



# Positively Involving Parents in Their Child's Education

**Presented by the Special Education District of Lake County:**  
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# Research

**“When schools and families work together, a partnership of support for children develops. Education becomes a shared venture, characterized by mutual respect and trust in which the importance and influence of each partner is recognized. Although children, families, teachers, and schools benefit individually, their partnerships enhance the entire process of education.”**

**Rebecca Crawford Burns “Parent Involvement: Promises, Problems, and Solutions”**

# Agenda



- **Research**
- **Parent Involvement—  
Expectations and Barriers**
- **Family-School Partnerships  
Benefits and Strategies**



# RESEARCH



# Research Sources

- **FINE: Family Involvement Network of Educators, Harvard Family Research Project, Harvard Graduate School of Education**
- **Center for Social Organization of Schools , John Hopkins University**
- **National Network of Partnership Schools, John Hopkins University**
- **National Center of Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE)**



# The Need

- **Navigating the system**
- **Training of school staff**
- **Met-Life study**



# Keys to Program Success

- **Strength-based programming**
- **Meeting the needs of parents**
- **Individualized programming**
- **Parent orientation and training**
- **Training of school personnel**
- **Internal support**
- **Parents as decision-makers**



# Program Implementation

- **Random acts vs. systematic, integrated, sustainable framework of family engagement**
- **Shared responsibility**
- **Continuous from ECH – Grade 12**
- **Across all settings where students learn**

**Weiss, December 2010**



# Outcomes

**Family engagement relates directly to a range of benefits for students:**

- **Improved school readiness**
- **Higher achievement**
- **Better social skills**
- **Increased likelihood of high school graduation**

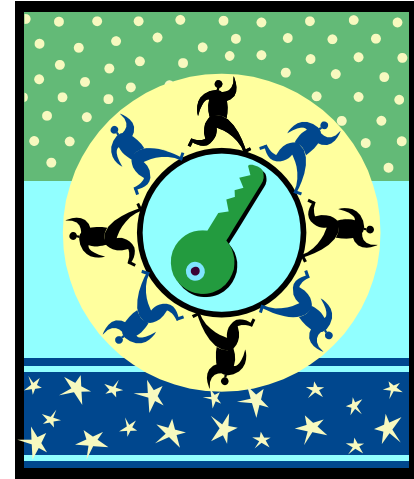


**Harvard Family Research Project**

The Parent Mentor Project  
Special Education District of Lake County, IL

# Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement

1. Parenting
2. Communicating
3. Volunteering
4. Learning at home
5. Decision making
6. Collaborating with the community



Epstein, et. al. 2002. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.



# Parent Involvement: Expectations & Barriers

# The Continuum of Education

## Family – School Partnership

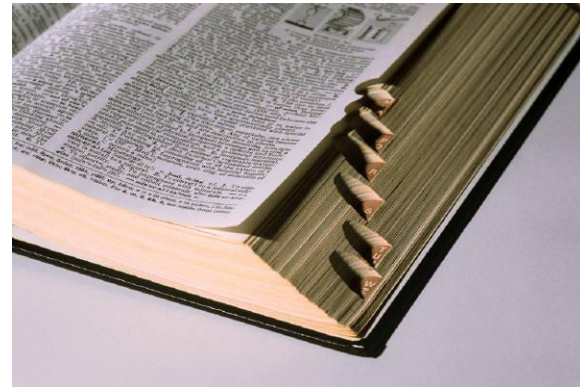


General Education  
Classroom

Response to  
Intervention

Special Education  
Services

# Involve



“ . . . to *engage* as a participant . . .  
to oblige to take part . . . to occupy absorbingly  
. . . to *commit emotionally* . . . ”

Source: *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*

# Legal Expectations: No Child Left Behind Act

## NCLB defines parental involvement as:

“the participation of parents in **regular, two-way, and meaningful** communication involving student academic learning and other school activities” (Sec. 9101[32]).







# NCLB Provisions

## Section 1118 Parental Involvement (highlights of LEA guidelines):

- *Jointly develop with parents a shared responsibility for improved student achievement.*
- Provide ways the partnership will provide parents supporting student learning, such as learning at home, volunteering, and *participating in decision-making.*
- Provide *access to staff*, opportunities to participate in their child's class, and observations of classroom activities.
- *Educate educators, with the assistance of parents*, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners.
- Provide such *other reasonable support* for parental involvement activities under this section as parents request.

