



Investment Partner in Renaissance 2010

2009 New Ventures in Education Seminar:

Building Partnerships: Parental Engagement Best Practices from Ren10 schools

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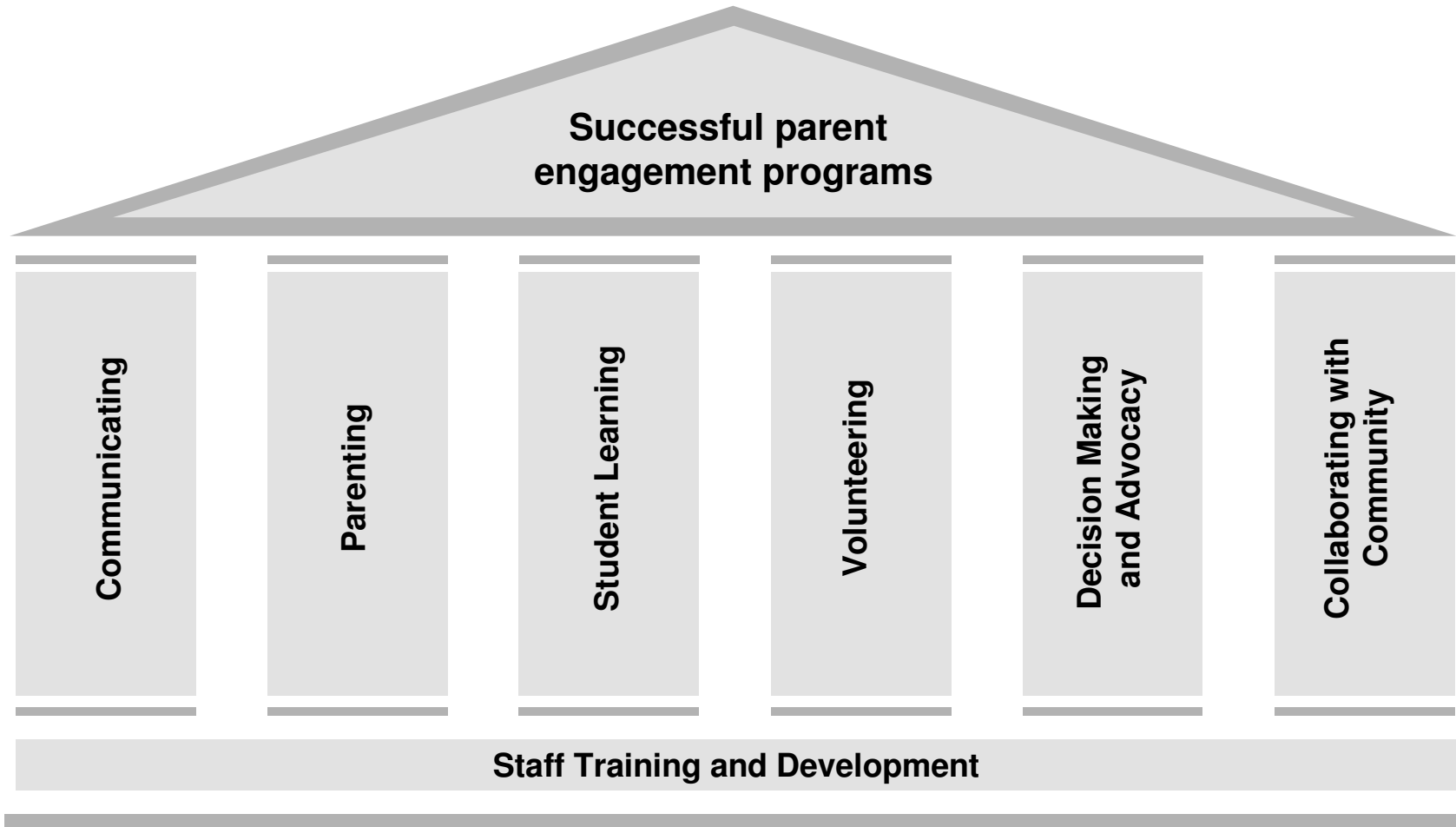
Creating a New Market of Public Education

Schools need to empower parents to serve as partners in education

- Parent-school interaction approached as a positive collaboration with all families; students arrive at the new school with a clean slate
- Dedicated staff trained to work in broad range of family contexts and with full spectrum of student needs; resources allocated to vigilantly track family changes
- Active collaboration with community service agencies to ensure basic family needs are met
- Accommodations made and training provided to allow all families to participate in school activities and engage in homework assignments
- Parent workshops and training classes, tutoring programs, increased teacher availability outside of regular school hours
- Unique educational models and programs to address full range of student needs, abilities, and prior academic preparation

Passion and collaborative culture fostered by Ren10 educators key enablers of successful parent engagement

Best practice for parent engagement recognizes six primary pillars for successful parent engagement programs



Each pillar characterized by number of key building blocks addressed through school practices and strategies

Sources: Joyce L. Epstein, Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University (1995); National PTA "National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs" (1997).

