



**National Standards for  
Family-School  
Partnerships and  
Character Counts!**  
What We Can Do Together to  
Support Student Success



**Slide – 1 minute**

Promoting and supporting parent involvement in the education of all children has been a priority of PTA at the local, state, national, and international level for its more than 100 years. From implementing programs that create opportunities for parents to connect to each other and their local schools to leading efforts that influence national policy on issues that affect the educational success and healthy development of children and youth, PTA has been and continues to be a powerful voice for all children. That's not new. What is new is a commitment to expanding the focus to promote not only what schools can do to involve parents but what schools, parents and community must do in partnership to support student learning.

# Overall Finding from the Research

When families are involved  
at home and at school,  
children do better in school.



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## **Slide – 1 minute**

In *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, a 2002 research synthesis of more than 50 studies, Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp conclude that there is a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and student achievement. This holds true regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or parents' level of education.

# Why Parents Get Involved

- Understand that they *should* be involved
- Feel *capable* of making a contribution
- Feel *invited* by the school and their children



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(Hoover-Dempsey  
and Sandler, 1997)

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## Slide – 2 minutes

Although much research has been done to support the link between student success and parent involvement, there is less research about why parents become involved and *how* their involvement influences student learning. Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey, a researcher in the field of parent involvement, has determined three key factors that motivate parents to become involved. She found that when parents:

- Believed that they were supposed to be involved,
- Believed that their involvement would make a difference, and
- Were actively invited by teachers and their children to be involved...

They became more involved with the school and with their children's learning.

PTAS can play an important role towards achieving these outcomes.

# Character Education and Parents

## Character Education begins at home

- Teaching the Six Pillars of Character at home will serve as an extension of the overall CHARACTER COUNTS! message.
- When the school and parents speak the same language, the message to your children will only be stronger.



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## Parent Involvement and CHARACTER COUNTS!

- CHARACTER COUNTS! (CC!) teaches consensus values known as the Six Pillars of Character which are:

*Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility,  
Fairness, Caring, Citizenship*

- CC! is designed to be integrated into all elements of your school culture including the PTA.
- In 2005, National PTA published a Character Counts! Guide for parents called ***Parenting: The Most Important Job of Your Life!***



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CHARACTER COUNTS! is a common language framework to address attitude and behavior issues. CC! relies upon all adults (staff and parents) to use the same vocabulary when discussing character. This only makes the message stronger when trying to develop good character in your children.

[There needs to be a statement that connects this slide to the one before – how can PTA use Character Counts! To help parents get involved?]

# TRRFCC

- Students and parents can use this acronym to help them remember that people with good character are "*Terrific!*":

T rustworthiness

R espect

R esponsibility

F airness

C aring

C itizenship



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The acronym for the Six Pillars of Character is TRFFCC (terrific). This is a great way to teach kids how to remember each pillar

# Be a T.E.A.M. Player

- **Teach** what good character is
- **Enforce** and reinforce behavior expectations
- **Advocate** the importance of character
- **Model** good behavior



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**Teach:** explain that their success and happiness depend on who their are inside. Teach them the difference between right and wrong and guide their thoughts and actions by the Six Pillars.

**Enforce:** Reward good behavior (usually praise is enough). Demonstrate courage and firmness of will by enforcing these core values.

**Advocate:** Continually encourage children to live up to the Six Pillars. Be clear and uncompromising that you expect your children to be TRRFCC.

**Model:** Everything you say and do (or neglect to do) sends a message about your values. When you slip, be accountable; apologize sincerely and do better!

# Parent Involvement Matters

No matter what their family income or background may be, students with involved parents are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Pass their classes
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education



National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (Henderson & Mapp, 2002)  
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## **Slide – 2 minute**

Whether parents are in the school on a regular basis or simply making sure their children go to school every day ready to learn and consistently instilling the importance of education, students will do better in school. Research has shown that no matter what their family income or background may be, students with involved parents are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores.
- Be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits.
- Attend school regularly.
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school.
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

# National Standards for Family-School Partnerships



National Standards for Family-School Partnerships  
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## Slide 5 minutes

In 1997, building on the six types of parent involvement identified by Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., the PTA developed the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs. These Standards were intended to serve as an organizing framework or platform for creating programs that promoted and strengthened parent and family involvement in schools. Since the Standards' inception, thousands of PTAs have used the Standards to raise awareness about the importance of parent involvement and to advocate for the adoption of parent involvement policies in their schools, districts and state offices of education.

In 2007, the Standards were updated to expand 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. There was also a need to increase PTA understanding how to the use of the Standards in strengthening partnerships with school leadership and staff, and a broader representation of the school community including families traditionally not involved and representatives from community members outside of the school. To that end, PTA developed an assessment guide that identifies goals for each of the Standards and indicators of what success would like when these goals are met.

