

KENTUCKY SCHOOL UPDATES

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

THE BASICS OF THE LAW

- **Kentucky law states:** “The General Assembly recognizes that public education involves shared responsibilities. State government, local communities, parents, students, and school employees must work together to create an efficient public school system. Parents and students must assist schools with efforts to assure student attendance, preparation for school, and involvement in learning. The cooperation of all involved is necessary to assure that desired outcomes are achieved . . .”

- In addition the law recognizes the **importance of parent involvement** by requiring the following:
 - ✓ Parents are members of school-based decision making councils at each school, making important decisions about school issues around learning and instruction.
 - ✓ Parents must be involved in setting targets and developing plans to close achievement gaps.
 - ✓ One of the critical attributes of the primary program is positive parent involvement.
 - ✓ The preschool program requires that schools involve parents.
 - ✓ Parents are required members of local family resource and youth services center advisory councils and must make up no less than one-third of the membership.
 - ✓ The membership of superintendent screening committees includes parents.
 - ✓ The state board requires that parents be represented on local facilities planning groups that study building and redistricting needs of school districts.
 - ✓ Parents are represented on the School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council that advises the board of education and legislature on implementation of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System and No Child Left Behind.
 - ✓ Federal law requires that parents be included on individual education planning meetings for students with special learning needs.
 - ✓ State law provides for four of the 19 members of the Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education to be parents.
 - ✓ Parents are included on school audit teams.

- **Parents are defined**, for the purpose of school-based decision making, as parents, stepparents, or foster parents, or a person who has legal custody of a student and with whom the student resides.

* Source for NCLB Section: Anne T. Henderson, *No Child Left Behind: What's In It for Parents?* Parent Leadership Associates, 2002

- The Kentucky Board of Education has a **policy statement** titled *Parent and Family Involvement Initiative* that recognizes the importance of the family’s role in educating children. It encourages schools to welcome parents and families and engage them in their child’s education. (See Tool Kit below to access a copy.)

- Yearly school and district report cards are required by state and federal law to give parents and citizens more information about their schools. See Chapter on Assessment and Accountability for details.

- The **Federal No Child Left Behind** (NCLB) law gives parents whose children attend Title I Schools, options in working to assure their children get a good education. NCLB requires states to set standards for learning in reading, math and science, assess student progress on meeting the standards and issue a report card that includes the percent of students reaching a proficient level of achievement as a whole and by subgroup. Goals are established that must be met for all students and by each subgroup based on ethnicity, poverty, English as a second language, and disabilities. Title I schools failing to reach the goals for all students and for each subgroup in reading and math fail to make “adequate yearly progress” and face consequences that give parents choices for their children. See Chapter on Assessment and Accountability for more information.

- The requirements for parent involvement are described in *No Child Left Behind: What’s In It for Parents?** as follows:
 - ✓ Every Title I school must have a **written parent involvement policy**, developed with and approved by parents.

 - ✓ **School-Parent Compact.** Every Title I school must have a school-parent compact, developed with and approved by parents, that describes how the school and parents will build a partnership to improve student achievement.

 - ✓ **District Policy.** Every school district must have a written Title I parent involvement policy that is developed with and approved by parents, and evaluated every year.

 - ✓ **Report Cards.** The school district must distribute a report card specifying how every school and the district as a whole are performing. This applies to all schools and districts.

 - ✓ **Public School Choice.** If a Title I school has not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) over the past two or more years, parents have two options. They can ask to transfer their children to a school that is making adequate progress. Or they can request supplemental services and become involved in improving the school...After three years of not making AYP, the school must

* Source for NCLB Section: Anne T. Henderson, *No Child Left Behind: What’s In It for Parents?* Parent Leadership Associates, 2002

provide “supplemental education services” to children who remain at the school.

- ✓ **State Review.** The state education agency must monitor the school districts’ Title I programs to make sure they carry out the law. If the district is not involving parents, parents and community members should appeal to the state.

