURCE: National Parent Teacher Association

**Henderson and Mapp (2002) suggest families who are engaged and involved in the preschool years maintain that level of involvement throughout their child's educational life.**

#### SOURCES

*Get Involved at Your Preschool* by Ellen Booth Church—<http://www.greatschools.net>  
 Harvard Family Research Project, *Family Involvement Makes A Difference*, Spring 2006—  
<http://www.hfrp.org>  
 National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education—<http://www.ncpie.org/>  
 National Parent Teacher Association Parent/Family Involvement—<http://www.pta.org/1216.htm>  
*A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement* by Anne T. Henderson & Karen L. Mapp—<http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>  
*Parental Involvement is Key to Student Success* by Grace Chen—<http://www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/12>





SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY  
EARLY CHILDHOOD DIRECTION CENTER  
805 S. CROUSE AVENUE  
SYRACUSE, NY 13244-2280

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Mid-State Central  
Early Childhood Direction Center  
Syracuse University  
805 S. Crouse Avenue  
Syracuse, NY 13244-2280

Phone:  
315-443-4444  
1-800-962-5488

Fax:  
315-443-4338

E-mail: [ecdc@syr.edu](mailto:ecdc@syr.edu)

<http://ecdc.syr.edu>

**WE KNOW WHERE TO LOOK FOR ANSWERS.**



### Who We Are

The Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) is a regional technical assistance center for the State Education Department providing information, referral and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with young children birth to five. We are located at Syracuse University's Center on Human Policy.

**ECDC services are  
free and confidential.**

### ECDC Staff

Tracey Menapace, Director  
Maria Gill, Education Coordinator  
Glenda Criss-Forshey, Community  
Outreach Coordinator  
Cyndy Colavita, Office Coordinator  
Rachael Zubal-Ruggieri, Coordinator of  
Computer and Technical Applications

### Workshops of Interest

The ECDC can provide information and workshops on a variety of topics tailored to the interests and needs of parents and early childhood professionals. Resources are available on such topics as general child development, developmental issues for children with special needs, coping strategies, and specific disabilities.

**Workshops include:**

- **Including All Kids**
- **Making Parent Partnerships**
- **Early Childhood Development: The Meaning of Red Flags**
- **What Are Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education?**
- **Transitioning from EI to CPSE**
- **Transitioning CPSE to CSE**
- **Understanding IDEA Regulations and Parent Rights**