

Parents - Students - Teachers - Community

A Toolkit for Successful Partnerships



Providence
Schools



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Schools

*This toolkit was created by the Rhode Island Parent Information Network
with funds from the Providence Public School Department.*

Dedication

The Office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) at the Providence School Department extends a special Thank You to the members of the district-wide Parent Advisory Council (PAC) for their participation in the creation of this handbook. This dedicated group of parents contributed significant time, effort, knowledge and experience to ensure that this toolkit included appropriate and necessary levels of information for every school in Providence to have a successful parent organization. Their contributions include practical strategies and best practices for parents, school staff and community partners to meaningfully engage in improvement efforts at their individual schools.

Due to the efforts of the following PAC members, this book will serve as a useful tool for meaningful parent engagement at every PSD school:

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Introduction

“All parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them”.



This quote from *Beyond the Bake Sale*¹ tells us that all parents want their children to succeed. Thirty years of research has proven that parent engagement in their child’s education is a key ingredient to that student’s success. Research has also shown us that parents can be involved in many different ways. A parent may choose to participate in the school’s parent orga-

nization, perhaps in a leadership role. Another parent may choose to be part of a school improvement team, or the district strategic planning team. One parent may decide to attend parent workshops to learn more about what their child is learning at school, and how to support that learning at home. Parents may choose to advocate at the community or state level for education reform. A parent may choose to volunteer their time in their child’s school, to support the learning of all children. Other parents may ensure that their child attends school daily, arrives on time, and completes homework assignments. Parent engagement has many faces.

¹ Henderson, A., Mapp, K., Johnson, V. and Davies, D. 2007. *Beyond the Bake Sale*, New York, New York: The New Press.

Dr. Karen Mapp, Anne Henderson, and Dr. Joyce Epstein have contributed to the research on the impact on parent engagement on student achievement. In *Beyond the Bake Sale*, Mapp and Henderson describe four types of schools and the level to which they welcome families to be involved. Using this book as a resource, schools are able to assess if they are moving toward establishing a true partnership with families.

Dr. Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University identified six types of parent involvement. This framework defines the ways families should be involved, and at the same time recognizes the challenges in fostering each type of involvement. The six types of parent involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community.

THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Epstein's Six Types of Involvement



Parenting:
Assist families in understanding child and adolescent development and in setting home conditions that support children as students at each grade level. Assist schools in understanding families.



Communicating:
Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.



Volunteering:
Improve recruitment, training, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school and in other locations to support students and school programs.



Learning at Home:
Involve families with their children in learning at home, including homework, other curriculum-related activities, and individual course and program decisions.



Decision Making:
Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through the PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, action teams, and other parent organizations.



Collaborating With the Community:
Coordinate community resources and services for students, families, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.

Most recently, the National PTA has revised their National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. These six standards which align with the work of Mapp, Henderson and Epstein, outline key aspects of parent engagement for schools and districts. Each standard in the assessment guide has a list of indicators which schools can use to measure their practices using a rubric. These standards have been included in the new RI Basic Education Plan.

National Standards for Family-School Partnerships



Chapter 1

Establishing a Parent Group



So you want to start a parent group? You may be asking yourself a couple of questions.

- *How will a parent group help my school and its students?*
- *What will this group do?*
- *What type of parent group should we be?*

This section will answer these questions.

A Parent Group is an important piece of each school community. Schools and teachers need the support of parents. The parent group creates an opportunity for parents to voice their opinions and shape the environment where their children go to school. These groups work best when there is a partnership with all parties who have a stake in children's education.

For the purposes of this handbook we will use the word "parent" to mean any caregiver who is important in the life of a child. This may include but is not limited to guardians, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, step parents, or adoptive parents.

In this chapter...

- Benefits of a Parent Group*
- Establishing a Group's Purpose*
- Bylaws*
- PTO or PTA*

A. Benefits of a Parent Group

A study by Temple University's Center for Research in Human Development and Education showed that out of 28 factors of learning; home environment and parent support ranked 4th. This demonstrates how important supporting parent involvement is to the success of our students. There is a lot of research on the topic of parent involvement. Research has found that increased parent involvement:

- Builds strong parent leaders
- Strengthens communication between parents and school
- Gives parents a higher respect for staff
- Gives staff a higher respect for parents
- Teaches parents how to use more positive approaches with students
- Improves student achievement
- Improves student attendance
- Makes students more motivated
- Gives students a higher self esteem
- Increases graduation rates
- Increases student enrollment in college
- Lowers suspension rates
- Decreases students risky behavior (drugs, violence)
- Increases parents use of community resources to help their children
- Improves community support of schools

Research not only gives us evidence that there is a positive impact when parents are our partners at school, it give us tools and programs that can be duplicated. This can save time and effort from creating programs and plans from scratch.

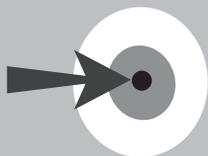


How will a parent group help my school and its students?

It **INCREASES** Parent Involvement!

Parent Involvement Researchers

Karen Mapp & Joyce Epstein



Karen Mapp's research focus is on education leadership and the partnership between school, parents, and community. Some of her publications are "Making the Connection between Families and Schools," published by the Harvard Education Letter (1997) and A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement (2002), which she coauthored with Anne Henderson.

Joyce L. Epstein has over one hundred publications on family and community involvement including School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, Third Edition (Corwin Press, 2009), School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools, second edition (Westview, 2011). Her research focus is on the affect of education leadership on programs for family and community involvement and their results for students.

B. Establishing the Group's Purpose

What will this group do? The following steps will define what your group will do.

1. Collect information

Start by surveying your school community. You can find premade surveys or create your own. The feedback from parents and staff can highlight the specific needs, strengths, and programs in your school community. On your survey you can include a way of letting parents and teachers indicate their interest in getting involved in the group (special skills, time availabilities, contact information). (See *sample Parent Teacher Survey in Appendix*)

2. Get to know your community

Every Providence school has data on their school website. This data includes information on gender, race/ethnicity, special education services, limited English proficiency, free and reduced lunch, academic testing results, attendance, and behavior. This information can help you understand your school's unique community. Review your school improvement plan to find out what the goals of the school are. Additional information is available on www.Infoworks.com. This website contains information about academics, behavior, teaching, health, engaging families and connectedness at the school, district, and state level. Knowing the make up of your school helps when gathering your team. A goal is to have your parent group represent your school community.

3. Define your purpose

Do you already have ideas about things you would like to improve? Before you get ahead of yourself make sure to build a strong foundation for your group. First you need to consider the role that the parent group will play in the school.

1. *Do you work as part of the school improvement team? If so you may focus more on supporting the goals set by the school improvement plan.*
2. *Are you independent from the school improvement team? Then you would set your own agenda and goals.*
3. *Will fundraising be a component of your group's work?*
4. *Who will the group report to?*
5. *Will the parent group take an advocacy role? On a local level? On a state level?*
6. *What is the group's mission and vision?*



- *You need approval from the principal for work you do regarding the school.*
- *Remember that the overall purpose of the parent group is the success of our students.*

4. Mission and Vision

When your group begins to meet, a written mission and vision statement will focus your group's efforts. (See sample Vision and Mission Statements in Appendix)

- A **vision statement** is a long term view of what the group hopes to accomplish.
- A **mission statement** describes why the group exists and what it does to accomplish its vision statement.

How do you begin to create a vision and mission?

"The process begins when you ask group members to consider why they joined or are thinking of joining your group. What do we want for our children in this community? What are our hopes and our fears? What do we want our children's school experience to be like? How do we see our parent group contributing to the achievement of our ideas about our children and their school?" www.ptatoday.com

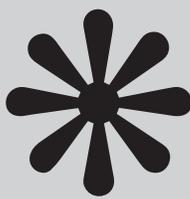
5. 501c3

Consider if your group will apply for 501c3 status. 501c3 is a tax exempt status (non profit status). This status is for a group that does not seek to make a profit, but will be pursuing a charitable, educational, or religious purpose.

(See Chapter 5 for more information)

501 c3 Benefits include:

- The group will not have to pay taxes.
- The group will be able to receive grants.
- People who donate money to the parent group can claim a tax deduction (Encouraging more donations).



KEEP in
MIND

- *There is a fee to apply for 501c3 tax exempt status.*
- *You will have to apply for tax exempt status at federal and state levels.*
- *You will be required to have bylaws and keep records of meeting minutes.*

C. Bylaws

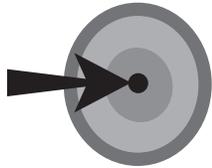
Bylaws are a set of procedures and rules that a group creates to build a strong foundation. They help to regulate the group's decisions, help the group remain focused, and build sustainability. While it is not required, it is good practice to have your bylaws reviewed by administrators such as the principal and the FACE office.

Some topics you may address in your bylaws:

- **Name:** What will you name your group?
- **Purpose:** What is the group's purpose?
- **Members:** Who can be a member?
- **Officers:** What roles need to be assigned? How long can I be an officer?
- **Executive Board:** Who is on the executive board?
- **Elections:** How many members need to be present to vote?
- **Meetings:** How to conduct a meeting? What is a quorum?
- **Finances:** How will you keep good records of budget and spending?
- **Committees:** Creating committees to work on specific issues.
- **Dissolution Clause:** How would you disband the group?

