

# A Parent's Guide School Involvement

*This guide was developed to help parents and communities become more involved in their children's education.*

## **Why do schools need parent and community support?**

**T**hirty years of research clearly shows that parent and community involvement in schools improves student achievement. To reach their potential, students need parents and the community to take an active role in their education. Schools are working hard to provide a high quality education for every child. But they can't do it alone. Parent and community involvement is critical to creating great schools.

## **What can you do to be involved?**

**T**here are many ways parents, other adults who play an important role in a child's life and community groups can be involved with children's education at home, at school and in the community.

## **What can you do at school?**

**A**s a parent or adult who plays an important role in the life of a child, your involvement in your child's education at school and at home shows your child that you value education. Teachers can see that you care about your child's learning. You can provide teachers with the most reliable source of information about your child. The partnership between you and your child's teacher is powerful. Here are some ways you can be involved in your child's education each year at school:

- Meet the teacher. Tell her about your child's interests and hobbies. Let her know how and when it is best to reach you. Ask her how you can support your child's learning at home.
- Make a date with the teacher to visit your child's classroom. Are the kids busy learning, exploring and asking questions? Does the teacher draw them in?
- Go to parent-teacher conferences. If the school doesn't have them, meet with your child's teachers. Ask how your child is doing and review his work.
- Join the PTA or other parent group. Go to school events like back-to-school night. See how you can help the school reach its goals.
- Stay up-to-date on school policies, schedules and rules. Ask about opportunities to participate in the development of school policies.

- Make sure that your child is learning what she needs to know to meet the standards set for her grade level.
- Find a teacher or counselor you feel comfortable talking to about your child. Talk about the courses she should take to reach her goals. Do they match what the standards say she should be learning? Will they prepare her for college and a career?
- Check your school's Web site regularly.
- Contact your child's teacher or counselor if you have any concerns about what's going on with your child at school.

## **How can your community be involved in your child's school?**

**N**o family or school is a world unto itself. The community in which the family and the school exists exerts an enormous influence on the quality of education your children receive. Communities care about the quality of their schools. Here are some ways communities, parents and teachers can work together to provide a high quality education to all of their children:

- Establish school-business partnerships. Schools and businesses can work together to prepare students for further education and for life as productive members of their communities.
- Employers can grant parents leave to attend school meetings, conferences or to volunteer at school.
- Engage in activities to better meet the needs of children and their families. For example, the county health department can schedule regular visits to the school health clinic. Social service workers can meet with school counselors. After-school program providers can operate homework clubs utilizing text books and other materials provided by the school.
- Establish and operate a mentoring program for "at risk" students through the involvement of volunteers from community, civic and religious organizations, local businesses or the Chamber of Commerce.
- Check out public libraries, which are strong educational partners. They can sponsor story hours for

preschoolers and their parents, special programs that motivate children to read or specialized evening topics of interest to parents.

- Ask businesses, PTAs, churches and civic organizations to provide valuable services for schools. Many are excellent sources of volunteers, and many sponsor evening or afterschool tutoring programs for students who need extra help, organize drives to collect school supplies for needy students and raise funds for scholarships.
- Recommend that schools in your community remain open during the evening and on weekends to allow parents and neighbors to use the library, play ground, computers and other equipment. Let local groups hold their meetings and special events at the school.
- Recruit retirees to volunteer in the schools and to share their experiences and expertise on relevant topics. Retirees have much to contribute to schools.

For more information on parent and community involvement in schools:

National PTA, 800.307.4782 or [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

Center for Law and Education, 202.986.3000 or <http://www.cleweb.org>

American Association of School Administrators, 203.528.0070 or <http://www.aasa.org>

Family School Community Partnership Program, External Partnerships and Advocacy, National Education Association, 202.822.7446 or <http://www.nea.org>

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, 202.289.6790 or <http://www.ncpie.org>

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