

The Parent Educator

A Newsletter for Parent Educators Throughout the State of Arkansas

Volunteerism by Joyce Epstein

Joyce Epstein's six types of parent involvement are important in planning, evaluating, and continually improving activities to sustain successful partnership programs. In this issue we will be discussing Type 3 Volunteering.

Type 3: Volunteering activities enable families to share their time and talents to support the school, teachers, and students. Volunteers may conduct activities at school, in classrooms, at home, or in the community. Family volunteers may assist individual teachers or help in the library, the family room, the computer room, the playground, the lunchroom, after-school programs, or other locations. Families also give their time to attend student performances, sports activities, assemblies, celebrations, and other events.

Various strategies may be used to recruit and train volunteers and to match their time and talents to the needs of teachers, students, and administrators. Schools also must decide how to schedule opportunities so that all families

can volunteer and attend some events, even if they work during the school day.

Washington Junior High School in Naperville, Illinois, organized Washington Greeters, who help the school maintain a safe school environment. The volunteers welcome incoming visitors and deter anyone from entering the building that does not belong. Other schools may organize parent, grandparent, and neighborhood patrols to help students get to and from school safely each day. Ensuring a safe school is an important goal that can be assisted by well-organized volunteers.

The Williamston Middle and High Schools in Williamston, Michigan, designed the *Parent Resource Directory* to increase the number



of parents who volunteer. The Action Team for Partnerships collects and organizes information on volunteers' talents, interests, and available time. Each school uses its directory to identify willing volunteers for many kinds of activities and events throughout the school year.

Parent volunteers who serve as assistants and contributors to school and classroom programs

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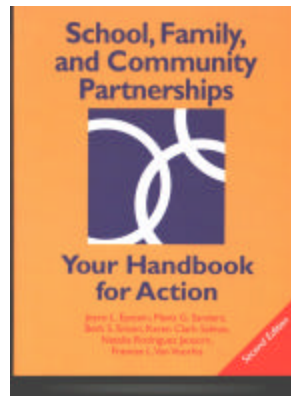
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Book Spotlight



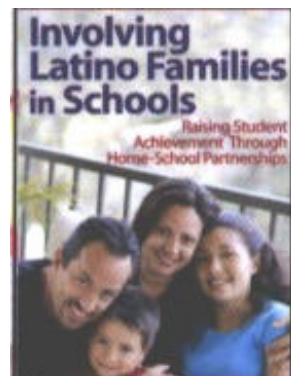
This research-based framework of six types of involvement guides state and district leaders, school principals, teachers, parents, and community partners to form Action Teams for Partnerships-dynamic groups that plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve family and community involvement for students success. The National PTA's Standards For Parent/Family Involvement Program is based on these six key points.

Author Joyce Epstein ISBN#0761976663 price **\$34.95**



Based on interviews with local PTA leaders, teachers, principals and experts from across the country, this innovative resource is based on the six standards that make up the National PTA's National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs: *Communicating, Parenting, Student Learning, Volunteering, School Decision Making and Advocacy, and Collaborating with the Community. Author National PTA ISBN#187963970X price **\$18.95**

Also: The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs pamphlet-\$2.00



While research has shown that parental involvement plays a key role in academic achievement, most schools have failed to modify their parent involvement programs to address social and cultural realities of Latino families. Gaitan provides tools and strategies for including Latino parents in developing sustained academic improvement.

Author: Concha Delgado Gaitan
ISBN#0761931384 price **\$27.95**

Volunteerism cont.

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and as audiences at school activities and events, help strengthen school programs. Their presence tells students, faculty, and the community that parents care about the quality of the school and the success of all students. By organizing and training volunteers to assist in many ways and in many locations, educators convey that parents and others are welcome and that their time and talents are valued.

In the book *School, Family and Community Partnerships* by Joyce Epstein she states the challenges and results from implementing type 3 Volunteering.

The challenges are:

- ◆ Recruiting widely for volunteers so that all families know that their time and talents are welcome.
- ◆ Making flexible schedules for volunteers, assemblies, and events to enable working parents to participate.
- ◆ Providing training for volunteers and match time and talent with school needs.
- ◆ Recognizing parent and other volunteers for their assistance at school and in other locations.

The need is to redefine volunteer to not only mean someone who comes to school during the day, but also anyone who supports school goals and

children's learning in any way, at any place and at any time.

The results from implementing Type 3 Volunteering are:

For Students:

- ◆ Skills in communicating with adults
- ◆ Skills that are tutored or taught by volunteers
- ◆ Awareness of many skills, talents, occupations, and contributions of parents and other volunteers.

