

## How Closely Is your School's Parent Involvement Program Linked to Student Learning?

This checklist is taken from *Beyond the Bake Sale—The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships* (2006) by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (pages 108-111).

**Directions:** As a team, review and rate the following items, then complete the reflection questions at the end of the survey to help you design a plan for improving the linking parent involvement with student learning.

Learning What Students are Doing in Class		Check one for each question			
1. Student work is posted in school hallways and in public places in the community and is rotated often.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
2. Exhibits of student work show how to recognize high-level work at different grade levels. The assignments are challenging and the student work is not all the same.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
3. Families can regularly observe in the classroom and/or see teaching demonstrations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
4. At parent-teacher conferences, students are present and discuss the quality of their work.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
Informative School Communications		Check one for each question			
5. Articles in the school newsletter and on the Web site discuss what students are doing in class and include tips on helping at home.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
6. A regular feature describes interesting approaches that teachers are using in class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
7. The articles use data about the school, such as attendance rates and test results, and describe how the school is working to make improvements.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
8. The school offers regular workshops and other information sessions that help families understand how children learn and are being taught. The topics are suggested by families.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
9. Families regularly receive information and materials to help their children at home.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
Using Student Achievement Data to Design Programs		Check one for each question			
10. Programs and activities for families are focused on skills and subjects that students need to strengthen.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
11. Student achievement data are shared with families in ways that solicit their ideas about how to improve achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
12. School staff and parents collaborate to collect other data about learning opportunities for students, such as community programs and resources.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
Collaborating with Community Learning Programs		Check one for each question			
13. School staff collaborate with community-based after-school programs and exchange ideas and information with program staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
14. School shares curriculum, textbooks, assignments, and learning materials with community after-school programs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	
15. After-school program staff can attend professional development at school. Staff development is also open to parents.	<input type="checkbox"/> Already doing this	<input type="checkbox"/> Could do this easily	<input type="checkbox"/> This will take time	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be hard	



*Use the following questions to reflect on the answers from your checklist*

In which areas are you doing well?

Which areas need more work?

How are parents and the parent organization involved in linking family involvement activities and programs to improving student achievement?

What are your concerns?

What steps could you take to help your programs be better linked to learning?

*Right now?*

*Over the long term?*

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## Including Every Parent

*Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School  
Dorchester, Massachusetts*

### Student Age Group Targeted

Elementary

### Stakeholders Involved

Parents and families of all students

#### Involvement Standards Addressed

- ✓ Student Learning
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Responsibility
- ✓ School Decision Making and Advocacy
- ✓ Community Collaboration
- ✓ Educator/Staff Development

### Activity/Program Description

#### Parents Are Present:

1. For the Principal: Genuinely welcome all parents. Focus on their positive contributions to their children's success. Acknowledge and affirm all levels of participation. Have visitation days for prospective students and parents. Be accessible and available to parents. Be a familiar face in the classroom.
2. Family Outreach Program: An all-parent outreach team welcomes new families through home visits. The team gives out books and information about the school, answers questions and establishes initial parent-to-parent relationships.
3. Family Center: Dedicate a space and time where families and children will always be welcome. Extend invitations. Provide food and drink. Talk about children, school, projects and ideas. Brainstorm ways that parents can contribute. Invite guests with expertise.

#### Parents Are Participating:

1. Parent Volunteers: Survey teachers for ways parents can contribute to classrooms, and survey parents for skills, willingness and time to participate. Make assembled data available to all teachers and families in a parent-volunteer binder. Ask parents to volunteer for simple, specific and necessary tasks. Follow up and celebrate their contributions. Keep lines of communication open.
2. School Newsletter: Parents communicate with parents about school and community events by organizing, writing, editing and publishing a newsletter about the school community.
3. Performing Arts: Parents organize, direct and participate in one to several productions each year. They encourage and recruit school and family talent, and they make videos of the performances available to all families.

Parents Are Partners:

1. Home Reading Program: Parents and teachers create a home reading contract to ensure younger students will read or be read to at home, at least fifteen minutes per night, four nights per week. The program is introduced and promoted through the Family Outreach Program and is supported and reinforced within the classroom. We track reading data, and reward children and parent participation. With difficult cases we try to be creatively persistently affirming. We aim for 100% participation.
2. The Book Swap: Parent volunteers build a book collection through donations and inexpensive purchases. Swaps are scheduled for children to exchange books. We believe in always being generous with books and children, and do not require that children give a book to get one.
3. After School Program: Survey parents about after school needs/ideas, such as homework, sports and activity clubs. Develop a plan and a budget. Raise funds, hire staff or recruit volunteers. Always evaluate.
4. Family Math Night: Parent volunteers and teachers oversee a variety of math games for students and families to play. With food and a focus on including everyone, this is an entertaining and community-building event.

Parents Are Empowered:

1. School Governance Council: Regularly invite any and all parents to attend meetings, and welcome their participation. Advertise meetings and agendas. Provide food, and make child care available. Set and stick to clear agendas. Welcome multiple perspectives. Give parents a voice.
2. Parent-Initiated Projects: How can we empower parents as leaders? Effectively involving parents is everyone's job, but Parent empowerment begins in the Principal's office. Make the parent-volunteer binder an organizing centerpiece. Look for and make funding available to support volunteer projects. Support parent-to-parent communication. Accommodate and affirm all parents.

**Outcomes/Effectiveness**

Including Every Parent grew from a recognition that parent involvement in the life of the school leads to greater academic and emotional success and well being for the children. Parents are everywhere engaged and involved in a wide variety of ways to support teaching and learning at the school. They volunteer at the front desk, organize the family center and the book swap, direct rehearsals for the talent show in the gymnasium, put out the school newsletter, volunteer and substitute teach in the classroom, and the list goes on. Today the Patrick O'Hearn is well known as an exemplary elementary school, consistently placing among Boston's top schools on standardized tests. In and out of school, our students shine. Under Boston's Controlled Choice Assignment Plan, so many parents rank the O'Hearn as their first choice that many families end up on a long waiting list. The parent involvement culture even led to collaboration with the national Project for School Innovation (PSI) and the publication and national distribution of a how-to parent involvement manual and videotape entitled Including Every Parent.