

St. Martin Parish School Board PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY

Parent Involvement: Empowering parents to participate in their children's education.

The St. Martin Parish School Board recognizes that parental involvement is the key to academic achievement. The term *parent* refers to any caregiver who assumes responsibility for nurturing and caring for children, including parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster parents, stepparents, etc. Studies demonstrate that when parents are involved in their children's education, the attitudes, behaviors, and achievement of students are positively enhanced.

Parents and families provide the primary educational environment for children; consequently, parents are vital and necessary partners with the educational communities throughout their children's school career. Although parents come to the schools with diverse cultural backgrounds, primary languages, and needs, universally all parents want what is best for their children. Parental involvement must be a focus in the classroom if schools are to be able to achieve high academic standards and create productive citizens. Schools in collaboration with parents, teachers, students and administrators, must establish and develop efforts that enhance parental involvement and reflect the needs of students, parents, and families in the communities which they serve.

District personnel provide coordination and technical assistance needed by schools' planning and implementing effective parental involvement activities. District personnel will present activities to build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement. Two Family Involvement Coordinators and six Parental Involvement Coordinators are available for consultation, assistance and presentation of parental involvement activities. Video, audio, and printed materials to use in preparation of and/or presentation of parental involvement activities are available at the District Office.

The district assigned a parental involvement coordinator (PIC) to each Title I school who acts as a liaison between the parent & the school in an effort to sustain & build upon the effort provided by the District's Parental Policy Plan. The PICs meet monthly, with partnerships from district personnel, community leaders, & parents, to plan & organize parent activities at the school & district level to improve student achievement. Two parish-wide meetings are held for parents. Parents are informed of topics such as content standards, accountability/testing, etc. Also, each school addresses this issue in their School Improvement Plan.

Employing group presentations and individual meetings, school personnel, with assistance from District & Title I personnel, will promote parental understanding of the State's Academic content standards, State student achievement standards, and State and local assessments. These presentations will occur at the beginning of each academic year and upon receipt of assessment results. Presentations will provide detailed overviews of the standards and assessments along with suggestions for monitoring student's progress and improving student achievement.

Six Parent Centers staffed by Parent Involvement Coordinators and stocked with an abundance of educational materials and equipment are located throughout the district. Parent Centers are available for all community members. Coordinators are available to provide individual or group assistance with the selection of activities to improve student performance. Parent Centers host a minimum of one parent training per month. Training topics are selected based upon parents' needs/requests and issues/topics identified by school personnel.

Workshops using Dr. Ruby Payne's "A Framework for Understanding Poverty" will be presented to facilitators from each school who, in turn, will train personnel at their respective schools. This training will address many of the issues influencing effective parental involvement.

At the onset of each year & quarterly, a collaborative agency partnership meeting is held between Headstart, Office of Family Support, DHH Infant Toddler Social Services, Title I & LA4 representatives to discuss the program year & outreach for parental involvement (ways to discuss parental involvement in programs i.e. Dad's Day, home visits, annual parent meetings). The Title I Family Involvement staff (Family Involvement Coordinators & Parental Involvement Coordinators) design, prepare and implement activities addressing the needs of parents of students enrolled in all Prek-6 programs. Phone calls and flyers sent home with students and/or posted throughout communities are used to invite parents of all the Prek programs (Title I, LA4, EEF, 8g) to attend these activities. Information about Family Center Resources & parent training activities are disseminated to all parents of students at these grade levels. Selection of resources and activities are made in collaboration with Prek teachers and the Early Learning Supervisor.

In order to enhance parental involvement, **six essential elements** should be promoted:

1. **Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful:** Effective communication requires school-initiated contact with the parent and parent-initiated contact with the school where both parties provide vital information about a child's strengths, challenges, and accomplishments. To effectively communicate, both parties must be aware of issues such as cultural diversity and language differences and appropriate steps must be taken to allow clear communication for all participants. LEP tutors are available to translate oral or print materials sent to homes of parents whose dominant language is not English.
2. **Responsible parenting is promoted and supported:** The family plays a primary role in a child's education, and schools must respect and honor traditions and activities unique to a community's cultural practices and beliefs. Parents are linked to programs and resources within the community that provide support services to families.
3. **Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning:** Educators recognize and acknowledge parents' roles as the integral and primary facilitator of their children's education. Research demonstrates that student achievement increases when parents are actively involved in the learning process.
4. **Schools are open and inviting to parents and families and are actively seeking parental support and assistance for school programs:** Parents are welcome in the school. Their support and assistance are sought. Capitalizing on the expertise and skills of the parents strengthens the family, school and community partnership.

- 5. Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families:** Parents and educators have a joint responsibility to make informed decisions related to all aspects of education provided to St. Martin Parish's youth. The role of parents in shared decision making should be continually evaluated, refined, and expanded.

Activities to promote effective participation of parents in decision making will include, but is not limited to:

- a. At least one parent, who is NOT a St. Martin Parish school employee, will serve as a member of each school's advisory council as an equal member.
- b. Parent representatives will be involved in the development, review and evaluation applications for State and/or Federal funds.
- c. District personnel will provide coordination and technical assistance needed in schools' planning and implementing effective parental involvement activities.
- d. District personnel will present activities to build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement.
- e. Periodic collaboration of personnel in charge of school, State and Federal program parental involvement projects will coordinate activities at the school and district levels.
- f. A District Parent Advisory Council consisting of a parent representative from each school (to include parents who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background) will meet at least twice each year. Once at the beginning of the school year to present the District Parental Involvement Policy and to discuss how the policy should be examined and monitored. Once at the end of the school year to evaluate the policy and consider suggestions for improvement. The policy is read and the effectiveness of each item is determined. Parents participate in a needs assessment at the end of each school term. Suggestions for improvements are reflected in the revised Parental Involvement Policy. The determination of barriers is made through information provided by school personnel, comments made at Parish Advisory Committee meetings, personal contact with parents, and responses provided on meeting evaluations.
- g. School, State and/or Federal programs will coordinate activities to involve parents in school activities. Some activities conducted are: District-wide parent/teacher conference days (two per year), school open house activities (including school's parental involvement plan/policy) at the beginning of each school year, inclusion of parents on school advisory councils, parent workshops to strengthen parenting skills and/or to focus on activities to improve students' academic performance. Individual schools and projects will provide additional activities.

6. **Community resources are made available to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning:** Schools and parents will cultivate relationships with additional members of the community in order to promote and effectively increase educational opportunities for children. The district has implemented a Partner in Education program which involves the community (business & parents) in adopting & partnering with schools. A yearly system report is published and distributed to parents and community leaders which includes test results, school accomplishments, programs and activities, and participating community leaders. Together, parents, educators and community members will join efforts toward identifying and promoting community resources and innovative programs for strengthening schools, families, and student learning.

Providing all St. Martin Parish's children with equal access to quality education is a primary goal. It is vital that all partners (parents, educators, communities, etc.) have the opportunity to provide input and offer resources to meet this goal. These partnerships are mutually beneficial. Developing cooperative efforts and linking access to resources will ensure improved academic achievement for all students, as well as quality schools.

Parents in Louisiana may contact this Parent Information and Resource Center for further information concerning No Child Left Behind and how to assist their children in meeting its requirements:

**Louisiana Promise,
Volunteers of America Highland Center,
520 Olive Street, Suite C-4,
Shreveport, LA 71104,
Phone: 318-429-6968,
Toll-Free Information Line: 1-866-751-6958**