For Parents:

- ◆ Understanding of the teacher's job
- ◆ Self-confidence about ability to work in school and with children
- ◆ Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school
- ◆ Specific skills of volunteer work
- ◆ Use of school activities at home
- ◆ Enrollment in programs to improve own education

For Teachers:

- ◆ Organization, training, and use of volunteers
- ◆ Readiness to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school
- ◆ Awareness of parents' talents and interests in school and children

- ◆ Individual attention to students because of help from volunteers.

Epstein provides research that has found just about all families care about their children, want them to succeed, and are eager to obtain better information from schools and communities so as to remain good partners in their children's education. It is up to your school to take the next steps to implement a great volunteer program.

*This article was reprinted with permission and is an excerpt from the book *School, Family, and Community Partnerships* by Joyce Epstein*

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TIPS FOR PARENTS

Here are some steps to get you started on your road to volunteerism.

Take time at home —

Before making that first call to volunteer, consider the opportunities you have at home to help reinforce what your child is learning at school. Supporting learning at home is one of the best ways to stay involved with your child's education. Set aside some time every day to talk with your child about school activities. Ask what subject was the best that day, or which topic was the hardest; this will give your child an opportunity to tell you what she sees happening in the classroom. Monitoring homework and class projects can help you better understand what is expected of her in school. Plan together for family activities that support or supplement what is being learned in the classroom. Discuss with older children what classes they need to develop special interests or skills, and what courses they need for graduation, college, or careers.

Set expectations and establish routines —

Show your son that you value learning and education by setting high, yet realistic, expectations. Help him develop a routine for studying and homework. Choose a specific time and place each day to complete homework and class assignments. Minimize distractions and set house rules about listening to music or studying with the television on. For older students, you may want to limit part-time job hours and restrict nighttime employment. Provide educational resources at home and help your son access additional resources through community libraries, museums, or via technology.

Make time to volunteer, and make a few calls —

Determine how much time your schedule allows you to participate in school events/activities and what you are willing to do. If you decide just how much you can be involved, you'll feel good about the time you can give. Not sure of whom to call to get involved at school? The PTA president, the classroom teacher, the school secretary, and school volunteer coordinator often will be your first contacts. Many can be reached through the school's website, school/PTA newsletter, or by calling the administration office. Let them know your schedule, the best times and ways to contact you, and when you are available to

volunteer. If you don't have a regular work schedule, call the school to ask what volunteer jobs are available on your next day off.

Join your PTA —

Whether your schedule permits you to volunteer on a regular basis, you can show your support through a membership in your local PTA. Your PTA works to address many important issues affecting the school in your neighborhood as well as your community at large. By becoming a PTA member, you add your support and voice to others making a difference for the children in your school and all children.

Keep in touch with the school —

Take five minutes on your lunch hour or break to keep in touch with your daughter's school. Make a phone call to her teacher, write a note, or send an e-mail; establish a method of regular communication that best suits both of you. Ask what you can do to reinforce at home what is being learned at school. If your daughter often says she has no homework to do, check with the teacher. Be sure to share any news about things going on in your family life that might affect your daughter at school. Establishing regular, open communication with your child's teacher early and throughout the school year is important, especially if a problem arises.

Stay informed —

One way to feel connected to your son's school is by reading school newsletters, calendars, or fliers sent home. You'll get a heads up on important school dates, events, and deadlines. An increasing number of schools now have websites that let parents know about specific classes, schedules, and important activities. Some teachers have their own classroom websites with homework assignments, tips, and project requirements. If you don't have a computer and Internet access at home, visit your public library. You can also check to see if your son's school has a parent center with computers.

Participate in the school listserv® —

Ask if your school has an e-mail listserv® that parents can join. A listserv® allows subscribers an opportunity to share information and discuss issues via e-mail on an ongoing basis. The school may have a listserv® just for parents, or it may have one for the entire school community: parents, educators, and students. You can choose simply to read the e-mail messages about school

issues and what others in the school community are saying, or you can participate actively by sending messages.

Take advantage of school functions —

Get a schedule of school and PTA programs, projects, and ceremonies (from the school office, school website, PTA newsletter, etc.). Discuss with your child which ones he feels are the most important for you to attend, and tell him which ones are of greatest interest to you, too. Volunteer to help with school functions when and where you can. Often there are specific, short-term tasks that can be done at home or on a lunch break. Ask if your child's school holds an informal breakfast, lunch, or potluck dinner where families can meet with other parents, share experiences, ask questions about school policies, get help on homework or preparing for tests, and be more involved.

Put your talents to work —

Your talents and skills often can be used from work or home to benefit the school and its students. Do you have computer skills? Offer to work on the PTA or school newsletter, help design a flier, or update a web page for the school. Are your talents in art, music, or literature? You might be able to provide curriculum enrichment activities in the classroom, or in before- or after-school programs. Do you speak/read a language other than English? Volunteer to be an interpreter for parents at school events or help translate materials for use by other parents. You could also be a "buddy" to a new parent for whom English isn't a first language. Hobbies such as cooking, carpentry, or gardening can sometimes be vital to supporting a special school program.