(See *sample PTO Bylaws Annotated* and *PTO Bylaws in Appendix*)

(See *Chapter 2* for more information)



D. PTA or PTO

We all hear people refer to parent groups as PTAs, PTOs, or by another name. We may think these are just interchangeable names with no specific differences. There are actually differences in these groups. PTA refers to a parent group that is affiliated with the National PTA. PTO or another name is a more general name for a parent group that functions independently.

PTA	PTO/Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local level parent group that is affiliated with a state PTA organization and National PTA • Professional affiliation with paid staff in Chicago and Washington DC, training available, conferences, free programs for PTAs, direct support from state PTA, national advocacy for educational issues, www.pta.org • Dues are required - \$5.00 per person • Depending on the state, insurance is required, but available through affiliation with National PTA • Nonprofit status is required and provided automatically through affiliation with National PTA • PTA is an advocacy group, has positions on issues, and has lobbyists. Local PTAs cannot publicly disagree with PTA positions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local level parent group that is independent of any other association • No formal organization. PTO Today Inc. is a media and service company with little staff, PTO Today website, PTO magazines, and free kits and shared files • Dues are not required. The local group may decide to have dues. • Insurance is not required, but any parent group is encouraged be insured. Lower rates are available through PTO Today Plus Program • Nonprofit status is not required, but available for a one time fee to the IRS • Positions on political issues and advocacy efforts are up to the local parent group

What type of
parent
group
should
we be?



Establishing a Parent Group CHECKLIST

• Benefits

- Assess what types of improvements you are trying to accomplish by creating a parent group*
- Look for research proven ways to address your goals*
- Read commonly used parent involvement resources (found in section IX)*

• Purpose

- Survey the school community*
- Look at the sample Parent Teacher Survey in the appendix*
- Read the school demographics information on the school's website*
- Visit www.infoworks.com to gain information about the school and district*
- Read the school improvement plan*
- Decide the purpose of your group*
- Write a mission and vision statement*
- See Sample Mission and Vision Statements in the appendix*
- Decide if you will apply for 501c3 tax exempt status*

• Bylaws

- Create a subcommittee to work on writing new bylaws or adapting existing bylaws*
- Look at the sample PTO Bylaws in the appendix*
- Read section IV Operational Strategies to learn more about using bylaws*

• PTA or PTO

- Plan a meeting with the State PTA organization for a presentation*
- Use the PTA vs. PTO/Other chart to inform your decision*
- Visit www.pta.org*
- Visit www.ptotoday.com*

Chapter 2

Building Your Team



After deciding to establish a parent group at your school, one of the biggest challenges is building your team.

It may seem to be a difficult task to recruit, train and maintain membership in your parent group. However, if you build your team with those thoughts in mind, it is a task that can easily be accomplished.

Am I the only one interested in starting parent group? You may be asking yourself a couple of questions.

- *How do I find other interested families?*
- *Does anyone at school want to be involved?*
- *What questions should I ask the principal as I form the team?*

This section will answer these questions.

In this chapter...

- Recruiting Parents*
- Recruiting Professionals*

Getting Started

If you begin to start to form a parent group on your own or with conjunction with a few other parents, it is best practice to partner with your principal to plan an information night to help recruit additional members. Consider holding the meeting on an evening where student work is showcased. Parents often come together when they share a common goal of promoting student success. Your group may begin to take shape after the meeting as you work together on a common purpose. Partner with your principal to advertise the event via phone message system, school website, and flyers home. (See Chapter 4 for more information)

Enlist the help of teachers and community partners to spread the word of your parent group to other parent volunteers already working within your schools. Meet with your principal to see how a parent group could benefit the school. Through the use of your parent zone, recruit other volunteers to help make phone calls and draft emails to other parents who may be interested in assisting with your group.



A. Recruiting Parents

As you begin to recruit members for your team, think about what the parent group hopes to accomplish. Identify what might keep parents from participating, and work to create a process that makes it as easy as possible for families to join.

1. Write a member description

To be successful in recruiting parents you must identify two important things.

- First, identify the benefits to joining the group. Potential participants may want to know what personal value membership may have.
- Second, you need to identify what you expect from

your members. Outline what their obligation will be if they commit to this group. Are there time commitments (such as monthly meetings)? Can a person be a member without attending meetings such as completing tasks at home? After you identify these key factors, then a description of a group member should be created.

Write a member description in easy to understand language that is inclusive and welcoming.

The description should:

- Be clear about what you are offering so parents know what to expect.
- Define the benefits of joining the group.
- Define the expected commitments, especially with regard to time.
- Explain any accommodations that will be made for parents to attend.
(ex. child care, transportation, food)

(See sample PTO Member Description in Appendix)

2. Advertise

Think about how information is exchanged in your community, and take advantage of those communication methods that are already working. Remember that people are more likely to volunteer if the request comes from someone whom they know and respect. Don't underestimate the power of using these standbys:

- Word of mouth
- School website and newsletter
- Presentations to community organizations
- Ask teachers to identify parents of their students who might be potential members
- Ask parents who volunteer to bring a friend
- District messaging system "Parent Link"

3. Engage all families

Are there groups of families that you have been unable to get to volunteer? Remember that people volunteer for many different reasons. Ask yourself the following questions as you try to connect with families:

- What are the barriers to volunteering? Have you addressed them in the volunteer description?
- Have you reached out to all parents in your school, in a way that is engaging? What groups may you need to reach out to in a specific way? (ex. parents of students with special needs, speakers of other languages)

4. Follow up

Even the best outreach efforts will not result in new membership unless you follow up with each potential member in a way that makes them feel welcome, and confident that joining your group will be a good use of their time.

- Find out why they are interested in joining and what their time schedules are.
- Keep track of contact information and return calls in timely manner.
- Let them know about next steps, including who to contact with questions.

Best Practices

Let families know about why they should join your parent group by advertising through:

- Word of mouth
- Recruit at community events
- Posters/flyers around town
- Public service announcements in newspapers and on the radio
- Direct phone calls to parents by parents



Translate Your Information with the Family Community Engagement Office - **FACE**

The Family and Community Engagement Office may be able to help translate your flyers into the most common languages spoken at your school. Translation is only one of the many services that the FACE office provides. This office can also assist with identifying effective ways to communicate within your local community.



Some Parents may feel they can't help because they:

- Are too busy
- Have a work schedule that conflicts with meeting times
- Have inadequate transportation
- Would need childcare
- Do not feel welcome
- Don't feel they have the skills needed
- Feel there is a language barrier

B. Recruiting Professionals

Who are the people at the school who can help?

1. School leadership

The principal is the leader of the school so it is important that he/she be involved. Before the group can begin making plans, it is crucial that you meet with the school principal to find out what their goals are for family engagement. These conversations are the first step in working together as equal partners. You should consider how you can work with the principal to establish clear expectations for parent/teacher collaboration.

Consider the following:

- What are your school's most pressing needs?
- What has the school identified as barriers to parent participation?
- What do you feel is needed if a parent group is to succeed at this school?
- Ask how the parent group can work to support the goals of the school improvement plan.
- Ask how the parent group can partner with the School Improvement Team (SIT).
- Offer to help the principal identify a parent volunteer who can keep parent leaders informed.



- Offer to help develop a role for the parent group in the school's parent involvement policy.
- Create a parent engagement committee made up of parents and teachers.

2. Teachers

As professionals in the classroom all day with your children, teachers see first hand what students need to succeed. They also have a unique opportunity to connect with families who want to help schools succeed in educating all children.

Try to meet with teachers who have engaged successfully with families at your school and ask if they can provide you with guidance as you build your parent group.

- Ask how a parent group could help improve academic achievement and school safety.
 - Find out which teachers take leadership roles at the school with their colleagues.
- Ask teachers to invite parents of their students to consider joining the parent group.
 - Identify at least one teacher who would be willing to serve on your parent group board. This will deepen the partnership with the school.

3. Front Office Staff

Staff working at the front desk are often asked to wear many hats. They may be expected to answer questions about the parent group, as well as ensure that all activity conforms to school policy. It is important to develop a positive and respectful relationship with the main office staff.

4. Other Educational Specialists

Staff people who work in different departments across the school often have frequent contact with families. Getting input from them will help you to build a strong network of support for your parent group.

- School nurses
- Special Education staff
- ELL specialists
- Title I Literacy specialists

Best Practices

- Determine what the policy is at your school to request time to meet with the principal to discuss the parent group.
- Talk with the principal when planning and coordinating events at your school.
- Parent group members can also serve on a Parent Advisory Council and/or the School Improvement Team to serve as a link between district, principal and parent group.
- The parent group could help schools meet parent involvement requirements in Title I schools by helping to design and evaluate school parent involvement policies.
- Let teachers know that your parent group wants to help support student success.
- Review your Home School Parent Compact.
- Attend the annual Title 1 Parent meeting at your school.



