

Creating Real Family Engagement

SPAC Conference 2013

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PA Title I State Parent Advisory Council (SPAC)

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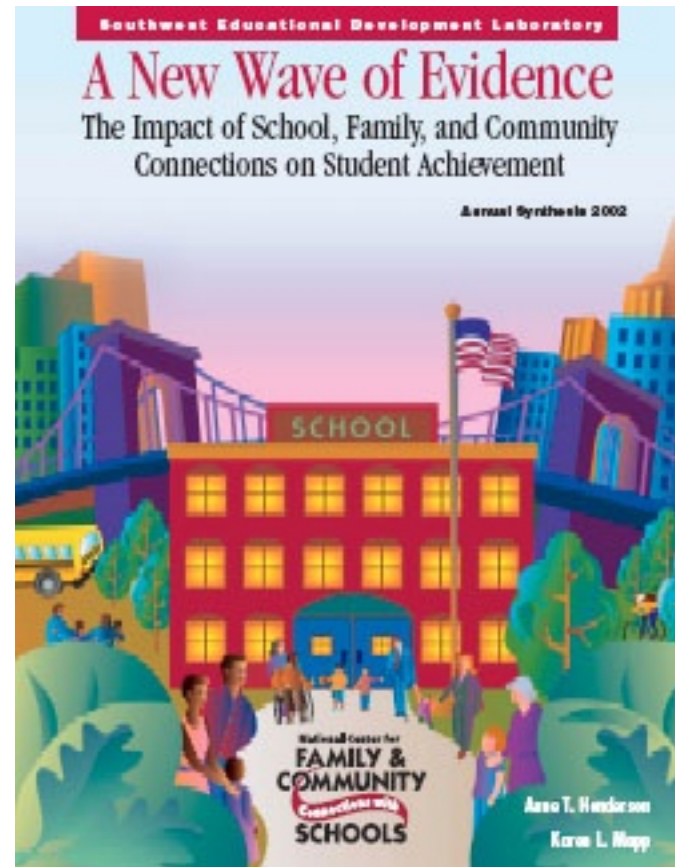
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Goals

- Why is engaging families important?
- What are the characteristics of effective family involvement programs?
- How do these link to processes, techniques and strategies presented in *101 Ways to Create REAL Family Engagement?*

Why engage families?

School, family and community connections have a powerful impact on student achievement



www.seld.org/connections/research-syntheses.html

If Parents are Involved, Students from All Backgrounds Tend To:

- **Have a high sense of self-worth and self-esteem**
- **Adapt well to school and attend regularly**
- **Have better social skills and behavior**
- **Earn higher grades and test scores**
- **Graduate and go on to higher education**
- **Are more likely to have high paying jobs**

Link Involvement to Learning

Parent and community involvement that is **designed to improve student learning** has a greater effect on achievement.



Link to Learning: Ask How Will This:

- **Promote high standards for student work?**
- **Support learning at home?**
- **Promote discussion about improving student progress?**
- **Help families see good teaching?**
- **Help parents know what their children are learning and doing in class?**

Family Involvement at Home



Programs and activities that help families support their children's learning at home are linked to higher student achievement.

PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

Standard 1: Welcoming All Families into the School Community

Standard 2: Communicating Effectively

Standard 3: Supporting Student Success

Standard 4: Speaking Up for Every Child

Standard 5: Sharing Power

Standard 6: Collaborating with Community

ESEA*/NCLB* has Parent Involvement Requirements for Districts and Schools

- There are Parent Involvement Requirements at Every Level:
 - Every District in the state that receives Title I money has a parent involvement policy at both the district and at each Title I school.
 - Every Title I school also has a Parent/School Compact.
- Districts must demonstrate both “compliance” and “effective practices”.

However, not every school and school district can claim that they have great parent involvement.

WHY??