# Standard 1

## Welcoming All Families

### Goal 1: Creating a Welcoming Climate

- Developing personal relationships
- Creating a family-friendly atmosphere
- Providing opportunities for volunteering

### Goal 2: Building a Respectful, Inclusive School Community

- Respecting all families
- Removing economic obstacles to participation
- Ensuring accessible programming



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### Slide – 2 minutes

Under Standard 1, 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 student are learning and doing in class.

As you think about your school or schools in your district, consider these questions:

How welcoming is the school environment? Are there welcome signs inside and outside the school, written in all the languages of the school community?

- Is office staff friendly?
- Are relationships between families and teachers strong?
- Do the school's policies and programs reflect, respect and value the diversity of the families in the community?

# Standard 2

## Communicating Effectively

### Goal 1: Sharing Information Between School and Families

- Using multiple communication paths
- Surveying families to identify issues and concerns
- Having access to the principal
- Providing information on current issues
- Facilitating connections among families



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### Slide 2 minutes

Under Standard 2, Communicating Effectively, families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

As you think about your school or schools in your district, consider these questions:

- Are communication materials informative, regular, and accessible by all families?
- Are there translators and interpreters available upon request?
- Does the school and PTA provide opportunities for families and staff to share information in a variety of ways (e.g., e-mail, home visits, phone calls, printed materials)?
- Is it easy and convenient for parents to contact teachers and provide feedback to the school around policies and issues of concern?

# Standard 3

## Supporting Student Success

### Goal 1: Sharing Information About Student Progress

- Ensuring parent-teacher communication
- Linking student work to academic standards
- Using standardized test results to increase achievement
- Sharing school progress

### Goal 2: Supporting Learning by Engaging Families

- Engaging families in classroom learning
- Developing family ability to strengthen learning at home
- Promoting after-school learning



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### Slide – 2 minutes

Under Standard 3, 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.

### ***Ask the group to consider these questions:***

Do parents have regular opportunities to learn what students are doing in class?

- Is student achievement data used to inform teaching and learning?
- Do parents have opportunities to learn how to work with their child?
- Are parent education and other courses or training for parents available (e.g. GED, college credit, family literacy, ESL)?

# Standard 4

## Speaking Up for Every Child

### Goal 1: Understanding How the School System Works

- Understanding how the school and district operate
- Understanding rights and responsibilities under federal and state laws
- Learning about resources
- Resolving problems and conflicts

### Goal 2: Empowering Families to Support Their Own and Other Children's Success in School

- Developing families' capacity to be effective advocates
- Planning for the future
- Smoothing transitions
- Engaging in civic advocacy for student achievement



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### Slide 2 minutes

Under Standard 4, 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.

### *Ask the group to consider these questions:*

- Are families consulted about major decisions?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Do parents know how the local school and district operate and how to raise questions or concerns about school and district programs, policies, and activities? Do they understand their rights and responsibilities under federal and state laws?
- Are parents prepared to monitor students' progress and guide them toward their goals through high school graduation, postsecondary education, and a career?

# Standard 5

## Sharing Power

### Goal 1: Strengthening the Family's Voice in Shared Decision Making

- Having a voice in all decisions that affect children
- Addressing equity issues
- Developing parent leadership

### Goal 2: Building Families' Social and Political Connections

- Connecting families to local officials
- Developing an effective parent involvement organization that represents all families



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### Slide – 2 minutes

Under Standard 5, families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs. This is often one of the hardest standards to achieve.

### ***Ask the group to consider these questions:***

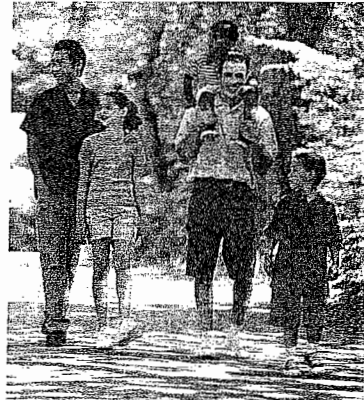
- Do the PTA and school support leadership opportunities for all families?
- Does school leadership and other school staff believe that parents should be partners in education?
- Are families full partners in making decisions on issues that affect their children at school and in the community?
- Do you believe your PTA represents the needs and concerns of all families?

# Standard 6

## Collaborating with Community

### Goal 1: Connecting the School with Community Resources

- Linking to community resources
- Organizing support from community partners
- Turning the school into a hub of community life
- Partnering with community groups to strengthen families and support student success



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### Slide – 2 minutes

Under Standard 6, families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect student, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

### ***Ask the group to consider the following questions:***

- Are families aware of resources in the community that link to learning?
- Are students organized to provide a service to the community?
- Is the community engaged in supporting learning through opportunities such as service learning and internships?
- Are community members included in planning and implementing programs and policies?