- *Principals may have limited time to work with the parent group because of other responsibilities.*
- *Principals may have had a negative experience with parent groups in the past. Try to have a discussion about this.*
- *School policies may not define how parents can play a leadership role.*
- *All teachers may not have time to participate as they may already belong to a parent group at their own child's school.*
- *Some teachers may not feel comfortable working with parents in a parent group, especially when they are the parents of their students. They may be concerned about crossing professional boundaries. These relationships may take some time to build so that everyone feels comfortable.*
- *Union mandates may restrict hours and/or duties of teachers and staff.*
- *Look for a Board Volunteer Policy and/or district Volunteer Application so your recruitment efforts are line with district procedures and expectations.*



Building Your Team CHECKLIST ✓

Good communication is essential to any teambuilding effort, and good communication means good listening. As you approach each individual or group remember to:

___ *Take time for face to face communication*

___ *Maintain consistent contact*

___ *Promise only what can be delivered*

Work through the systems that are already in place. Identify shared values, choose a common focus to work toward, and take time to reflect together as the work progresses. Consider the following as you build your team:

___ *Who are the people at the school who can help?*

___ *What are the resources and needs of your community?*

___ *How will you reach out to parents?*

___ *Which parents have already been involved and how can you include them?*

Establish practices that show your community how your PTO:

___ *Values the knowledge and experience of others*

___ *Complies with all school rules and procedures*

___ *Aims to improve academic achievement for all students*

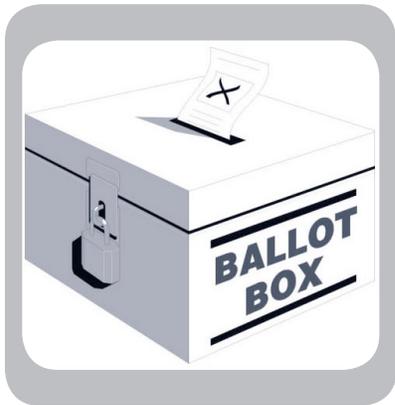
___ *Welcomes input from all families*

Forming Your Parent Group

Parents come together for a variety of reasons, but they share a common goal. Once the group decides on its purpose, jobs can be assigned to the members of the group. The group needs leaders to ensure the group remains on task. These leaders are found from within the group.

A. Electing Leadership for Your Parent Group

Once the group has established its role within the school community, it needs a strong leadership team to guide them. The leadership is often called the **executive board** and is made of individuals elected and/or appointed by the members of the group to oversee the management of the organization. **The board** is often called the officers of the group.



If you are forming your group for the first time, leaders will surface from attendees of your meetings. As your group establishes leadership roles that best suits the group, elections should be held at the next scheduled meeting. Make sure to give notice of the meeting date to the school population. Advertise the meeting date by posting flyers at school. Announce your meeting at school events. Include meeting information in the school's newsletter and on the school's website. Partner with your school's principal to utilize the school's list-serv and phone messaging system to advertise your event. Send flyers home with students. (See chapter

four for more information on strategies for advertising your meeting). All individuals interested in holding office should make themselves known at the meeting. They may nominate themselves or another attendee may recommend them for office.

All nominated individuals for each role should be made known to the group. It is best practice to conduct voting by paper ballot. Votes should be read and validated by two meeting attendees and the school administrator present at the meeting. If two people are interested in a position, consider splitting the workload and sharing the position.

Once your group is established, it is best to form a nominating committee to find the most qualified individuals to fill future leadership positions.

1. Role and duties of officers/board members

Your group may want to define roles of its officers within the organization's bylaws. These roles should be determined to fit the mission of the group. Here are some ideas for positions, but are not limited to:

President- Presides over all meetings and serves as the chair of the organization; coordinates the work of officers and committees; approves all material distributed in the name of the organization; remains unbiased with the best interest of the organization in mind as well as the vote of the members; and performs such other duties as directed by the board or organization

Vice President- Assists the president; performs the duties of the president in the president's absence or inability to serve; and performs other duties as assigned by the president or organization

Secretary- Keeps an accurate and permanent record of notes (minutes) of all group meetings signed by the secretary; reads or distributes the minutes of any previous meetings for approval by the membership; sends out meeting reminder notices; keeps an up to date list of all members of the organization; handles correspondences; keeps a sign in attendance sheet at all meetings; and performs other duties as assigned by the president or organization

Treasurer- Keeps a full and accurate account of the receipts and disbursements of the treasury belonging to the organization; deposits funds in the group's insured bank account; pays bills as authorized; gives a written financial statement to the board at group meetings; presents an annual report of the financial status of the organization; and performs other duties as assigned by the president or organization

(See Chapter 4 for more information)

(See sample Executive Board Job Descriptions in Appendix)

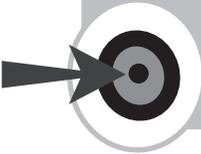
(See sample PTO Member Description in Appendix)

2. Things to keep in mind when forming a nominating committee

- A nominating committee is usually composed of at least 3 members and is always an uneven number (your group may use bylaws to define structure).
- The president never serves on a nominating committee.
- The committee elects its own chairperson.
- The task of a nominating committee is to nominate qualified candidates who have the abilities and a willingness to serve as an officer in the best interests of the group.
- Consult bylaws on the number of officers to be elected and explain duties of each office as noted in the bylaws.
- Discussions of the nominating committee are confidential.
- Members of the committee are not excluded from becoming nominees for office.
- The committee is not obligated to nominate the current officers if they are eligible to serve a second term.

The nominating committee will present a list of individuals nominated (one for each position) to be elected in the month as noted in the bylaws. Every effort should be made to select officers who reflect experience and inexperience, representative of the group's geographical areas and reflective of the diversity of the group membership. The nominating committee members should have a broad knowledge of the membership and be able to give objective consideration to nominees.

Executive boards thrive when there is an effective nominating committee that seeks out the right person for the right job. The best results happen when board members have a good understanding of the mission and purpose of the organization as well as their roles and duties.



Your group may consider allowing two people to split the work load and share a board position when they are willing to work together. Please check specific incorporation requirements for your group before splitting board positions.

Please see Rhode Island General Laws for more information about incorporation requirements:
www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE7/7-6/INDEX.HTM

3. Best practices for board members

- Have an open dialog with school leadership
- Follow bylaws
- Communicate with each other and work together
- Work through conflict or seek mediation as needed
- Evaluate their goals and accomplishments
- Have a planned orientation for new and experienced board members
- Plan transitions for incoming board members
- Outgoing board members should provide guidance, records, and materials

4. Responsibilities of elected board members

Elected board members should accept the nomination only when willing and able to fulfill the duties of the office. By accepting the position, you are committing to uphold the policies and procedures of the organization. If a board member is unable to perform the duties of the office they are duty-bound to resign.

Board Members must:

- Follow organization's bylaws
- Attend and participate in meetings
- Keep a procedure book and files for their position and pass it along to the incoming officer at the end of the term
- Accept the vote of the majority
- Respect the privacy of all members
- Attend conferences, workshops, and trainings when offered
- Give accurate and detailed account of all monies entrusted to them

5. Not every executive board looks the same

Your executive board structure needs to meet the needs of your group. Some groups may choose to split a secretary's role into two board positions. A recording secretary may be responsible for recording minutes at the group meetings. A corresponding secretary may draft flyers for events, create newsletters and update websites and blogs. Many times, a past president stays on as member of the executive board after their term had ended to advise new officers.

Some presidents may serve as president-elect for a year before taking office so they may learn the job before taking over leadership. Having the support of peers is crucial for leaders to be successful. This provides leaders with the appropriate on the job training and the understanding of the expectations of the job.

Sample Executive Board

2010-2011

MLK Elementary School

PTO

Board Positions:

President

Vice-President

Treasurer

Secretary

Parliamentarian*

Past Co-Presidents

What is a parliamentarian?

1. An expert in the group's bylaws
2. Responsible for keeping the bylaws current and up to date
3. Consulted by other board members regarding the group's procedures
4. Enforces Robert's Rule of Order during meetings (See Appendix)

6. Don't forget the "T" in PTO (Parent Teacher Organization)

Your group may want to include an executive position for your school's administrator. Some schools have included a second vice-president position held by the school's principal. Other schools have elected to have teachers serve as a parent/teacher liaison to other school staff. Teachers who take on this role report back to the school staff regarding business generated from the meetings. This may include informing teachers of grant opportunities, informing colleagues of upcoming events and fundraisers, collecting surveys, soliciting teacher volunteers to help with family events, or designing enrichment programs.

B. Use of Bylaws

Bylaws contain the basic rules of an organization. They provide structure to ensure that the best interest of the group is carried out fairly and justly. Bylaws are unique to the group. Bylaws need to reflect how the organization works and should be reviewed every 2 - 3 years to amend as needed or as stipulated in the bylaws. They are usually created and reviewed by a Bylaws Committee.

Bylaws provide members with information on how your group works. They outline important dates and how information is shared. They also should include how members can join the group, inform members about their rights, and outline voting privileges.