Schools should utilize a variety of strategies to ensure strong communication within an urban environment (1)



		Examples: effective practices and strategies in use	
Communicating	Key building blocks		
	Variety of tools in use for communications to parents	Dedicated parent page on school website frequently updated with information regarding school calendar, resources, newsletter, outreach from community service organizations (NLCP)	Parent cafe held on monthly basis as open forum between principal and parents; opportunity for discussion regarding school activities, operations, and planning (CICS Irving Park)
	Frequent sharing of information with parents	Nightly student assignment book includes homework, test results, behavioral updates, notes from teachers; must be signed by parents and returned each morning (Providence Englewood)	Mandatory end-of-day student pickup used as opportunity for teachers and administrators to conduct impromptu parent conferences as issues might arise (Frazier Prep)
	Clear transmission of critical information	Weekly packet sent home in "Tuesday Folder", organized by items to remain home and those needing to be signed and returned to school; follow-up call if student does not return (Polaris)	Series of mandatory Saturday enrichment and orientation classes for new parents to provide essential information regarding curriculum and expectations (Providence Englewood)
	Regular progress reports and updates distributed	Formal progress reports distributed at least once per term at all schools with mandatory pick-up by parents	Day-to-day updates of student progress available on-line for parents to view via Power School software platform (Frazier Prep, U of C Woodlawn, NLCP)
Formal parent teacher conferences	Standard parent-teacher conference format with large scheduling blocks and alternative locations made available to accommodate parent needs (Providence Englewood)	Student-led conferences require students to prepare presentation describing educational goals, achievements, struggles (NLCP, Polaris)	

Schools should utilize a variety of strategies to ensure strong communication within an urban environment (2)



		Examples: effective practices and strategies in use	
Communicating	Key building blocks		
	Informal activities to promote family-educator interaction	Weekend social events and field trips organized for parents and children (Providence Englewood, U of C Woodlawn)	All families greeted each day at entrance to the school by administration, providing opportunity for informal conversations and interactions (Polaris)
	Immediate contact regarding concerns or positive achievement	Power School student information system enables real-time electronic access to grades, attendance, assignments, teacher concerns by both school and families (Frazier Prep, U of C Woodlawn, NLCP)	Each teacher required to record 10 calls in the "Happy Call Log" each month; report positive achievement to parents (CICS Irving Park)
	Opportunities for parent review of school work	Twice weekly community circles, celebrations held at end of learning expeditions provide families with opportunity to see results of student work (Polaris)	Nightly student assignment book includes results of previous student work for parent review (Providence Englewood)
	Parent scheduling, language, child care needs met to facilitate participation	Provisions for childcare, meals, Spanish translation, scheduling needs when planning parent-teacher meetings (NLCP)	Scheduling for parent-teacher conferences begins five weeks in advance with numerous large time blocks provided as options to accommodate all schedules (Polaris)

Parenting programs reach out to parents to promote positive parenting practices in the home



Parenting	Key building blocks	Examples: effective practices and strategies in use	
	Aid to parents seeking community programs and support services	School mission to serve as intermediary linking parents and students with social service providers in the community (NLCP)	School discretely provides resources and facilities to families (e.g. laundry, kitchen) when need arises (Polaris)
	Outreach to all families	Attendance at parenting events made mandatory with fines for lack of compliance (Providence Englewood)	Parents directly approached through "Playground Outreach" and told that their presence at school activities is both valued and valuable (CICS Irving Park)
	Communication to parents re: importance of relationships with their children	Effective parenting enrichment classes and workshops (U of C Woodlawn, Providence Englewood)	Full time non-CPS social worker on-site to work with families and address underlying family sources of student issues at school (Polaris)
	Accessible information and resource center for families	On-site parent resource and social activity center (U of C Woodlawn, Polaris)	Sections of parent website dedicated to support services, job listings, social service organizations, financial resources available in community (NLCP)
	Classes and workshops to support parent development	Evening and weekend parenting classes and workshops offered (U of C Woodlawn, Providence Englewood)	Workshops for parents offered with emphasis upon transition to college years and supporting student through post-secondary education (NLCP)
	Respect for cultural, religious, parenting traditions	On-campus behavioral code for parents framed as school policy rather than prescription for how to raise one's children (CICS Irving Park)	"Clean Slate" policy; all parents and children begin at school with clean slate regardless of past troubles at different schools (Frazier Prep)