*ESEA = Elementary and Secondary Education Act

*NCLB = No Child Left Behind

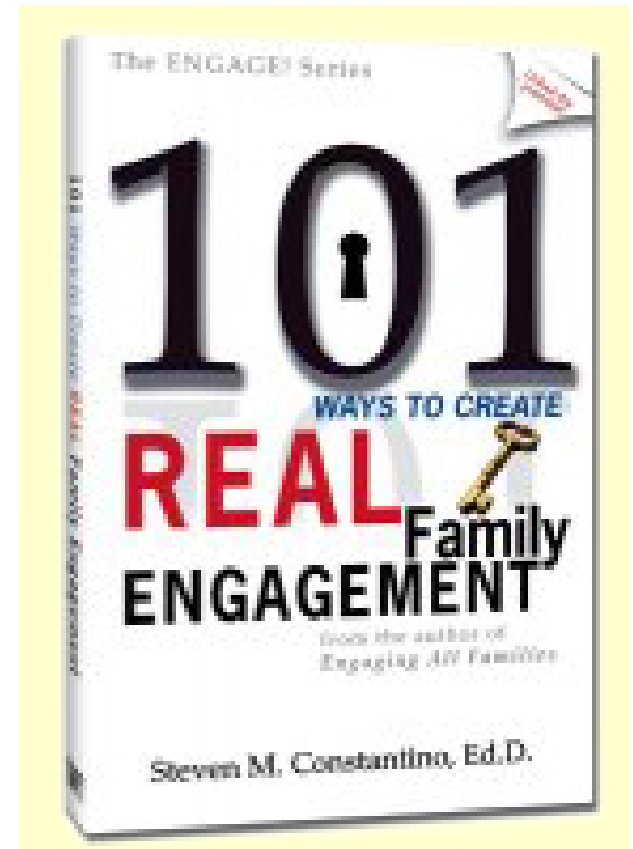
“Strategies alone will not promote real family engagement.”

101 Ways To Create REAL Family Engagement

Steven M. Constantino, Ed.D.

ENGAGE! Press, 2008

www.engagepress.com/books.html



Shaping School Culture to Engage All Families

Barriers to Family Engagement

- Fear
- Isolation
- Assumptions
- Values
- Attitudes

“To create true family engagement, we must examine and remove all of these barriers between the teacher and the families of students.”

Underlying Assumptions

Statement

- “I do not allow parents to visit my classroom.”
- “As principal, I will decide which parents will be on our school planning team.”
- “If parents would read what we send them, we would not have communication problems.”
- “If the parents want to talk to me, they will schedule a conference.”
- “The problem is the poor attitudes and behaviors that children come to school with these days.”

Assumption

- *Parents are judging me.
Parents are trouble.*
- *I am the professional. I need to control the situation.*
- *I have told them everything they need to know. I do not need their input.*
- *It is lack of effort on the parents' part.*
- *Poor parenting is the cause.
What happened to the good old days?*

Family Engagement Culture Quiz

Answer yes or no to the following questions:

- Are all families treated with respect by everyone at your school?
- Are all families seen as a potential source of valuable expertise?
- Do all staff take personal responsibility to engage families?
- Do all staff believe that student performance can be improved with family engagement?
- Is active family engagement met with enthusiasm by the entire staff?

Developing Staff to Engage All Families

- Provide family engagement training for all employees. (p. 40)
- Teach staff the concept of a warm transfer. (p. 68)
- Families can be translators of their own culture and can be invited to teach school staff. (p. 98)
- Bilingual staff can serve as cultural staff development trainers. (p.94)
- Devote professional development time and resources to helping teachers effectively communicate with families. (p. 103)
- How to evaluate effectiveness?
 - Service Response Cards (p. 42)
 - Select 2 sign-in sheet names and phone for feedback (p. 62)

The 4 Domains of Family Engagement

1. A welcoming environment for families
2. Effective two-way communication
3. The degree of engagement
4. School support for home learning

Creating a Welcoming Environment

- Designated “family” parking area (p. 36)
- “Spruce up” exterior (p. 31)
- Informational and directional signs in all languages (p. 35)
 - Welcome and encourage return (p. 65)
 - “You Are Here” signs (p. 61)
 - Turn negative signs into positive ones (p. 63)
- Map of building with personnel photos (p. 58)
- “Guest” instead of visitor badges (p. 43)
- Promote school’s “family friendly” priorities (p. 51)
- School marquee includes call-to-action and/or connects to learning (p. 55)

Healthy Two-Way Communication

- Survey to determine best communication method (p. 74-75)
 - Successful communication includes verification
- Build relationships through informal channels (p. 76)
- Personal calls to invite or confirm attendance (p. 92)
- Student autobiography project (p. 99)
- Look for staff, parent or community native speaker for written and spoken languages and dialects (p. 84 and 94)

PTA Standard 2

School Support for Home Learning

- Video or audio tape workshops for families who could not attend (p.182)
- Tutoring and homework help in addition to childcare at meetings (p. 121)
- Share the length of homework assignments (p. 177)
 - Get feedback on the actual amount of time needed to complete it
- Include information on upcoming lessons and learning in the weekly folder (p. 175)
- Parent Involvement Bus (p. 85)

And the Hits Just Keep on Coming

- Promote staff development sessions to all families
(p. 159)
PTA Standard 3
- Getting out into neighborhoods and welcoming families to school (p.122)
 - Staff “field trip” to create a dialogue and better understanding (p. 141)
PTA Standard 2
- Low attendance means parent/family needs have not been met (p.126)
PTA Standard 2 and 3
- Creating meaningful policies, goals and action plans together (p. 111)
PTA Standard 5

Questions