1. Bylaws should describe:

- Who can become a member
- How to become a member
- Minimum number of meetings held per year
- Minimum number of members needed to conduct business (vote) at a meeting, which is called a quorum
- Minimum number of days for advance notice to hold meeting as well as minimum number of days notice for a change of a meeting date
- Procedure of voting and making motions or using Robert's Rules of Order and Parliamentary Procedure
- How to form committees and plan of work of the group

(See sample Robert's Rules of Order and Parliamentary Procedure in Appendix)

2. Bylaws should describe how officers are elected

- Procedure for voting
- How long they can serve (term of office) and how to fill vacancies
- When new officers will begin to serve in their new position
- Month of formation of nominating committee with number of members and how selected (appointed or elected)
- Month of meeting when announcing nominees for office and month of meeting when elections will take place

3. Bylaws should describe the group's financial practices

- Provision of an annual audit/review of the treasury of the organization
- Include dates of the fiscal year of the organization
- Procedure for dissolution and how the remaining monetary assets will be distributed to benefit the organization or another like organization –
Refer to state laws

(See Chapter 5 for more information)

Bylaws may be amended by the membership at a general membership meeting provided the proposed amendments (changes) have been approved by the board. Advance notice of the meeting date and agenda must be given to the membership (example at least 30 days). Amendments are approved when a 2/3 majority vote of members present.



4. Bylaws are living documents

Bylaws are the framework to hold the organization together. They are used by officers to follow procedures and complete tasks. Bylaws govern an organization and describe the organizational structure of the board and officers. All board members should have a copy of the bylaws of the organization. Your bylaws should include a procedure for reviewing your bylaws periodically.

Bylaws

are necessary for an organization to become incorporated with the state. If your group is planning to apply to become a 501(c)3 federal income tax exempt organization, you should visit this website for more information: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4220.pdf>

Bylaws may also aid a group in:

- Transitioning of boards as new officers take office
- Resolving conflicts and restoring order

C. Making Decisions at Your Meetings

The work of the organization is decided on by the membership at the group's general meetings. Topics like the usage of the group's funds and the planning of sponsored activities are voted on by the membership.

Voting procedure

1. A member makes a motion.
Example: "I move that the funds earned from the bake sale be used for storyteller performance for all the students."
2. A different member seconds that motion signifying they are in agreement.
3. Now there is a timed discussion on the motion
Example: 5-10 minutes
4. After discussion, there is a call for a vote on the motion by those members in attendance at the meeting either for or against
5. The president declares the result of the vote for the motion
6. This is recorded in the secretary's minutes of the meeting

Keeping minutes

- Minutes from the previous meeting may be voted into the record by members at the group's next meeting.
- A record of all business conducted at the meetings should be kept by the group's secretary.

Whenever there is a question about what occurred at a meeting, the minutes provide your group with a record. Members of your group will be able to go back and review the minutes to ensure proper procedure was followed. Your group may want to post the minutes on your school's website or information board. If parents or staff members are not able to attend your meetings, information about what happened at the meeting is readily available.

Resources

The Providence Public Schools Family and Community Engagement Office is a valuable resource for parent groups. Contact the office for additional support and trainings.

The Rhode Island State Parent Information and Resource Center at RIPIN is available to provide detailed technical assistance and trainings to parent groups.

Important Contacts:

Providence Public Schools Family and Community Engagement Office
(401) 456-0686

RI State Parent Information and Resource Center at RIPIN
(401) 270-0101



Operational Strategies CHECKLIST ✓

• Electing Leadership For Your Team

- Meet with your principal to ensure your group's purpose meets the needs of the school*
- Advertise to recruit potential members*
- Identify members who are willing to take on leadership roles*
- Establish an nominating committee*

• Best Practices for Board Members

- Have an open dialog with school leadership*
- Communicate with each other and work together*
- Work through conflict or seek mediation as needed*
- Evaluate their goals and accomplishments*
- Have a planned orientation for new and experienced board members*
- Outgoing board members should provide guidance, records, and materials*

• Board Member Duties

- Follow organization's bylaws*
- Attend and participate in meetings*
- Keep a procedure book and files for their position and pass it along to the incoming officer at the end of the term*
- Accept the vote of the majority*
- Respect the privacy of all members*
- Attend conferences, workshops, and trainings when offered*
- Give accurate and detailed account of all monies entrusted to them*

• Bylaws Should Describe

- Who can become a member*
- How to become a member*
- Minimum number of meetings held per year*
- Minimum number of members needed to conduct business (vote) at a meeting, which is called a quorum*
- Minimum number of days for advance notice to hold meeting as well as minimum number of days notice for a change of a meeting date*
- Procedure of voting and making motions or using Robert's Rules of Order for Parliamentary Procedure*
- How to form committees and plan of work of the group*
- How officers are elected and how long they can serve (term of office) and how to fill vacancies*
- Financial Procedures and Audit Reviews*
- Review process for bylaws*

Chapter 4

Organizing a Meeting



Now that you have established a board, elected officers and created your bylaws, Chapter Four will provide you with information and ideas on how to organize your meetings. Each meeting should have a purpose, a goal and follow the mission statement.

By using the information contained in this chapter, you will be able to organize your meeting more efficiently, create a friendly environment for members of your organization, bring parents and school staff together to benefit all students, and build communication between home and school.

Are you wondering how to organize your meeting? You may be asking yourself a couple of questions.

- *Who should be part of the parent group?*
- *How do we get the information out to the parents?*
- *What do I need to do to keep the parent group working effectively?*

This section will answer these questions.

In this chapter...

- Planning and Advertising*
- Creating an Agenda*
- Running the Meeting*
- Job Descriptions*
- Scheduling Meetings*
- Other Factors to Consider*

A. Planning and Advertising

When planning a meeting be sure to invite key people into the discussion. These people can include the principal, teachers, and board members of the organization. The board members should include the President/Vice President or Co-chairs, the Treasurer, the Recording Secretary, and any other board position. During your discussion, you should determine the best times and days to hold meetings that will work best for both parents and staff.

- Set a time, date, day, and place to hold your monthly meetings
- How long the meetings will last
- Purpose of the meetings
- Secure a place with the school district facility director or with your local community centers



Planning and advertising notices may be translated in language(s) that are necessary in your school community. Parents should consult with the school Principal or designee regarding translation – written and oral to support parent engagement efforts. Parents can help with translation but written translation should be reviewed by someone else for readability and common use of standard words from that particular language...in Providence it would be Spanish. The Principal can help gather this information. Sending reminder notices is always helpful.

When advertising your meetings, be sure to communicate the information in multiple ways, including the day, date, time, and location of the meeting. If possible, provide a copy of the agenda ahead of time so members will know what will be discussed. Listed below are ways in which to advertise your meetings:

- Send home flyers, newsletters, other written materials (approved by the principal)
- Create a phone tree for families
- Post agenda on school website/calendar
- Send out a notice on an e-mail listserv
- Post on Facebook/twitter
- Access the district electronic calling system
- Use text messaging system

B. Creating an Agenda

An agenda will help you keep your meetings within a time frame. A well planned agenda will help your meetings run more efficiently. Your agenda should be clear and concise to keep the meeting on track. When creating an agenda, list the items that will be covered during the meeting. Also list which items will need to be approved, discussed, or adopted (vote to accept) during the meeting. At the beginning of each item, list the amount of time allowed for each item (example: 7:00-7:10 introductions, 7:10-7:15 approval of minutes, etc.). An agenda may contain the following items; however, it should be adapted to your organizational needs:

- Name of organization
- Date, day and time
- Location of meeting
- Start time of meeting (call to order)
- Welcome and introductions

- Approval of previous month's minutes
- Committee reports (treasurer, secretary, fundraiser, membership, etc.)
- Unfinished business
- New business
- Administrator/Principal report
- Announcements
- Next meeting day, date, time and location
- Adjournment

(See sample Agenda in Appendix)

C. Running a Meeting

When running a meeting, keep in mind the purpose of the group (see Chapter 1 for more information) in order to meet the needs of students, families, and teachers. Every meeting should have quorum (the number of people needed to conduct a meeting and approve agenda items) as set forth in your bylaws. The following suggestions can be used at the beginning of the meeting to help members become comfortable with the group and to help it run more smoothly:

- Greet all members
- Introduce new members
- Ask new members about their skills and expectations
- Give members tasks to keep them engaged
- Have older members sit with newer members
- Pass around a sign in sheet for members to list their contact information
- Designate a time keeper to keep the group on track
- Appoint a jargon buster for the group (For example AYP – annual yearly progress)
- Create a parking lot (Parents can use a sticky pad poster posted on the wall or a note pad and track those ideas that might not be part of the discussion at the present time, but should capture because they are important and addressed later)
- Review additional ideas at the end of meeting
- Keep to the time allotted for the meeting (extending evening hours can be very inconvenient for families)

D. Job Descriptions

There are 3 key positions on the executive board that help to make the meetings run more efficiently. These positions will require organizational and communication skills. It will require commitment to the school, families, and students of the district. These positions are:

- **President/Co-chair**
- **Treasurer**
- **Secretary**

(See sample Executive Board Job Descriptions in Appendix)



Ground Rules can help your meeting run more efficiently. At the first meeting, the group should set ground rules to help meetings run more efficiently.