* Source for NCLB Section: Anne T. Henderson, *No Child Left Behind: What’s In It for Parents?* Parent Leadership Associates, 2002

- **Title II.** All classroom teachers must be highly qualified (as defined by federal law). Parents may ask to see teacher credentials and parents of students assigned to teachers who do not meet the qualifications for the content area they are teaching must be notified.
- **Title III. Bilingual Education.** Schools and districts receiving Title III funds must develop plans to involve and effectively communicate with parents of children with limited English proficiency.
- **Title IV, Part A. Safe and Drug-Free Schools.** This provision allows parents of students who are victims of violence at school or who attend a “persistently dangerous school” to transfer to a safer public school. States must define “persistently dangerous.” Schools applying for Title IV funds must involve parents in establishing and carrying out these programs.

RESULTS

- A 50-member **Commissioner’s Parent Advisory Council** has been created to advise the Commissioner of Education on policy issues and increase the positive leadership of parents for improving public education in Kentucky. The commissioner meets with this state-level council four times each year.
- The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence sponsors the **Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership**, a program that prepares parents to understand Kentucky’s standards-based education system and become full partners with schools as they focus on student achievement. The first institute of was held in the fall of 1997. Since then over 1,300 parents have completed the training and have gone back to their schools and communities and developed projects that engage more parents in working to improve student achievement. Call (800) 928-2111, or Lexington area 233-9849, for more information.

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence also sponsors, with assistance from The Kentucky Center, a two-day program that enables parents to understand how the arts support core content and what they can do to support the arts in their schools. The first **Parents and Teachers as Arts Partners**, with parents attending with a teacher from their school, was held in 2005. Call (800) 928-2111, or Lexington area 233-9849, ext. 231 for more information.

Starting Strong is a program that the Prichard Committee has adapted from its Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership for parents of preschool children. The program brings parents and early education and care teachers and administrators together for three days of training to build partnerships to improve outcomes for young children. For more information call 800-928-2111, Lexington area 859-233-9849 ext. 231.

* Source for NCLB Section: Anne T. Henderson, *No Child Left Behind: What’s In It for Parents?* Parent Leadership Associates, 2002

In 2002 the Prichard Committee launched the **Center for Parent Leadership** in response to requests from across the country for assistance in developing parent involvement programs like the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership. This consulting arm of the Committee focuses on development of parent involvement programs and training that target improved student achievement. For more information contact the Center for Parent Leadership at the Prichard Committee. (See below for contact information.)

Parent graduates of the Prichard Committee's Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership in Fayette County, worked with the district and other community leaders to find ways the district could support parent involvement. The result was development of a **Parent Involvement Tool Kit for School Leaders**, resources and ideas intended to help educators and parent leaders think about and plan to increase parent involvement. Hard copies of the Tool Kit were made available to each school in Fayette County, but no longer available. However, a Web-based tool kit was developed on the Fayette County Schools' Web site and is available to anyone with Internet access at <http://www.fcps.net/fcs/>. A hard copy of the table of contents with a list and description of each item in the tool kit is available for \$10 from the Prichard Committee. See below.

- The Kentucky Department of Education Web site has a section for parents that allows parents to sign up for updates from the department, see your school report card, and find other valuable information. Visit it at <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Student+and+Family+Support/Parents+and+Families/default.htm>, or go to <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Default.htm> and click on "Parents & Families" on the left side of the first page.
- **GEAR UP, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Education Programs**, is a federal program designed to encourage and support middle and high school students to attend post secondary education. It targets low income students and those who traditionally do not attend college and their parents. (See Chapter on High Schools for more information.)
- The **Partnership Cadre for School and Community Development** is a group selected and trained by the Partnership for Successful Schools to help schools and communities work together to improve student achievement. Many participants are parents.

WHAT'S NEW

- The Commissioner's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC) published *The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle: Recommendations for Involving Families and Community in Improving Student Achievement* in June 2007. Former Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit gave parents on the Council this charge: "My goal is outstanding practice to involve parents in every school in Kentucky. Your charge

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is to pull together an agenda for the state and produce a document that builds on what exists and pushes us to a higher level.”

