

PTA'S PARENT INVOLVEMENT LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE TALKING POINTS

PTA's parent involvement recommendations are grounded in research, experience and ideas from throughout the education community. The purpose of these recommendations are not just to help improve the parent involvement sections within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, but to provide more opportunities for parents to get involved in their child's education.

The PTA recommendations are built on the following four key principles:

- More accountability to parents
- Better information through a more understandable delivery system
- More resources for parents and teachers
- Community involvement

The parent involvement provisions added in NCLB were a big step in trying to get parents involved. Five years later it is time to take the next step.

Improvements to the law need to come in how these provisions are going to be enforced. While ensuring local flexibility, PTA's recommendations create a system of accountability to parents designed to encourage parents to be active partners in their child's education.

PTA's parent involvement plan is a model of how schools, districts and states can incorporate parent involvement and how they are accountable for implementing the law.

- Research by the education community suggests there is very little accountability to ensure that schools and districts and states are actually implementing their parent involvement plans and other parental provisions mandated by NCLB.
- Strengthening parent involvement in those schools "In Need of Improvement" is currently designated as a type of "technical assistance" in NCLB. However, parents are not merely "technical assistance" in their child's life.
- Schools and districts need to involve and notify parents; bring them into the conversation on how best to improve the school. There needs to be a vehicle to ensure schools and districts are adhering to existing provisions in the law.

The state and district need more resources to be successful in this effort, including:

- Ways to identify and support the development of a partnership between schools and the broader community;
- A specific government office/employee, to monitor how parents are encouraged to be involved, the opportunities for parent involvement that are available, and most importantly --- ensuring that parental involvement plans are robust and being followed throughout the school year.
- Creation of a parent committee that mirrors the diversity of their school to provide the parental assistance required by many aspects of the law
- Adequate funding for these important activities

PTA is calling for the enhancement of the requirements for parent notification.

- Parent notification requirements are critical and enable parents to make informed decisions about their child's education.
- NCLB is lauded as a law of options. But if a parent does not have the necessary information, how can they be expected to use these options and make the right decisions regarding their child's education?
- Why take all of these metrics, test scores etc, if you are not going to pass the information along to parents for them to understand and use?
- NCLB needs to improve by ensuring the information sent to parents is clear. Many parents don't understand their child's Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) report nor are they aware of the options available to them due to the performance of their child's school.
- Notifications need to improve in timeliness. The new authorization must require and hold schools accountable to ensure that all notifications occur in a timely manner. Parents need time to investigate the options, make their decisions, and exercise the rights provided under NCLB.
- Notifications need improved clarity. The information must be presented in a way that parents can understand---whether the barriers are language, vocabulary, format or other impediments to comprehension.

PTA seeks the expansion of parent involvement provisions and Congress must find a way to enforce what it passed 5 years ago. There is very little accountability for adhering to existing parent involvement provisions in the law. Schools and districts need to be held accountable.

PTA's top priorities have not changed since the introduction of NCLB --- to assist parents in developing skills to raise and protect their children and to encourage parent and public involvement in public schools.

Our recommendations provide more accountability in parent notifications and the implementation of parental involvement plans.

- Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) need to have a central role in providing assistance; not just to parents but to schools that need help implementing their parent involvement plan. PIRCs are an under used resource. PTA encourages legislators to find ways to expand and make the most effective use of existing resources to improve parent involvement at the school, district and state levels.
- PTA recommends Congress expand the roles of PIRCs to include the assessment of individual districts' and schools' parent involvement policies and as a valuable resource for the provision of technical assistance to those schools "In Need of Assistance."

PTA recommends strongly that all districts be required to provide clear, concise guidance on how to access information and services related to their child's school. This needs to include information on all choice options, Supplementary Educational Services, and community organizations available to improve academic achievement.

Training for teachers needs to be required to better enable them to become stewards of parent involvement.

- A large roadblock in parent involvement exists due to many language, cultural and socio-economic barriers
- Every parent is different and teachers need the skills to work effectively with a variety of people.

Parent involvement in schools and education is difficult to fit into the schedules of parents today. Districts and states need to find creative ways to support and promote parent involvement.

Every community must find innovative ways to get businesses, community institutions, and all residents---not just those with children in school, to support local schools as a focal point in the community. Whether that means providing special services, hosting more events, creating joint civic activities, or encouraging service projects, the school itself should be viewed as a core part of the community.

Increased parent involvement helps parents become more comfortable and welcome in the school, contributes to student achievement, and fosters the investment of the whole community in the success of our schools and our children.