



Position Paper:
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TRAINING AND EVALUATION FOR
TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Background

It has been recognized at the state and national levels that student achievement must improve if the United States is to preserve its pre-eminent role in a global economy. For this goal to be realized, systematic change must occur involving increased academic rigor, accountability and family engagement in school affairs.

In January, 2011, the New York State Board of Regents adopted the Common Core State Standards in ELA and math, designed to standardize curricula and improve student achievement. The Board of Regents has also approved revisions to the teacher training standards incorporating elements of family engagement. The state also requires ongoing staff development for teachers and administrators. Research demonstrates that family engagement in a child's education improves student achievement and performance, improves attendance and reduces drop out rates which in turn increases school, district and community effectiveness irrespective of ethnicity or socio-economic status. Research conducted by Dr. Heather Weiss and the Harvard Family Research Project supports this notion, suggesting that families play a significant role in supporting their child's learning, guiding children successfully through a complex school system by advocating for both their children and effective public education. Dr. Weiss has developed a definition of effective family engagement, a definition that has been adopted by the Family, School and Community National Working Group,

“First, family engagement is a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and in which families are committed to actively supporting their children’s learning and development.

Second, family engagement is continuous across a child’s life and entails enduring commitment but changing parent roles as children mature into young adulthood.

Third, effective family engagement cuts across and reinforces learning in the multiple settings where children learn at home, in pre-kindergarten programs, in school, in after school programs, in faith-based institutions and in the community.”

National PTA has stated: “Family engagement in education is a critical strategy for ensuring students’ academic achievement, graduation from high school and overall success in life.” With this in mind, promoting the National PTA Family-School Partnership Standards is a top priority for both National and New York State PTA. The PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships provide a framework for strengthening family engagement programs, activities and policies. According to evidence-based research, the National PTA Standards shift the focus from what schools should do to involve families to what families, schools and communities can do together to support student achievement.

The National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships are:

- 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; and
Standard 6: Collaborating with community

At the federal level, the Family Engagement in Education Act of 2011 (H.R. 1821/S.941) proposes to provide incentives for schools and districts to meaningfully engage families to close the achievement gap. Specifically, this legislation is designed to empower parents by increasing Title I funding dedicated to family engagement. It proposes requiring local education agencies to develop and implement standards-based policies and practices for school-family partnerships, to restructure Parental Information Resource Centers, to improve professional development in family engagement education, to extend family engagement in education to neglected and delinquent youth, to build national-level capacity for family engagement and to improve existing law and funding regarding family engagement.

At the state level, Education Law 3012-c requires a new performance evaluation system for classroom teachers and building principals. New York State will implement a state-wide comprehensive evaluation system for all school districts and BOCES. This evaluative system, known as Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR), is designed to measure teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance, including measures of pupil achievement and evidence of educational effectiveness in meeting the NYS teacher or school leader standards. Commissioner's Regulation 100.2(o) requires all school districts and BOCES to adopt an APPR plan for ELA/math teachers in grades 4-8 and all principals in these schools by September 1, 2011 and a similar plan for *all* teachers and principals by September 1, 2012. However, it is important to note that while there is currently a family engagement component in this evaluative system, it is not as explicit as we would like.

The Role of PTA

We are at a critical juncture in public education with a strong movement at both state and national levels to increase student achievement and teacher/principal accountability at a time when fiscal support has diminished. Given this reality, PTA strongly supports the importance of meaningful, culturally competent family engagement in the process of improving pupil achievement and performance.

Specifically, we must influence the New York State Board of Regents to adopt National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships. PTA therefore urges that teacher preparation program enhancements include *meaningful, culturally competent* family engagement, particularly the concept of ongoing, two-way school-family communication. PTA also supports family engagement training as a component in ongoing professional development for all teachers and administrators. Regarding APPR, PTA advocates that the revised process includes an evaluative component related to family engagement for all non-tenured and tenured teachers and administrators. Lastly, PTA supports the provision of appropriate funding by the New York State Legislature for the development and implementation of the revised APPR processes and the ongoing professional development.

For more information about the National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships and PTA programs that promote family-school partnerships, visit www.pta.org or www.nyspta.org. For more information regarding APPR, visit www.nysed.gov or www.nysut.org.

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