Members of CPAC recommended that Kentucky become the first state in the nation to set a standards for family and community involvement focused on improving student achievement and developed *The Missing Piece* as a model. It is a comprehensive performance assessment tool that includes six objectives designed to involve families and the community to improve student achievement along with performance descriptors that can be used as a rubric or scoring guide. The descriptors include provisions that every student in Kentucky have a parent, or another adult, who knows how to support that student’s academic achievement. Parents are defined for this purpose as parents, adoptive or foster parents, close relatives, legal or educational guardians and/or community or agency advocates.

The objectives include:

1. **Relationship-building:** The school staff builds productive, personal relationships with parents of all students.
2. **Communication:** Two-way information in many forms flows regularly between school staff and parents about students’ academic achievement and individual needs.
3. **Decision-making:** School staff encourages, supports and expects parents to be involved in school improvement decisions and to monitor and assist school improvement.
4. **Advocacy:** For each student, the school staff identifies and supports a parent or other adult who can take personal responsibility for understanding and speaking for that child’s learning needs.
5. **Learning Opportunities:** The school staff ensures that families have multiple opportunities to understand how to support their children’s learning.
6. **Community Partnerships:** The school staff engages and partners with community members to plan and implement substantive work to improve student achievement.

To implement these objectives, CPAC recommended that the Kentucky Department of Education:

1. **Set high expectations, measure performance, and report progress** and adopt the guide as an audit tool that can serve as a scoring guide, or rubric and incorporate the performance descriptors into the Standards and Indicators for School Improvement (SISI) document.
2. **Help schools improve relationship-building and communications.** Encourage schools to adopt a “customer satisfaction” model through training modules, making data and other information on family involvement available and establishing family and community involvement advisory councils at all levels — local, district and state.

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3. **Provide resources and support** for districts and schools including training, resources, tools, and recognition for achievement in family and community involvement, adding reader-friendly information to the KDE website.
4. **Build capacity through professional development** for parents (fund statewide parent leadership training, develop a parent education curriculum for monitoring a student's progress, develop a diverse network of parents who are trained to act as mentors, trainers, and team members for school, district and state-level work); and for educators (professional development on strategies for engaging families in improving student achievement), joint training on cultural competence and SBDM councils, and audit teams on the effective use of the new objectives and performance descriptors. Also evaluate impact of this work on levels of family and community involvement, teacher satisfaction, school climate, and student outcomes and recognize schools and districts that have fully implemented the new objectives.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- ★ **Check** with the Prichard Committee to learn when and how a Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership will be offered in your area: (800) 928-2111, Lexington area 233-9849 ext. 231 or visit the Web site at <http://www.cipl.org/>.
- ★ **Review** your school and district report cards, available from your school or district offices and in the parent section of the Kentucky Department of Education Web site.
- ★ **Ask** to see your school's test scores broken out by gender, race, poverty and so on or visit the Kentucky Department of Education Web site at www.education.ky.gov. You can also visit <http://www.just4kids.com> or <http://www.schoolresults.org>, national Web sites with individual school data. If your school has significant achievement gaps, volunteer to help establish targets for and develop plans to close the gaps. Attend school and district meetings required by law to present these plans to the public.
- ★ **Ask** to see a copy of the *Core Content for Assessment* and the *Program of Studies*, guides for teachers to use as they prepare curriculum and instruction. Visit the Department of Education Web site at <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Default.htm> for a copy. The Kentucky Association of School Councils has Core Content Cards, a tool to help review and plan curriculum for parents and educators (859) 238-2188. Hold a discussion about curriculum and instruction with the PTA, school council curriculum committee, or other groups of parents.
- ★ **Ask** to see a copy of your Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) to see how your school intends to improve student learning. **Get involved** with the planning process.

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★ **Visit** the Parent Involvement Tool Kit for School Leaders Web site for ideas on how to get parents in your school more engaged in student learning. (www.fcps.net/fcs/)

★ **Encourage** your school to become a Welcoming School. A Welcoming School encourages parents and the public to become more involved in education by implementing the following practices. Call the Prichard Committee for more information (see below).