Student learning programs ensure that parents are active partners in their child's education



Student learning	Key building blocks	Examples: effective practices and strategies in use	
	Parents participate in curricular decision-making process	Parent-teacher community organization (PTCO) empowered with voice in curriculum development, policies, and regulations (U of C Woodlawn)	Family involvement group (FIG) provides input to daily execution of educational model in place at the school (CICS Irving Park)
	Parents enabled to provide homework help	"Home Connection" – accompanying pages to homework assignments with parent instructions (Frazier Prep)	All parents aware of student level on literacy step assessment and provided with worksheets to aid promotion (Polaris)
	Communication to parents of expectations for student performance	New parent orientation activities and workshops conducted at all schools	Individual student development plans in use at all schools and accompanied by review and goal-setting discussions on cyclical basis
	Homework assignments require parents and students to engage together on material	Parent worksheets accompanying homework enable parents to actively participate in completion of assignments (Frazier Prep, Providence Englewood)	Expeditionary learning model employed by school incorporates significant community and parent engagement in student learning (Polaris)
	Classes and workshops for parents to support student academic progress	Parent curricular and enrichment classes introduce parents to reading and math curricula (Providence Englewood, CICS Irving Park)	College preparation workshops enable parents to navigate college application process and requirements, standardized testing, financial aid (NLCP)
	Parents partners in goal setting and education planning with students	Mandated parent involvement in individualized student academic plan development at all schools	Parents full partners in Phoenix Rising summer college enrichment application as critical piece of post-secondary planning (NLCP)

Volunteer opportunities are leveraged to build parent-school relationships



Volunteering	Key building blocks	Examples: effective practices and strategies in use	
	Parents feel welcomed and valued at the school	Parent Observation Model in place formalizing opportunity for parents to observe and participate in classroom activities (CICS Irving Park)	Parents welcomed within the school during classroom hours and invited to participate in classroom activities (U of C Woodlawn)
	Parent needs met to facilitate participation	Parents unable to volunteer during school hours provided with tasks that can be completed at home upon request (Frazier Prep)	Evening and weekend opportunities to volunteer including safety patrol, coaching, fundraising, security (U of C Woodlawn)
	Volunteer assignments matched with parent skills and interests	Parents utilized in student goal setting through participation in career day activities during which discuss their own occupation (U of C Woodlawn)	Informal process with wide range of flexible opportunities available and matches based upon parent interest (Frazier Prep)
	Systems in place to facilitate volunteer coordination and training	Family Involvement Group (FIG) central organization facilitating parent volunteer activities within the school (CICS Irving Park)	Parent Teacher Community Organization (PTCO) central organization facilitating parent volunteer activities within the school (U of C Woodlawn)
	Recognition shown to parents for their contributions	Parents have opportunity to be recognized as "Light Leaders" within the school community for extraordinary contributions (Polaris)	Parent contributions always treated positively and as constructive to school's growth, rather than as critique of staff (CICS Irving Park)
	Parents provided with dedicated space within the school	Parent room with lounge area, computer terminals, kitchen facilities located on-site (Polaris)	Parent center serves as gathering point, social outlet, resource center for parents visiting the school (U of C Woodlawn)

Opportunities are created for parent input in the decision-making processes (1)



Decision making	Key building blocks	Examples: effective practices and strategies in use	
	Parents trained to participate on boards, decision-making bodies	Significant involvement from principal during formation of Family Involvement Group (FIG) to ensure understand role and processes (CICS Irving Park)	Key parent leaders onboard newly active participants in PTCO activities (U of C Woodlawn)
	Formation of parent groups is encouraged	Highly active PTA with governing structure and functional roles mandated by school contract (Frazier Prep)	Parent Teacher Community Organization (PTCO) empowered with decision-making authority and key advocacy roles (U of C Woodlawn)
	Parents provide input into all decision-making committees	Parents and community together form 1/3 of governing board with participation on all committees (NLCP)	PTA role in governance mandated by school contract (Frazier Prep)
	Processes to be involved in decision-making and advocacy well-publicized	School cluster governing board includes chair from each PTCO who ensures that local school community involved in all significant decisions (U of C Woodlawn)	Parents approached on individual basis and encouraged to attend meetings and events (CICS Irving Park)
	Communication of school policies, practices, performance data is consistent	Standard CPS reporting mechanisms and scorecards across all schools including mandated Ren10 reporting compliance	Parent orientation and observation opportunities prior to enrollment provides clear communication to parents regarding school policies and practices to ensure parents comfortable with model (Polaris)

