

National Standards

— *for* —

Parent/Family Involvement Programs

National PTA®

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Foreword

Affirming the significance of parent and family involvement has been a priority of the National PTA since its founding. Over the past 100 years, National PTA has consistently demonstrated that effectively involving parents and families in support of children and their education produces meaningful and lasting results.

In the midst of the current climate of education reform, National PTA maintains what numerous research studies and years of experience as advocates on behalf of children have demonstrated to be true: *Parent and family involvement increases student achievement and success.*

The overall importance of parent and family involvement, as the foundation for all other education reforms, warrants the same consideration and attention as other areas for which national standards are being developed. Therefore, the establishment of standards to guide parent involvement programs and evaluate their quality and effectiveness is crucial.

The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs were developed by the National PTA in cooperation with education and parent involvement professionals through the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE). Building upon the six types of parent involvement identified by Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University, National PTA created program standards of excellence. These standards, together with their corresponding quality indicators, were created to be used in conjunction with other national standards and reform initiatives in support of children's learning and success.

In recent years, through unwavering advocacy efforts, National PTA secured parent involvement as one of the eight National Education Goals:

Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of children.

It is with this fundamental goal in mind that the National PTA invites all education and parent involvement representatives to support these National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs, so that student success can soar—in school and beyond.

Lois Jean White, National PTA President, 1997–1999

Ginny Markell, National PTA President-Elect, 1997–1999

Joan Dykstra, Immediate Past National PTA President, 1995–1997

Why National Standards?

National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs

- Standard I:** Communicating—Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- Standard II:** Parenting—Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- Standard III:** Student Learning—Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Standard IV:** Volunteering—Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- Standard V:** School Decision Making and Advocacy—Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Standard VI:** Collaborating with Community—Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

Introduction

Over 30 years' research has proven beyond dispute the positive connection between parent* involvement and student success. Effectively engaging parents and families in the education of their children has the potential to be far more transformational than any other type of education reform.

The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs and their quality indicators are research based and grounded in both sound philosophy and practical experience. The purpose for the standards is threefold:

- To promote meaningful parent and family participation
- To raise awareness regarding the components of effective programs
- To provide guidelines for schools** that wish to improve their programs

* Throughout this document are references to "parent" involvement. All such references may be interpreted broadly to include the adults who play an important role in a child's family life, since other adults—grandparents, aunts, uncles, step-parents, guardians—may carry the primary responsibility for a child's education, development, and well-being.

** Throughout this document are references to "schools." All such references may be interpreted broadly to include other programs that serve children and families, i.e., other academic, specialty, or community programs.

The program standards are guidelines for leaders of institutions with programs serving parents and families. Therefore, the intended audience includes principals, administrators, educators, and parents who are in positions to influence and improve parent involvement programs. When the standards are used as guidelines, they can direct leaders as they move from discussion to action in developing dynamic programs to improve student achievement through parent involvement. As with any effective long-term reform, the overall integration and implementation of standards should be based on local needs and circumstances.

The National PTA will regularly review and revise the standards to ensure that they are dynamic and responsive to future demographic trends and research. Future versions will be shaped through collaboration with other groups working on standards for teacher preparation, core academic content, and other related school reform initiatives.

Special features of this guide

The research that led to the development of the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs is summarized in the following section. The **research summary** provides insights to how parent and family involvement is directly linked to student success, quality schools, and effective reform strategies.

Research studies indicate that although the six program standards are closely related, each produces distinct, and in many cases, unique gains for students, parents, or schools. **Quality indicators**, listed with each program standard, identify the important elements of each standard if those distinctions and unique gains are to be realized. They inform local leaders about what contributes to effective programs and fosters success.

Gains for students are greatest when parents participate in activities in each of the six standard areas; therefore, **sample applications** for putting ideas into action accompany each program standard. Also included, in Appendix A, are checklists for the quality indicators of each program standard to help assess how effectively each standard is represented in parent involvement programs.