The ground rules should help the group stay on track. The group should agree to:

- Keep an eye on the time
- Follow the agenda
- One person speaks at a time
- Listen while others are speaking
- No sidebar conversations
- Keep on topic and keep comments brief
- Bring up new ideas at the end of the meeting
- Notes should be taken and shared

President/Co-chair

The President/Co-chair's job description may contain some of the following duties. These duties may be adjusted to meet the needs of the group.

- Attends and leads all meetings; general and executive board meetings
- Calls monthly meeting
- Sets the agenda
- Reviews all flyers and PTO/PTA communications for accuracy (flyer must be approved by principal)
- Helps to organize events
- Coordinates fundraisers
- Monitors monthly budgets
- Recruits and trains new members to help with leadership transitions
- Liaison between administrators and staff and the parent group
- Co-signs all checks
- Coordinates the yearly independent audit before the end of the fiscal year (ex. June 30th)

Treasurer

The Treasurer's job description may contain some of the following duties. These duties may be adjusted to meet the needs of the group.

- Collects and disperses all funds of the organization
- Signs all checks
- Make bank deposits for funds received
- Maintains an accurate checkbook
- Maintains files of all requests for reimbursements slips and bank deposit slips
- All requests for reimbursements are documented, accurate and approved within the budget
- Develops and updates a monthly spreadsheet of income and expense report
- Prepares the Treasurer's report for each meeting
- Prepares next year's budget which must be approved by the group
- Assists in the independent audit
- Reconciles monthly bank statements
- Prepares all tax forms or establish a professional to assist if necessary
- Prepares all necessary paperwork to maintain non-profit or tax exempt status
- Attends all organizations meetings
- Orders checks
- Provides cash boxes with bill/coins for making change at organizational events

(See sample Treasurer Report in Appendix)

Secretary

The Secretary's job description may contain some of the following duties. These duties may be adjusted to meet the needs of the group..

- Provides a sign in sheet for participants/Keep record of attendance
- Records the minutes of the meeting
- Makes notes of items that were approved, motioned or tabled
- Attends all meetings
- Brings bylaws to the meeting
- Types and distributes the meeting minutes in a timely manner
- Proofreads minutes for accuracy
- Seeks approval and/or make necessary changes to the minutes
- Maintains a hardcopy of the minutes in a binder for future reference
- Prepares several copies of the minutes for organization's meeting
- Receives all correspondence and presents them at organization's meeting (awards, certificates, letters, notes etc.)
- Prepares announcements for meeting or weekly newsletters
- Works with members to help with events/activities
- Updates organization's contact list
- Posts minutes on website

(See sample Meeting Minutes in Appendix)

E. Scheduling Meetings

When holding your group meetings, consider the time of day that the meeting will take place and the implications for members.

1. Morning Meetings

- Will accommodate parents who work evenings
- Parents may be able to attend while children are in school
- Parents will be dropping off their children

2. After School Meetings

- Parents will be picking up their children
- Teachers will be finished with their work day
- Parents and teachers do not have to go out again at night
- It will accommodate children who go to bed early

3. Evening Meetings

- Will accommodate parents who work later
- Might be easier to find childcare
- Children would have already eaten dinner

Create Binders

Key members of the board could create binders to help with organization.

- ➔ Organize your binder to hold your minutes, agendas, treasurer reports for each meeting help with organization.
- ➔ Create folders to hold flyers you distributed for each event, a list of volunteers, and an activity report for that event .

F. Other Factors to Consider

There are other factors to consider when you are planning your meetings. These factors are very important when developing a strong parent group within your school or community. Consider:

- Child care for parents with small children
- Refreshments for families just coming from work or for children right after school
- Transportation for families who may not have a vehicle
- Door prizes (book, food basket, etc)
- Language barriers- Translators if needed

Tips for Staying Organized

- Be sure at least two group members and the principal know the organization system
- Keep the binder/s and other materials the group uses in the same place so they can always be found
- Know how members will access the binders/information
- Ask the principal for a safe space to keep materials, office supplies and records belonging to the parent group (all binders, paper, envelopes, stamps, binders, files cabinet, board games, decorations, sound system, karaoke machine, cash register boxes and more)
- Have a “Where Do I Find the . . .” list (on PTO Today site) (coffee pot, coffee, filters, etc.)
- Have a “How Do I . . .” list (reserve event locations, get permits, reserve translation equipment, etc.) etc.)
- Save all information pertaining to events for the group to refer to in the future
- Save agendas, minutes, sign-in sheets, sample flyers, letters, and other written communications in binders/folders
- Keep contact information: on childcare, transportation, group members, principal, superintendent and other key school personnel; community resources, translators, etc
- Keep photographs of activities with information regarding the success
- Use spreadsheets to track things like volunteer hours, finances, etc.
- Track your supplies - chart paper, printer paper, markers, envelopes, etc.
- Create timelines for managing event planning, non-profit status documentation and more
- Keep a web-based timeline calendar for volunteers
- Use separate binders for:
 1. Financial reports and accounting information
 2. State, and federal tax preparation information and copies of all returns
 3. Group meeting agendas, minutes and sign-in sheets
 4. Event information including flyers, radio announcements, service providers, steps to implement the event, how many volunteers were needed, obstacles encountered, cost of hosting the event, etc.
 5. Membership information including volunteers’ skills and contact information



Organizing a Meeting

CHECKLIST ✓

- ___ *Secure meeting place with school facility director or community center*
- ___ *Create an agenda*
- ___ *Advertise the meeting:*
 - *Send home flyers*
 - *Post on website*
 - *Create a phone tree*
 - *E-mail*
 - *Electronic calling system*
 - *Text messaging*
 - *Facebook/twitter*
- ___ *Collect new member contacts*
 - *Phone numbers and addresses*
 - *E-mail addresses*
- ___ *Create a sign in sheet*
- ___ *Prepare meeting minutes*
- ___ *Prepare Treasurers report*
- ___ *Secure childcare*
- ___ *Secure transportation*
- ___ *Door prizes*

Chapter 5

Money Management & Fundraising



The key to successful money management techniques is having clear and detailed records. In this chapter are procedures for handling the finances of your organization.

Your group must be organized and keep detailed records. These records must be available to its members at all times. It is always best to consult a professional to ensure that laws and procedures are being carried out properly.

Who will be responsible for our group's finances? You may be asking yourself a couple of questions.

- *How will we keep track of money flowing in and out of our group?*
- *How do we raise money for our group?*
- *How will we open a bank account for our group?*

This section will answer these questions.

In this chapter...

- Money and the Role of the Executive Board*
- Money Handling*
- Fundraising*
- Managing Bank Accounts*
- Incorporating Your Non-Profit Group*
- Important Forms and Documents*
- Budgets and Record Keeping*

The money management details in this chapter are to be used as a general guide for your parent group. The specific details are determined by the type of organization being created. Always check with the appropriate parties for any financial or legal issues and concerns. Ensure your group is following district procedures for money management and fundraising procedures.

Always consult state and federal laws and procedures. If you have an existing parent group with tax exemption status, it is important to have documentation of your status and keep those records up to date.

A. Money and the Role of the Executive Board Members

It is the responsibility of the group's leaders to keep detailed records. The treasurer is responsible to keep financial records up to date. All monetary transactions must be documented. It is best for the treasurer to share a report of the group's monthly transactions and provide an updated budget for its members at membership meetings. All financial records must be made available to the executive board upon their request.

1. The Treasurer's role: the most crucial job of all

Your parent group has a responsibility to its members to handle finances properly. Your group needs a dedicated individual who is willing to take on the job. The person holding the job does not need to be a professional accountant but rather enjoy working with numbers. The treasurer provides your group with information vital in decision making. This information will help drive the work of the group.

A successful treasurer is:

- Trustworthy
- Honest
- Available to the group to provide payments when needed
- A problem solver
- Someone who sticks to the rules
- Well organized and detailed oriented
- Accurate

Important Note & Websites

It is always best to consult a tax professional if you are unfamiliar with proper budgeting protocols or have questions about your group's money management techniques. You should always follow your school's procedures and state and federal guidelines.

Providence School Board:
www.providenceschools.org/pesb

City of Providence:
cityof.providenceri.com/provconnex

RI General Laws:
www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes

RI Secretary of State's Office:
sos.ri.gov

Internal Revenue Service:
www.irs.gov/charities/index.html

2. The President's role: responsibility to your group

The group's president has the ultimate responsibility for your parent group. The treasurer may make financial reports, but it is up to the president to ensure these documents are reviewed and remain current. It is a good practice to keep your own set of records on file including budgets and monthly bank statements. The president must make sure that there is a financial report at each meeting. The treasurer's report should be included on the meeting agenda.

B. Money Handling

Your parent group is a small business. Your group may have money flowing in and out. Your group might generate revenue through membership dues, fundraisers, and grants. The treasurer will pay out expenses approved by your group for costs associated with events and enrichment opportunities for your students and their families.

A receipt must be presented when a member of your group submits expenses related to the work of your parent group. The person submitting a receipt should also keep a copy for their records. Whether you assign someone to purchase items for an event with group funds or reimburse someone for items purchased, it is best practice to always have documentation of the flow of money.