Opportunities are created for parent input in the decision-making processes (2)



		Examples: effective practices and strategies in use	
Decision making	Key building blocks		
	Parents active partners in student placement, education planning	Mandated parent involvement in individualized student academic plan development at all schools	Parents kept informed of student placement in step literacy assessment and provided with tools to help push forward (Polaris)
	Parents treated as partners in setting of school goals, policies	Phased-in growth of school across grade levels with parent input into curriculum, school mission, policies at each stage (U of C Woodlawn)	Within context of school mission and curricular framework, parent input sought in day-to-day details of execution (CICS Irving Park)
	Respect and interest is shown to parental concerns	Commitment to treat parent input as constructive rather than combative and recognize value of suggestions being proposed (CICS Irving Park)	Parent concerns expressed formally via feedback survey at regular intervals (NLCP)
	Genuine intent to use parent input in decisions	Parent organizations empowered with decision-making authority (U of C Woodlawn, Frazier Prep, NLCP)	Parent input solicited directly by principal and treated as valuable decision-making resource (CICS Irving Park)

Community partnerships help to strengthen engagement



Collaborating with community	Key building blocks	Examples: effective practices and strategies in use	
	Partnerships formed with local businesses and service groups	School utilizing its social capital to serve as intermediary between families and social service providers (NLCP)	Parent volunteers assist with school community service campaigns (U of C Woodlawn)
	Collaboration with service agencies to support families	Service agencies supporting school families in turn supported by school through reciprocal volunteerism (U of C Woodlawn)	Relationships between school and service agencies to ensure resources on-call in case of emergency (Williams Elementary)
	Information about community resources available to families	Portions of parent website link families to community resources (NLCP)	On-site parent center with collected information about resources available (U of C Woodlawn)
	Employers encouraged to adopt policies enabling parent involvement	Not currently observed among Ren10 schools	Not currently observed among Ren10 schools
	Community an active participant in school volunteerism	Community organizations engaged in learning expeditions e.g. Organic farm support school garden (Polaris)	Broader community engaged in planning and preparation for school opening (CICS Irving Park)
	Communications about school provided to the entire community	Classroom observation, parent cafe events open to community as a whole to attend (CICS Irving Park)	Community invited to open houses, celebrations, festivals, information nights in order to communicate mission and successes of school (Williams Elementary)

A benchmark template is an essential tool for evaluating the success of parent engagement initiatives (1)

	Key building blocks	In place? X / ✓	Effectiveness ● / ● / ●	Primary Strategies	Key Challenges
Communicating	Variety of tools in use for communications to parents				
	Frequent sharing of information with parents				
	Clear transmission of critical information				
	Regular progress reports and updates distributed				
	Formal parent-teacher conferences				
	Informal activities to promote family-educator interaction				
	Immediate contact regarding concerns or positive achievement				
	Opportunities for parent review of school work				
	Parent needs met to facilitate participation				
Parenting	Aid to parents seeking community support services				
	Outreach to all families				
	Communication re: importance of relationships with children				
	Accessible information and resource center				
	Classes and workshops to support parent development				
	Respect for cultural, religious, parenting traditions				

Benchmark template (2)

	Key building blocks	In place? X / ✓	Effectiveness ● / ● / ●	Primary Strategies	Key Challenges
Student learning	Parents participate in curricular decision-making processes				
	Parents enabled to provide homework help				
	Communication to parents of expectations for performance				
	Homework assignments require parent-student engagement				
	Classes and workshops for parents to support student academic progress				
	Parents partners in goal setting and academic planning				
Volunteering	Parents feel welcomed and valued at the school				
	Parent needs met to facilitate participation				
	Volunteer assignments matched with parent skills and interests				
	Systems in place to facilitate volunteer coordination and training				
	Recognition shown to parents for their contributions				
	Parents provided with dedicated space within the school				

Benchmark template (3)

	Key building blocks	In place? X / ✓	Effectiveness ● / ● / ●	Primary Strategies	Key Challenges
Decision making and Advocacy	Parents trained to participate on boards, decision-making bodies				
	Formation of parent groups is encouraged				
	Parents provide input into all decision-making committees				
	Process to be involved in decision-making well publicized				
	Communication of school policies, practices, performance data consistent				
	Parents active partners in student placement, education planning				
	Parents treated as partners in setting of school goals, policies				
	Respect and interest is shown to parental concerns				
	Genuine intent to use parent input in decisions				
Community collaboration	Partnerships formed with local businesses and service groups				
	Collaboration with service agencies to support families				
	Information about community resources available to families				
	Employers encouraged to adopt policies enabling parent involvement				
	Community active participant in school volunteerism				
	Communications about school provided to entire community				