- ✓ Display a mission statement committing the work of the school to students, families, and the community it serves.
- ✓ Reflect an orderly and safe environment conducive to effective learning by students and productive work by staff.
- ✓ Display internal and external signs welcoming visitors to the school.
- ✓ Use friendly language to describe what visitors should do when entering the school.
- ✓ Have designated parking areas for visitors.
- ✓ Employ staff who are friendly to visitors, provide needed information easily, and answer the phone in a way that makes callers glad they have called the school.
- ✓ Set standards of welcoming behavior for all staff and volunteers, including bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers.
- ✓ Display students' academic work throughout the building.
- ✓ Display large readable signs with directions to such areas as the library, gym, cafeteria, and restrooms.
- ✓ Have an identified and furnished work space for parents and other volunteers.
- ✓ Have a cheerful and furnished waiting area for visitors.
- ✓ Have clearly written information available to parents and visitors explaining school philosophy and programs and how a person can be involved.
- ✓ Have an outside marquee, readable from the street, which carries notices of meetings, and recognition of students/staff/organizations.
- ✓ Allow staff to be easily accessible to parents.
- ✓ Produce a climate that is cheerful and student-centered.
- ✓ Ensure that students demonstrate friendly and courteous behavior.

★ **Organize a Parents and Teachers Talking Together (PT3)** for your school. This is a meeting where teachers and parents discuss goals for children in their school and actions to achieve those goals. Contact the Prichard Committee for more information.

★ **Get a copy** of *Conway Middle School: Student-Led Conferences* and encourage your school to consider involving students in parent-teacher conferences. (Available at <http://www.prichardcommittee.org>, under publications.)

★ **Run** for a seat on your school council or your school board or work to find good candidates. (See Chapters on School-based Decision Making and Governance.)

★ **Get copies** of *The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle* and share it with your principal, school council members and PTA leaders. **Suggest using it as a guide** for

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increasing parent/family involvement to improve student achievement. (Available at <http://www.education.ky.gov> and search for Parents & Families.)

- ★ **Contact** the Prichard Committee's Center for Parent Leadership, the Kentucky Association of School Councils or the PTA for information about workshops on involving parents. See contact information below.
- ★ **Encourage** local business owners to use the *Learning Equals Earning Employee Communications Packet* developed by the Partnership for Successful Schools for ways to help employees support education. Topics include reading, math, science, summer learning, technology, quality teaching, workplace skills and back-to-school issues. **Ask** for a copy of the packet which also includes good information for parents. See below.
- ★ **Visit** the Prichard Committee Web site or call for a copy of the *Glossary of Kentucky Education Terms*. Share it with others.
- ★ **Volunteer** to serve on a school council committee.
- ★ **Get involved** with your PTA/PTO/PTSA. Learn about their Rock and Read program to involve senior citizens in reading with children. If your school does not have a PTA, **form** one. Call the Kentucky PTA office at (502) 226-6607.
- ★ **Stay in contact with your state legislators**. Call and leave a message for legislators on the Legislative Message Line at (800) 372-7181; write to legislators at Capitol Annex, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601; send an e-mail message. The Legislative Research Commission Web site at <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/> has an icon at the bottom of the home page that allows you to e-mail legislators.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

- **Kentucky Association of School Councils** (859) 238-2188 or visit their website at <http://www.kasc.net>
- **Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers** at (502) 226-6607
- **Kentucky Department of Education** at (502) 564-4201 or visit the website at <http://www.education.ky.gov>
- **Parent Involvement Tool Kit for School Leaders, Prichard Committee and Fayette County Public Schools**, available online only at <http://www.fcps.net/fcs/>
- **Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence**, P. O. Box 1658, Lexington, KY 40588-1658; (859) 233-9849 or (800) 928-2111; e-mail: admin@prichardcommittee.org or visit the website at <http://www.prichardcommittee.org>

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- **Center for Parent Leadership**, <http://www.centerforparentleadership.org>
- **Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership**, <http://www.cipl.org>

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