1. Accounts receivable best practices

When receiving payments always:

- Make copies of checks when used as payments
- Make note of the student who is associated with the payment
- Create a ledger to keep track of payments and goods purchased by student name
- Some vendors may provide you with a template for easy computing
- Give receipts of payment upon request

2. Accounts payable best practices

When paying vendors always:

- Follow district procedures when paying vendors
- Provide vendors with 1099 forms when appropriate
- Keep records of all contracts and receipts

C. Fundraising

While this should not be the only focus or purpose of the parent group, an organization sometimes needs to fundraise in order to carry out their goals and activities to promote their mission of supporting student achievement. All fundraising should be done with a goal in mind on where to use the funds. Fundraising activities need to be pre-approved by the board of the organization and are often organized by a fundraising committee. Fundraisers can be organized events such as a walk-a-thon or sales of goods from vendors such as a candle or wrapping paper company.

Fundraising opportunities

There are many companies and vendors that specialize in fundraising opportunities for your group. Always research the company and their products your group will be selling. Meet with the vendor or contact person for the products to talk about your fundraising plan. Ask what supports their company provides such as tracking sheets, internet sales opportunities, and informational flyers.

Look to www.pta.org and www.ptotoday.com for resources on specific fundraising vendors. PTO Today also sponsors area expos where many vendors and resources are on display. This is a great way to meet with new vendors and see samples of the products. Visit www.ptotoday.com/events for more information about their annual expo series. PTO Today publishes a monthly magazine which features articles related to parent group activities and provides advertisements to fundraising vendors.

Look to local businesses and restaurants to support your school. Seek donations of gift certificates that may be raffled at an event. Many restaurants may offer to donate a percentage of sales on a given night to your school. This is a great way to gather families in your community. Others restaurants and retailers may offer coupon books full of discounts for your families purchased for a small fee. Ensure that you are following district procedures when planning a fundraiser for your group.

Things to Consider: When Planning Your Fundraiser

- Fundraising activities need to be consistent with school district procedures. The organization needs to be aware of these procedures and follow them.
- Always partner with your school's administrator when planning your fundraising event.
- All fundraising activities must be approved in advance by the board and full membership. Approval should be recorded in the minutes
- Enough volunteers need to be recruited to conduct the fundraising project. Assign each volunteer a specific task and develop a work schedule.
- Ask for donated goods and services.
- Approve the date of the event with the school or other facilities where it is to be held. Obtain all necessary permits as needed.
- When using vendors, make firm arrangements. Require the terms of the agreements and confirmations in writing.
- Make sure the vendor possesses liability insurance and Workers' Compensation. Ensure the vendor is fully covered. Your group may want to obtain a copy of their certificates for your records.
- Research and evaluate several fundraising companies. Invite companies to give presentations so you can compare them. Ask how long the company has been in business and get references. Check with these references on their experiences with the company and if they would recommend them. Determine the experience, professionalism, and reputation of the company within the community..
- Do not select a company based on one criterion, such as percentage of profit. Make sure to verify the amount of your group's profit from sales in writing. Ask for samples of products to determine the quality. Ask what services are offered to make the fundraising easier such as pre-packaging of individual orders and producing advertising flyers.

When fundraising through the sale of products always:

- Ask companies if there are any additional costs such as shipping or delivery fees.
- Ask if there are any reduced costs based on volume sold.
- Guarantee all money is collected in advance and that goods are distributed timely to customers.
- Organize a date and time for parents to pick up the fundraising items purchased before the start of the fundraiser.
- Make sure no goods will be distributed without payment and repayment (if there is a cancelled check).
- Make sure there is a procedure for bounced checks and fees.
- Do not suggest children go door to door for sales

Handling money at a school event

When your group is planning a fundraising event at your school keep these things in mind:

- Designate a responsible person to collect and give money to the treasurer
This may be a board member or the event chairperson if the treasurer is not available.
- Designate two people to count money collected at the end of the event
It is always a best practice to have two people at the event tally the money. The second person will validate the total of the funds. Both people will sign off on the total funds collected and give money to the treasurer.
- Limit the number of people handling the money. It is always best to limit the amount of money on hand at an event. The group may want to sell tickets prior to the event. Have a cashier give out tickets/tokens in a central location at the event's entrance.
- Partner with the administrator responsible for the building to ensure district cash handling procedures are followed Always partner with the school's administrator. While planning the event, designate a representative from your group to be in charge during the event and forward their name to the school's administrator. Let them know who will be responsible for the funds at the end of the event. Before leaving the event, inform the administrator of the amount of money generated and the plan for securing the funds.
- Always consult laws and district procedures before conducting raffles
Always check with a representative of the district before planning a raffle. Always check with city hall or the state police to inquire about any necessary permits. Visit the RI State Police's website for more information regarding charitable gaming:
<http://www.risp.ri.gov/charitable-gaming/>

Always keep accurate Records of your Fundraiser



All money collected by the organization needs to be re-counted by another member of the organization and immediately deposited in the organization's account. Discuss with the members the successes and challenges of the fundraiser, both financially and organizationally.

D. Managing Your Group's Bank Accounts

Managing the finances of the organization is vital to success. Not only is it important for ensuring funding for programs and events, it is most important for legal and federal guidelines. Accurate records must be maintained. Only parent group funds (not school funds) should be deposited into the parent group's bank account.

1. Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN)

- All organizations must obtain an EIN in order to open a bank account. An EIN is an Employer Identification Number. It is obtained from the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) and can be done online. www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=97860,00.html
- The EIN is used on all financial and tax documents of the organization

2. Opening bank accounts

- Use a bank that is federally insured to open a checking account in the full name of the organization.
- Complete all necessary paperwork with the bank including a signature card.
- The Treasurer balances the deposits and withdrawals on all monthly bank statements and presents a summary report at the organization's monthly meeting.

E. Incorporating Your Non-profit Parent Group

1. Incorporation status - Becoming incorporated helps to protect the board from legal liabilities incurred by the organization. This is obtained through the Secretary of State office: www.sec.state.ri.us/corps. Keep a record of Incorporation Status on file. Please see RI General Laws for information on corporations: www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE7/INDEX.HTM.

2. 501c3 tax-exempt status - 501c3 is a tax-exempt designation for a non-profit organization. This is obtained from the IRS: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f1023.pdf>. There is a fee involved to obtain 501c3 status. Refer to the IRS website for criteria of eligibility and guidelines to follow. The treasurer keeps a record of your group's 501c3 status on file.

There are several important benefits of 501c3 non-profit status:

- The organization is exempt from income tax and donations from individuals to 501c3 non-profits are generally tax deductible to the individuals making the donation which encourages gift giving.
- Many grants are only given to non-profit organizations.

State tax-exempt status - The organization applies for tax-exempt status (sales tax) with the state. Please see applications for specific requirements: www.tax.state.ri.us/forms/1998/misc/exempt.pdf. This allows the purchase of goods in the name of the organization sales tax free. Keep a record of State Tax-Exempt Status on file.

Signatures

Having the requirement of two signatures for check signing is a best practice. This is often includes the President, Vice-President and/or Treasurer.



F. Important Forms and Documents

990 filings with the IRS:

Federal legislation now requires all non-profits, regardless of gross income, to file at minimum a 990-N (e-postcard) annually. The law provides that any organization not filing for three consecutive years will automatically lose its tax exempt status. Detailed information can be located on the IRS website:

www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=217087,00.html.

Form DWC-11:

This form should be given to all non-incorporated companies and individuals except non-profits that your organization hires (for example, disc jockeys, photographers, etc.).

It tells the non-profit that the individual/company is an independent contractor and not an employee. They are not eligible for worker's compensation benefits. This will protect your group should the person you hired be injured during an event. For more information: www.dlt.ri.gov/wc/formsEmployer.htm

Form W-9:

The purpose of this form is to request the correct taxpayer identification number of an individual or company the non-profit hires. This form also tells the non-profit that you do not have to withhold any taxes. This form is especially important if the person receives a \$600 or more in the calendar year. For more information: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf?portlet=3

Form 1099-MISC:

The purpose of this form is to notify the taxpayer how much the non-profit paid them during the calendar year. It should be given by January 31 to any non-incorporated company or individual who earned \$600 or more during the previous calendar year. For more information: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f1099misc.pdf

Check out the IRS website for more details and to download forms.
www.irs.gov

PLEASE CONSULT YOUR TAX ADVISOR FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.



Make sure that you have complete records for your group.

Gather copies of the organization's newsletters, copies of recent budget reports, and copies of your group bylaws.

When filing paperwork make sure that submissions are checked for completeness and that time guidelines are followed.

Be on the look out for correspondences related to your filings. Ensure that your group responds to requests for additional information in a timely fashion.

Failure to produce documents or not follow time lines may prevent your group from obtaining the status you are applying for. Be aware that the process takes time.

G. Budgets and Record Keeping

Develop an annual budget which includes all projected income and expenses. A budget is the financial objectives of the organization. The board should take into consideration the goals and activities planned by the organization. When preparing the annual budget, refer to the previous year's actual income and expenses. The annual budget is approved by the membership by vote at a meeting.