# Build Trusting Relationships

## ■ Seek to Understand, Then to be Understood



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### Slide – 5 minutes

In order to gain buy-in and investment in any program or practice designed to strengthen family and community engagement, the architects of that plan must include the voices and experiences of the individuals for whom the plan is designed. This should include a balance of school, home, community, and when appropriate student representatives. It should include people of different ages, ethnicities, languages and income levels. Not every member of the Partnership Action Team has to be a member of the PTA.

In order to sustain an effective family-school partnership, persons in leadership roles must have the qualities and/or skills:

- Build a sense of trust among the members of the partnerships
- Create a climate where everyone is treated with respect and fairness, and a culture where everyone's opinion is valued and individuals take responsibility for their actions

Trust is built among the team members, even if they don't all agree, and the likelihood of the members to support consensus decision making increases. One way to begin to build trust is to take time to understand what each member values.

# Assess Your School Community



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## Slide -2 minutes

- You can better identify and prioritize how best to engage families in supporting student success when you identify your school's assets and needs. For example, what are the family conditions (i.e. working families, single family households, stay-at home moms or dads, supportive principal, community support, student performance based on standardized tests, etc) that will influence how parents are involved?
- Do all families feel connected to the school and their child's learning? PTA's Power of Partnership Family Survey that is based on the National Standards is a good tool to measure how families feel.
- Other ways of gathering include: Focus groups (informal or formal); Interviews – face-to-face or telephone; Asset mapping (identify the resources in your school community – e.g. supportive businesses, churches, neighbors, colleges, community center, after-school programs, etc); Demographic study – racial/ethnic, ESL in the home, working parents (1 parent or both), # of children in the school; PTA perception – inclusive, exclusive, relevant, fundraisers
- How are students doing academically? Where are the deficits? (Here's where the principals input is critical.)

**Facilitator note: You may want to just review the survey but not take the time to have participants complete it.**

# Identify Key Issues



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As you review the findings from your assessment of assets and needs, key issues should emerge. It is important that everybody on the action team or planning team have a chance to express their viewpoints about the results of the data before prioritizing the focus of the family-school partnership plan. However, the data must determine the course of action for the team.

**Facilitator note: This activity does not apply if participants did not complete the Family Survey. You can walk them through how to use the forms.**

***Handout - "My School Community" Facilitator says: Take a look at your responses to the Personal Inventory. Prioritize what you consider the strengths your and complete this form handout. (5 minutes)***

When identifying key issues, remember, it's a partnership. What you consider to be the best things about your school may not be consistent with the rest of the team members of the data. Collaboration is not always easy but it's absolutely necessary in a successful partnership. When you're working with your Action Team, each individual member should complete the **My School Community** handout, then use the **Our School Community** handout as a tool to reach consensus about the priorities for the family involvement plan.

**Handout 4 "Our School Community".**

Facilitator note: If it's not possible to group people from the same school,

# “The proof is in the pudding”



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## Slide - 4 minutes

Facilitator will say:

- When you have taken time to carefully plan a strategy to strengthen family involvement in ways that support student success, the likelihood of seeing results of your actions increases tremendously.
  - Do another survey at the end of the year to determine if attitudes, behaviors or knowledge has changed based on the priorities of your plan.
  - Share your success with the entire school community.
  - Describe not only your success but also lessons learned and opportunities to build on your success in the next year or two.
  - Use **PTA's Report to the Community (show a copy and refer to the website)** as a way of capturing your story. This will allow you to organize your story so that it is consistent and compelling. Make copies and send to your superintendent, school board, community volunteers and or businesses that supported your program and the local newspaper. This Report could potentially lead to financial support from outside funders including businesses and community foundations.
- Let everyone know that PTA has moved beyond the bake sale is committed to making every child's potential a reality

**Time to share plans.**

# “Failing to plan, is planning to fail”



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## Slide time – 25 minutes

We often hear the quote of “failing to plan is planning to fail” but some of us still ignore the warning. Another famous quote that relates to the importance of good planning is this: “Insanity is doing the same thing the same way and expecting a different result

Once your planning team has reviewed the findings from the surveys and forms of data collected to inform the plan and come to consensus on the priorities its time to develop a plan. As you consider strategies for building successful family-school partnerships to support student success, keep in mind that supporting family involvement is a process – not an event. Schools and PTAs often define the role of the PTA as fundraisers and event planners. While some fundraisers and special events (e.g. family nights, Back to School Night, Book Fairs) are important, are they planned with the end in mind? What Standards are they connected to? How will you measure success? How will they improve family involvement in ways the support student success?

## Handout – Parent Involvement Plan Template/Sample

The facilitator will refer the participants to the blank template and say: “In an Action Team setting at your school, the group leader/facilitator would have the team identify goals from the Family Survey results and other academic priorities identified by the principal. For now, use one blank template for each goal, write the Standard you were assigned. Using the following two goals, begin to build an Action Plan that will help your school achieve these goals: 1) **Improve reading/literacy skills for all students;** 2) **Build a more respectful, inclusive school community for all families.** A sample plan is on the back of your template to help you get started. You have 15 minutes.