Get your employer involved —

Successful schools have the support of local businesses and community members. Ask your employer about allowing employee flextime to volunteer at school or to attend school activities. Encourage your company to "adopt" a school by donating supplies or equipment, or providing mentors, speakers, or internship opportunities for students. Suggest that your employer donate door prizes for parent-teacher meetings, help print needed materials or fliers, or provide incentives for students in special programs.

This information was reprinted with permission from the National PTA organization. You can get more information at www.pta.org

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

Several teachers told Scholastic about the pleasures and pitfalls of having parents in the classroom.

An ideal classroom volunteer:

Would...

- ◆ Be reliable, responsible, and on time
- ◆ Be flexible (not every job will be fun!)
- ◆ Stick to the schedule and alert the teacher if you can't
- ◆ Dress according to school dress code
- ◆ Stay positive and helpful
- ◆ Support the teacher's decisions
- ◆ Follow directions
- ◆ Treat all students equally
- ◆ Know your abilities and boundaries
- ◆ Treat the classroom as a workplace
- ◆ Respect the classroom structure
- ◆ Ask the teacher the best times to contact him or her
- ◆ Take initiative, but not too much
- ◆ Leave when you finish the task
- ◆ Help clean up
- ◆ Remember the teacher is the expert

Would NOT...

- ◆ Arrive unannounced
- ◆ Miss deadlines
- ◆ Snoop at students' schoolwork
- ◆ Gossip — with students, teachers, or other parents
- ◆ Play favorites
- ◆ Pump the teacher for information
- ◆ Give your child extra attention
- ◆ Bring anyone else (particularly another child) along
- ◆ Bring valuables that could be lost or stolen
- ◆ Start a project without talking to the teacher first
- ◆ Take advantage of having a close relationship with the teacher
- ◆ Go overboard

*This segment was reprinted with permission from Scholastic Inc. and taken from the article *Volunteering in the Classroom* by Shama Narang. To read more of the article please go to the website: www.scholastic.com/family-matters/parentguides/schoolinvolve/volunteer.htm*

Once you have determined the value of parents helping you achieve your classroom goals, then it's time to sit down and write a letter inviting them to help. Below is an invitation I have used that might be helpful to you. Feel free to use it as is or to adapt it in any way for your own purposes:

Dear Parents:

Helping your child realize the value of education is extremely important. Your presence at school is one way to show your love and encouragement.

Our school's mission is to create an educational environment in which students are given the opportunity to reach their full potential, and the academic, social, and developmental needs of each student are met. We are looking for volunteers to help us with that awesome task.

The children and I invite you to come to school to volunteer your time and talents. We will value you as a volunteer, and appreciate your dedication to the children as a supportive aide, role model, and mentor.

We know your time is at a premium, but we hope this invitation will empower you to come in and volunteer. Please feel free to contact me with a time to volunteer that is convenient for you.

Thank you again for volunteering your time and talents! Together, we can make a difference in the lives of children.

*Sincerely,
(Your name)*

You can find more tips from the article *Tips for Welcoming Parent Volunteers Into Your Classroom* by Peggy Cramer at www.education-world.com. This web site is updated daily with information for parents, students, and administrators.

Spotlight on Parent Centers

This month we focus on Cloverdale Magnet Middle School Parent Center in Little Rock and Parent Educator- Dorothy Davis

What is your background that led you into parent education?

My teaching experience in the school library/office, classroom, computer lab, church setting and other jobs has given me my background in parent education. (Daily contact with many parents)

Can you give us a brief description of your parent center and how long you have been established?

Our parent center is located behind the main office. It has a large black and gold sign on outside the door that says PARENT RESOURCE CENTER. The atmosphere is warm and inviting. It has a couch, chairs, end and coffee tables, a crystal and gold lamp sits on the end table. A beautiful abstract painting hangs above the couch and a gold mirror hangs on the opposite wall in front of the couch. Book shelves house a selection of parenting books and tapes for parents to check out. Quick Tips Brochures are in a handy display rack that parents may take home for future reference. The bulletin board displays a variety of various communications that inform parents about coming events. Plaques of various sorts are arranged on the walls also. A conference table and chairs are available for parents to meet with classroom teachers, assistant principals, district specialist, parents and students. Hot coffee and sometimes other refreshments are available for parents and other persons during their time in the parent center.

What are your roles as a parent educator?