1. Best Practices for record keeping

- Maintain a paper trail of receipts and deposits to ensure traceability and visibility of every dollar of the organization
- Backup all computer financial data
- Keep all financial records on file as required by the IRS
- Obtain receipts for every expense and require receipts for reimbursement
- Develop a procedure for counting money that includes 2 people and a signed receipt documenting the amount
- Take care of bounced checks by following up with the check writer
- Formulate an accounting system to organize the recording of deposits and expenses

2. Annual review of treasury books

The purpose of an annual review/audit is to certify the accuracy of the treasury books and records of the organization. The annual review/audit also assures the membership that funds are being managed correctly. The annual review/audit takes place at the conclusion of the fiscal year and before the incoming treasurer receives the books of the treasury.

Best practices for your annual review/audit

- An annual review committee is formed with no committee members classified as check signers for the organization.
- Files related to financial activity are of key importance in an audit.
- The treasurer is available to answer any questions; however they cannot be part of the committee.
- Compare bank statements to checkbook ledgers to receipts and invoices. Record any discrepancies.
- Discrepancies will be addressed by the treasurer.



Money Handling & Fundraising CHECKLIST ✓

• Money Handling

- Make copies of checks when used as payments*
- Make note of the student who is associated with the payment*
- Create a ledger to keep track of payments and goods purchased by student*
- Give receipts of payment upon request*

• Paying Vendors

- Follow district procedures*
- Provide vendors with 1099 forms when appropriate*
- Keep records of all contracts and receipts*

• Planning a Fundraiser

- Need to be consistent with school district procedures*
- Always partner with your school's administrator*
- All fundraising activities must be approved in advance by the board and full membership*
- Enough volunteers need to be recruited to conduct the fundraising project*
- Look to area businesses for donated goods and services*
- Obtain all necessary permits as needed*
- Require the terms of agreements and confirmations from vendors in writing*
- Make sure vendors possess liability insurance and Workers' Compensation*
- Research and evaluate several fundraising companies*

• Fundraising through the Sale of Products

- Ask companies if there are any additional costs such as shipping or delivery*
- Ask if there are any reduced costs based on volume sold*
- Guarantee all money is collected in advance*
- Goods are distributed timely to customers*
- Organize a date and time for parents to pick up the fundraising items purchased before the start of the fundraiser*
- Make sure no goods will be distributed without payment and repayment (if there is a cancelled check)*
- Make sure there is a procedure for bounced checks and fees*
- Do not suggest children go door to door for sales*



Managing Your Group's Finances

CHECKLIST

• Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN)

- _____ *It is obtained from the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) and can be done online.
www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=97860,00.html*

• Opening Bank Accounts

- _____ *Make sure the bank that is federally insured to open a checking account in the full name of the organization*
- _____ *Complete all necessary paperwork with the bank including a signature card*
- _____ *The treasurer balances the deposits and withdrawals on all monthly bank statements*
- _____ *The treasurer presents a summary report at the organization's monthly meeting*
- _____ *Only funds pertaining to the organization itself should be deposited into the accounts*

• Incorporating your non-profit parent group

- _____ *This is obtained through the Secretary of State office: www.sec.state.ri.us/corps*
- _____ *Submit an annual report yearly*
- _____ *The treasurer should keep a record of all filings*

• 501c3 Tax Exempt status

- _____ *This is obtained from the IRS: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f1023.pdf*
- _____ *There is a fee involved to obtain 501c3 status*
- _____ *The treasurer keeps a record of your group's 501c3 status on file*

• State Tax Exempt status

- _____ *The organization applies for Tax-Exempt (sales tax) with the state after receiving non-profit 501c3 status*
- _____ *This is obtained through the state of RI: www.tax.state.ri.us/forms/1998/misc/exempt.pdf*
- _____ *Keep a record of tax exempt status on file*

Chapter 6

Sustainability



This chapter will discuss what you can do to build sustainability into the day to day operations of your organization. It will outline how to put systems in place so that your parent group can go on making a positive impact long after your time with the organization is over.

Sustainability is the ability to remain productive over time. In order to be sustainable your organization will need to grow and adapt to change.

A strong organization grows over time by continuing to address needs as they arise. You may be asking yourself a couple of questions.

- *How can I encourage parents to take on more leadership?*
- *Our group is so diverse. How will we all get along?*
- *What if our members lose interest or move on?*

This section will answer these questions.

In this chapter...

- Develop Leadership*
- Retain Members*
- Working as a Team*
- Documentation*
- Manage Transitions*

A. Develop the Leadership Potential of your Members

Good leaders have the ability to inspire groups of people to get work done in the most productive way. Leadership traits can be learned through a process of self-discovery that will take time, practice, and reflection. Ongoing leadership development will keep your parent group strong even as established members move on.

1. Identify potential leaders

It can be difficult to find parents willing to act as leaders. Use the connections you have established around the school and the community to help with recruitment efforts. In the process try to learn what you can about potential leaders.

- Get suggestions from principal and teachers.
- Consider how comfortable parents and teachers are with the assignment.
- Consider whether parents and teachers feel they know how to do the job.

2. Offer in-house trainings

Members will quickly increase their confidence as they participate in learning opportunities that give them a chance to gain new skills. Make sure you find out what parents and teachers want to learn, then schedule ongoing trainings throughout the year. Members may be interested in topics like how to:



- *Sometimes people believe that someone else is responsible for developing their leadership potential, or that the process will be quick and simple.*
- *Educational jargon may scare away potential candidates.*
- *Members would rather get work done then spend time in training sessions.*
- *Parents may not see themselves as someone with the skills needed to participate in meetings, committee work or other leadership functions.*

- Help with school wide goals and initiatives
- Use data to set priorities and develop plans
- Function as a team that welcomes all families

3. Encourage members to attend trainings offered in the community

There are many local and national associations that offer free or low-cost training sessions. Attending these workshops will help your members connect with other RI families and professionals, and may help spread the word about the work your parent group is doing. Examples of these workshops include:

- Grant writing
- Data collection
- Project management
- Positive youth development
- Program evaluation
- Working with volunteers

Best Practices

- Providence Public School District's Parents Advisory Council serves as a model of parent leadership.
- Providence Public School District's Family and Community Engagement Office supports parent leaders giving guidance and offering workshops.
- Local organizations offering trainings include:

The Rhode Island Parent Information Network supports increased family involvement in every child's education by working with families, schools, and community partners to foster on-going, two-way, meaningful communication between home and school. A schedule of their free parent workshops can be found at: www.ripin.org/workshops.html

The RI Foundation Initiative for Nonprofit Excellence builds the capacity of nonprofit organizations so they can better achieve their missions. They provide local networking events, workshops, leadership development, and links to national resources. Find a listing of their upcoming events at: www.rifoundation.org/CommunityInitiatives/InitiativeforNonprofitExcellence

Serve Rhode Island seeks to transform the lives of Rhode Islanders by increasing the number of people engaged in volunteer and service activities in their communities. You can find guidance on how to sustain volunteerism on their website: www.serverhodeisland.org/VolunteerServices/Overview/tabid/181/Default.aspx



B. Retain Members

How do you keep parents and teachers involved in your group? To answer this question it helps to understand what motivates your members. Remember that people generally contribute in order to make a difference. Keep members inspired and energized by showing them the benefits and the importance of their contributions. Support your members as they do this work by providing guidance and feedback on their performance. Finally, seek input from all members and address questions and concerns as they come up.

1. Strengthening your team

- Look for opportunities to build team spirit. Teambuilding activities will promote enjoyment, build trust, and resolve conflicts. Choose activities that are designed specifically for adults and that show the importance of collaboration. Visit www.teampedia.net for ideas on teambuilding activities.
- As projects come to a close, it is important to take time as a group to evaluate the experience of each member. Schedule time to consider, share, and gain deeper insight into the work your group does.

Reflection activities can be as simple discussing the following questions:



2. Rewards

All volunteers, regardless of age, gender, or physical ability, respond positively to being rewarded for their work. Find out what motivates your members and recognize them in their community for the things they have helped your school accomplish. Some members may enjoy public recognition, while others may appreciate the opportunity to take on more responsibility. Think in terms of:

- Recognition
- Incentives
- Opportunity for advancement

Best Practices

- Plan ahead and take advantage of any opportunity to recognize your volunteers
- Hold volunteer recognition nights
- Give gift cards to parents and staff who participate
- Submit articles to local newspapers and community

C. Work as a Team

Belonging to a team means feeling part of something larger than yourself. It also means being part of an effective, focused team that can accomplish a specific goal. Good leadership will keep everyone consistent and help resolve conflicts as they come up.

1. Establish expectations and agreements

This is sometimes referred to as etiquette or group norms. It is basically about setting the ground rules around group behavior and attitudes.

(See Chapter 4 for more information)

2. Respect members individuality

Remember that everyone comes with different experiences. The differences within your group will enrich the work you do. Everyone has a unique skill. Take time to find out what they are. Even though there are differences in your group, it will still have a common goal.

- Find common ground
- Take into account your school's unique culture

3. Information sharing

Consider how you communicate within your organization.

