

PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community

Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Standard 2: Communicating effectively

Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Standard 3: Supporting student success

Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Standard 4: Speaking up for every child

Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Standard 5: Sharing power

Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Standard 6: Collaborating with community

Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Promoting Family Engagement

Source: Georgia PTA, <http://georgiapta.org/resources-parent-involvement.html>

In the 2002 research review *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp conclude that there is a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and student success, regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or parents' level of education. To put it another way, when families are involved in their children's learning both at home and at school, their children do better in school. The report also points to specific types of involvement as being especially beneficial to children's academic success.

Finding 1: Involvement programs that link to learning improve student achievement. It's simple: The more parent and community involvement activities focus on improving student learning, the more student learning improves. Learning-focused involvement activities may include:

- Family nights on math or literacy.
- Family-teacher conferences that involve students.
- Family workshops on planning for college.

Finding 2: Speaking up for children protects and promotes their success.

Children whose parents are advocates for them at school are more confident at school and take on and achieve more. The more families advocate for their children and support their children's progress, the longer their children stay in school and the better their children do. Families should:

- Become knowledgeable about the operations of schools and the laws that govern those operations.
- Be confident about their ability to work with schools.
- Expect only the best from their children and for their children.
- Join PTA.

Finding 3: All families can contribute to their children's success. Family involvement improves student success, regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or parents' level of education. For involvement to happen, however, principals, teachers, and parents themselves must believe that all parents can contribute to their children's success in school. Parents can promote their children's academic success by:

- Teaching their children the importance of education.
- Finding out what their children are expected to know and to be able to do and reinforcing lessons at home.
- Sending their children to school ready to learn every day.
- Principals and teachers must support parent involvement by
- Making parent involvement a priority.
- Recognizing and removing barriers to parent involvement.
- Sharing decision-making power with parents and community members.
- Working to understand class and cultural differences.

Finding 4: Community organizing gets results. Engaging community members, businesses, and organizations as partners in children's education can improve the learning community in many ways. For example, community partners may be able to:

- Provide expanded learning opportunities.
- Build broad-based support for increased school funding.
- Provide quality after-school programs.

The findings presented by Henderson and Mapp provide a framework for strengthening parent/family involvement programs. PTA, working with leading experts on parent involvement and school-community partnerships, has updated its National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs to reflect recent research and improve parent and community involvement practices. The updated National Standards shift the focus from what schools should do to involve parents to what parents, schools, and communities can do together to support student success. **To reflect this change, the standards have been renamed the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships.**