# Legal Expectations: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004

**IDEA Part A, 20 U.S.C. §1400 (c)(5)(B) states that education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by . . . .**

**“strengthening the role and responsibility of parents ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home...”**



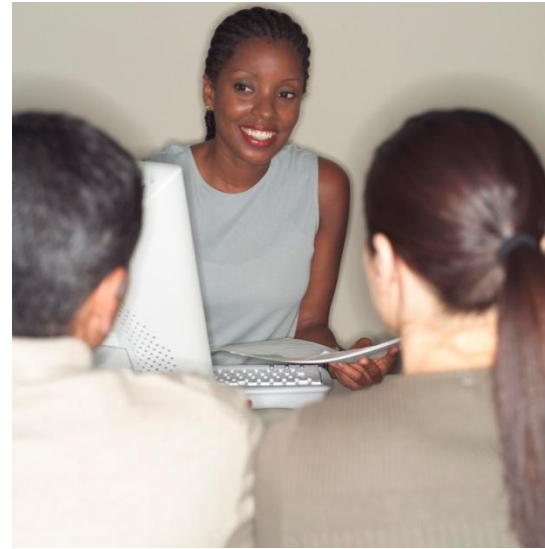




# Parent & Educator Expectations

- **Prior experience**
- **Obligation**
- **Concept of learning/education**
- **Roles**
- **Activities**

# Coming to the Table



## Parents:

- Feel they are walking into a “meeting in progress”
- Frequently attend meetings alone; feel isolated and intimidated
- Are often bombarded with advice; given conflicting information

## Educators:

- Have had years of training
- Have knowledge of education curriculum
- Have experience participating in numerous meetings
- Often have a game plan before a meeting

# Barriers to a Collaborative Partnership

## Families

- Lack of knowledge; intimidation
- Language and cultural differences; feelings of inadequacy
- Lack of responsiveness to parental needs
- Transportation issues; child care issues

## Educators

- Lack of funding for family outreach programs
- Lack of training on how to maintain a family partnership
- Fear of conflict with families
- Doubts about the ability of families to address schooling concerns

## Both

- Limited time for communication/meaningful dialogue; building trust
- Lack of a routine communication system
- Ownership; empathy
- Past negative experiences





# Poverty

- **Class/income**
- **Immigration status**
- **Family dynamics**
- **Educational achievement**
- **Culture of poverty—myth and reality**



# Cultural Diversity/Competency

- **Family values**
- **Extended family**
- **Attitude towards authority**
- **Communication styles**
- **Punctuality**
- **Personal space**
- **Childcare**



# Family-School Partnerships: Benefits and Strategies

# Benefits of a Collaborative Partnership



## Students

- Unified message
- Improved student achievement
- Higher graduation rates; higher post-secondary enrollments
- Improved self-confidence/self-esteem

## Parents

- Value of education
- Greater knowledge of school programs and systems
- Knowledge of how to be more supportive to children
- School understands individual child, family, and culture
- Greater empowerment

## Educators

- Greater teaching effectiveness
- Increased ability to understand families
- Greater sense of community
- More support, resources to meet student needs

## Communities

- Greater impact of services
- Greater sense of community



# Empower Parents



- **Focus on strengths and needs of student and family**
- **Model good communication**
- **Create systems change to include all staff and all parents**



# Examples of Epstein's Six Keys of Involvement

- **Parenting (parenting skills, education, and resources)**
- **Communicating (report card pickup, communication folders)**
- **Volunteering (survey for talents, communication trees)**

Epstein, et. al. 2002. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.



# Examples of Epstein's Six Keys of Involvement



- **Learning at home (home activities, parent learning opportunities)**
- **Decision making (develop parent leaders, encourage committee participation)**
- **Collaborating with the community (services to community, develop community partners)**

Epstein, et. al. 2002. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

# The Parent Mentor Project: Supporting Families with Peers

- Promote positive relationships between parents and educators through communication, understanding, and collaboration
- Liaison—not advocate
- Confidential parent-initiated service
- Services
  - ✓ Sounding board
  - ✓ Resources
  - ✓ Training for parents and professionals
  - ✓ Special education technical assistance
  - ✓ Preparation for and/or attendance at IEP meetings
- Funded through an Illinois State Board of Education grant with matching funds provided by SEDOL.



A vertical decorative bar on the left side of the slide, featuring a colorful, abstract pattern of green, blue, and purple. At the top of this bar is a small, colorful triangle pointing to the right, with a gradient from blue to purple.

“They may forget what you said,  
but they will never forget how  
you made them feel.”

Carl W. Buechner



# References & Resources

## Center on Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE)

- [www.directionservice.org/cadre](http://www.directionservice.org/cadre)

## Center for Social Organization of Schools; John Hopkins University

- [web.jhu.edu/CSOS](http://web.jhu.edu/CSOS)

## Center on School, Family & Community Partnerships, Joyce Epstein/Director; John Hopkins University

- [www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm)

## FINE: Family Involvement Network of Educators, Harvard Family Research Project, Harvard Graduate School of Education

- [www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/fine-family-involvement-network-of-educators](http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/fine-family-involvement-network-of-educators)

## IDEA Partnership

- [www.ideapartnership.org](http://www.ideapartnership.org)

## National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPiE)

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

## National PTA – Parent Involvement

- [www.pta.org/topic\\_parent\\_involvement.asp](http://www.pta.org/topic_parent_involvement.asp)

## Project Appleseed

- [www.projectappleseed.org](http://www.projectappleseed.org)



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# QUESTIONS?

Before leaving, please complete the course evaluation provided.

Your comments and suggestions are important to us

Thank you!

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