



California State Board of Education Policy

POLICY #
89-01
DATE
September 1994

SUBJECT

Parent Involvement* in the Education of Their Children

REFERENCES

HISTORICAL NOTES

Originally adopted January 1989. Revised September 1994

A critical dimension of effective schooling is parent involvement. Research has shown conclusively that parent involvement at home in their children’s education improves student achievement. Furthermore, when parents are involved at school, their children go farther in school, and they go to better schools.

From research studies to date, we have learned the following important facts:

1. Families provide the primary educational environment.
2. Parent involvement in their children’s education improves student achievement.
3. Parent involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, supportive, long-lasting, and well-planned.
4. The benefits of parent involvement are not limited to early childhood or the elementary level; there are continuing positive effects through high school.
5. Involving parents in supporting their children’s education at home is not enough. To ensure the quality of schools as institutions serving the community, parents must be involved at all levels in the schools.
6. Children from low-income and culturally and racially diverse families have the most to gain when schools involve parents. The extent of parent involvement in a child’s education is more important to student success than family income or education.
7. We cannot look at the school and the home in isolation from one another; families and schools need to collaborate to help children adjust to the world of school. This is particularly critical for children from families with different cultural and language backgrounds.

Schools that undertake and support strong comprehensive parent involvement efforts are more likely to produce students who perform better than identical schools that do not involve parents. Schools that have strong linkages with and respond to the needs of the communities they serve have students who perform better than schools that don’t. Children who have parents who help

* “Parent involvement” refers to the efforts of any caregiver who assumes responsibility for nurturing and caring for children, including parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster parents, stepparents, etc. Many schools are now using the alternative term “family involvement.”

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them at home and stay in touch with the school do better academically than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved. The inescapable fact is that consistent high levels of student success are more likely to occur with long-term comprehensive parent involvement in schools.¹

The California State Board of Education recognizes that a child's education is a responsibility shared by school and family during the entire period the child spends in school. Although parents come to the schools with diverse cultural backgrounds, primary languages, and needs, they overwhelmingly want their children to be successful in school. School districts and schools, in collaboration with parents, teachers, students, and administrators, must establish and develop efforts that enhance parent involvement and reflect the needs of students and families in the communities which they serve.

To support the mission of California schools to educate all students effectively, schools and parents must work together as knowledgeable partners. All of the grade level reforms, Here They Come: Ready or Not!, It's Elementary, Caught in the Middle, Second To None, and other major initiatives such as Healthy Start (SB 620) and School Restructuring (SB 1274), emphasize parent and community involvement in school restructuring. The reform efforts support school based shared decisionmaking at the school site that includes all stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, students, parents, and other community members.

The State Board of Education will continue to support, through the California Department of Education, assistance to school districts and schools in developing strong comprehensive parent involvement. Comprehensive means that parents are involved at all grade levels in a variety of roles. The efforts should be designed to:

1. Help parents develop parenting skills to meet the basic obligations of family life and foster conditions at home which emphasize the importance of education and learning.
2. Promote two way (school-to-home and home-to-school) communication about school programs and students' progress.
3. Involve parents, with appropriate training, in instructional and support roles at the school and in other locations that help the school and students reach stated goals, objectives, and standards.
4. Provide parents with strategies and techniques for assisting their children with learning activities at home that support and extend the school's instructional program.
5. Prepare parents to actively participate in school decisionmaking and develop their leadership skills in governance and advocacy.
6. Provide parents with skills to access community and support services that strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

¹ Henderson, Anne T. and Nancy Berla, A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement. National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1994.



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These six types of parent involvement roles require a coordinated schoolwide effort that has the support of parents, teachers, students, and administrators at each school site. Furthermore, research indicates that home-school collaboration is most likely to happen if schools take the initiative to encourage, guide, and genuinely welcome parents into the partnership. Professional development for teachers and administrators on how to build such a partnership is essential.

The issue of parent involvement in the education of their children is much larger than improving student achievement. It is central to our democracy that parents and citizens participate in the governing of public institutions. Parent involvement is fundamental to a healthy system of public education.