My role includes: 1. Creating and maintaining the Parent Center 2. Planning activities throughout the

year to encourage parental involvement 3. Purchasing parenting books, magazines, pamphlets, tapes, videos for parent check-out. 4. Honor parents who attend all parent –teacher conferences (“parents make a difference night”) 5. Schedule parent workshops. All of this is in accordance with ACT 603 (Parent Involvement Law)

In what parenting series/curriculums have you been trained?

I have had training in ACT 603 Parental Involvement, Active Parenting of Teens, Positive Discipline for Single Parents, Fred Jones Classroom Management, Curriculum Mapping, and Cooperative Learning Strategies.

Do you have any new idea's you've implemented that work with the parents in your parent center?

I have not implemented anything new however; I am currently asking parents to volunteer some of their spare time to serve as greeters for our school, work in the parent center and other small tasks. This will help to create a better relationship between the school and parents.

What organizations do you belong to?

I belong to the following organizations. Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). Little Rock Classroom Association (CTA), National Education Association (NEA), Red Hat Society and Greater Center Star Baptist Church.

What do you think the future holds in parent education?

I think the future of parent education is improving because parents are aware of Act 603 (Parental Involvement Law) and the No Child Left Behind Act. These acts have fostered more cooperation and accountability from parents, the administration, and teachers.



Include door prizes, food and activities at an open house.

Hold a parent meeting before or after a ball game, since the parents are already at school.

Hold a math night with different math games provided.

Hold a reading night with parents bringing books to read with their child.

Hold a reading picnic in a park with parents bringing books to read with children.

Hold a parent BBQ and have children share stories they have written.

Celebrate the birthday of an author at school and ask parents to come and read the author's books to the class.

Ask parents to volunteer a skill they can share at school and teach the students.

Open the computer lab/library to parents for use outside of school hours. Offer classes to parents and let their child help teach them about the computer by being the "computer tutor".

Host a game night at school and provide game centers for parents and children to rotate through during the night. Provide popcorn and a drink.

Provide a positive postcard once a quarter so parents receive a good note about their child. This can be done in the form of a phone call too.

Provide a guest speaker for parents to learn new reading or math techniques to use with their child. After the speaker is finished, let them work with their child using the new technique.

Have more than one school's Title 1 program get together for a mixer. Provide speakers, centers, books, etc. to engage parents and children.

Hold a parent/grandparent day.

Book parade in lieu of observing Halloween (Students dress as a character in their favorite book, they

if appropriate, use table decorations made in art class and provide theater tickets for parents to attend.

Conduct a "How to Read to Your Child" reading program for parents.

PROGRESS REPORTING TO PARENTS

Schedule your parent-teacher conference time with the classroom teacher so the student can be discussed at the same time with both teachers and parents and could provide these times in one day to accommodate parents.

Develop a Title 1 report card for quarterly reports to parents.

Positive phone calls to parents.

USING PARENT-STUDENT-TEACHER COMPACTS:

Have the parents sign the compact at parent/teacher conferences. This way you can discuss the document with the parents and answer any questions.

The student portion can be used on a daily/weekly/monthly basis as part of the morning pledge.

The student portion can be enlarged, signed by each student and placed on the wall as a reminder and reviewed monthly.

These ideas were provided by the Nebraska State Title 1 program. ■

More Ways For Parents To Be Involved In Their Child's Education

carry their book as they "parade" through the school which includes all staff and administrators. Have someone videotape the parade and set out chairs throughout the parade route for parents to watch).

Host United Nations Day! Pick a country to study, give passports for parents to use to go through each room, have students dress in native clothing if applicable.

Hold a holiday meal or dinner theater and have the students be the waiters. Students can make the food

Please share your idea's by emailing them to - megwriter@aol.com We will input them into the next issue of The Parent Educator.

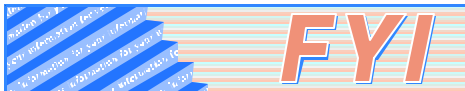
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— Important Web Sites —

Websites for Parent Educators

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading and Achievement
www.ciera.org

U.S. Department of Education Publications
www.ed.gov

National PTA
www.pta.org

Scholastic
www.scholastic.com

CNN's Interactive Learning Resources for Teaching
www.literacynet.org

National Institute for Literacy
www.nifl.gov

New York University Child Study Center
www.AboutOurKids.org

National Network of Partnership Schools
www.partnershipschools.org

Education World
www.education-world.com

Family Literacy Special Collection
www.literacy.kent.edu/midwest/familylit/index.html

National Mental Health and Education Center
www.naspcenter.org

National Education Association
www.new.org

National Educational Service
www.nesonline.com

Center for Effective Parenting
www.parenting-ed.org

What's Coming In The Next Issue

Parent Involvement In The Schools Continued. . .