- Create a plan for keeping members informed about the team's activities
- Establish guidelines for facilitating meetings/trainings
- Keep the whole school community informed about your activities.



Some things that get in the way of forming a strong team:

- *A lack of focus or direction*
- *Leaders have weak communication or meeting facilitation skills*
- *Unresolved conflicts*



Members will not keep coming if:

- *Participating in your parent group is no fun or if there is no time for socializing.*
- *Your leadership isn't sensitive to meeting times and length.*
- *Personality conflicts make meetings uncomfortable.*
- *There is no sense of achievement.*

Decision making process — Use these steps to come to a consensus (agreement)

1. Identify what needs to be decided
2. Brainstorm options
3. Look at good and bad points of each option (pros and cons)
4. Decide which option you choose

D. Documentation

The paperwork that you leave behind tells a story about your organization. Keep track of what you have accomplished, and keep files on how you got that work done. The record of your activities will serve as a template for future work. This will also make it easier to see where changes need to be made. The following techniques will leave you prepared for the time when someone else has to pick up the work that others have started.

- Have a mission, vision and bylaws
- Create binders to organize your parent group (Examples: agendas, minutes, flyers, contacts, etc.)
- Design templates for commonly used forms (Examples: sign-in sheets, agenda template)



- *It's hard to keep track of information if everyone is using a different system.*
- *Consider who has access to documents and where they are kept.*
- *Documentation will not be maintained if the process is too complicated or time consuming.*

E. Manage Transitions

Just when you get your parent group up and running smoothly, you may be faced with challenges that threaten the structure of your organization. There could be a leadership change such as a principal being relocated or parents whose children are moving on to another school. It could be that funding is lost or that priorities change. Consider how your organization might prepare for these possibilities.

1. Use a buddy/ mentor system

Consider setting up a system that allows experienced members to reach out to newcomers. This will set a welcoming tone as well as provide a backup plan should a member be unable to perform their regular duties.

- Experienced members share knowledge and insights with new members.
- Have members reach out to parents whose students are new to the school.
- Use your connections in the community, school and district to identify professionals who could offer ongoing guidance to your parent group president.

2. Maintain consistent communication

We always try to be clear and concise in our communications, but it is especially critical to keep lines of communication open during times of transitions. The unknown can create fear and encourage rumors that can lead to feelings of mistrust. To avoid this, imagine that the people you need to communicate with are your customers.

Let them know that:

- They are important to you and that you have not forgotten them.
- You are working hard to resolve issues (even if there's nothing new to report).

3. Take another look at your community

Transitions are a good time to reconsider what your school community's greatest needs are, what new resources may be available and what are the next steps you should take.

Best Practices

- Review your mission statement in times of transition.
 - Some parent groups have co-presidents who can stand in for each other at meetings.
 - Use school staff and members with experience to help make transition easier
 - Utilize the positive energy and excitement that new members bring.
- *Don't lose sight of your mission or purpose.*
 - *Miscommunication and loss of focus can leave people feeling disconnected.*
 - *Avoid making decisions without group consensus.*
 - *Don't overlook finances during transition phase.*
 - *Establish new roles if necessary.*





Sustainability CHECKLIST ✓

- **Develop Leadership**

___ *Identify Potential Leaders*

___ *Offer in-house trainings*

___ *Encourage members to attend trainings offered in the community*

- **Retain Members**

___ *Find out what motivates them*

___ *Recognize/reward good work*

- **Working as a Team**

___ *Establish expectations and agreements*

___ *Respect members individuality*

___ *Share information*

- **Documentation**

___ *Have a mission, vision, and bylaws*

___ *Create binders*

___ *Design templates*

- **Manage Transitions**

___ *Use a buddy/mentor system*

___ *Maintain consistent communication*

___ *Take another look at your community*

Chapter 7

Communication



Your parent group needs to be able to communicate effectively.

You may be asking yourself a couple of questions.

- *How can we be sure we are communicating effectively?*
- *What can we do to make sure we are reaching many different families?*
- *What do we need to keep in mind when reaching out to families raising children with disabilities?*

This section will answer these questions.

Communication takes takes many forms, and each has their own purpose. In this chapter we will review the basic strategies for effective communication between home and school.

Good communication is important to any relationship, including the relationship between schools and families. Good communication is helpful, two-way, meaningful, and happens often. This helps people feel connected to each other.

Good communication can improve our relationships by helping us avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. Schools and families benefit by good communication because it impacts how well they will work together.

In this chapter...

- Communication Strategies*
- Reaching All Families*
- Reaching Families Raising Children with Disabilities and Special Needs*

A. Communication Strategies

Most cities and urban areas are multi-cultural, and families living in these areas come from many different backgrounds. When writing to or speaking with families, it is helpful for schools to consider the diversity of their families which may include:

- Language
- Reading level
- Education level
- Culture
- Race, ethnicity
- Income level (low or high)
- Past experience with schools
- Religion or spiritual practices
- Children with special needs

You want to reach the families in the best way possible with the greatest chance of them understanding the information. Schools and families have the same goals for their children. Both want the children to succeed in school and in life. Schools and families can't do it alone and need each other to help students do their best. Knowing the diversity of your families helps schools, families, and students.

When communications are in languages families speak, it allows them to hear or read and understand the same information that other families are getting. It shows respect for the families and your desire to reach them.

Providence has 82 % of students receiving free or reduced lunch and many of these children are living in poverty. Poverty is often connected to education and can in turn be connected to the families' reading and writing abilities. Their reading level impacts how you write to them and how they write to you. In *Working with Parents: Building Relationships for Student Success*, by Ruby K. Payne, you can read about valuable ways to communicate with families living in poverty as well as those living in wealth.



Families' race, culture, ethnicity and religion are important to know too. These things may impact how a family will perceive the information they receive from you. They also impact things like whether or not a parent will come to your school, allow you into their home, or how much involvement they will have in their children's education. Understanding these factors can help you determine which mode of communication families prefer.

1. Two Way Communication

Meaningful, two-way communication is a critical element to parent involvement. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University found that when teachers and parents communicate well, students are more aware of what they have to do to get better grades. They understand how important it is for them to pass information from the school to their parents. Most of all, they see adults who care enough about them to work together. This sends students a positive message and they are more likely to be successful.

In addition, researchers found that it's not just students who benefit from good school and home communication. Parents understand school programs and policies better and they are more likely to check how well their child is doing in school. When teachers understand more about the families and students, they are more likely to receive help from the parents.

During the last forty years of parent involvement, research has also shown that schools and families have changed in many ways. Many schools have adapted with changes in a variety of ways, including effectively communicating with families while others have made few changes.

Let's take a look at how schools typically communicated with families in the past, and what the research tells us now is best practice. Best practice is what researchers have found to be what works well most of the time.

Decades of Education Research

proves that parent involvement consistently contributes to higher academic achievement, students' increased sense of well being, regular attendance, positive perception by both students and parents of classroom and school climate, and positive student attitudes and behavior.

(The Elementary School Journal, Volume 91 Number 3)



In the following chart, the way in which schools used to communicate with families is called Old Way. You will see that some of these are still useful. The New Way of communicating is based on best practices.

Parent / School Communication

Old Way	New Way
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools used two ways to get written information to families; they sent notices home with the students or delivered them through the mail. • Communication was mostly one-way; from the school to the students' families. Although, parents were encouraged to write back to the teacher • Written communications were very formal, lengthy and written in paragraph form. • Letters and flyers were written at the reading level of the person who wrote them. • Acronyms were used without explaining what they meant. • Jargon was used without explanation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use many ways to communicate your information to families; send flyers home, announce it on a local radio or television show, write an article in the school or district newsletter, use the school district's electronic telephone system, send e-mails, put it on the school website, post on a social networking site, and advertise in the city newspaper. Remind families that free internet access is available at the library or in many schools • Two-way communication is widely encouraged meaning that communication flows from school-to-home and from home-to-school. This shows families that schools value and encourage their ideas and suggestions. There must be a system in place for this exchange. Use e-mail, a notebook or folder, assign homework worksheets that include space for parent comments (Teachers Involve Parents in School Work, National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University). Social events encourage face to face communication • Keep communications short and to the point. Use bullets for quick reading. Include white spaces. White spaces are areas of the letter or memo that have no words and may include clip art or photos. • Written communication should be at a 5th -8th grade reading level Exception: If your school or parent group writes to a state legislator or other government body, the language should be as professional as possible. • Avoid using acronyms unless you explain what they mean. An acronym is a way of writing a phrase or name in a shorter way (example: PTA stands for Parent Teacher Association) • Avoid using educational jargon unless you explain what it means. Jargon is when people in a profession use words or phrases that typically only those in their profession know the meaning of.

Parent / School Communication

Old Way	New Way
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All families got the same information in the same way. • Information provided at school events, meetings, workshops and other events was only known by parents who attended the events. • Information provided at school events, meetings, workshops and other events was only known by parents who attended the events. • Parents were not asked what kind of information they wanted or how they preferred to receive it. • Schools did not take an interest in family culture or dynamics. • Communications, workshops and presentations were almost exclusively in English • Students were asked to interpret for their parents. • Telephone trees were the main mode of mass communication • Teachers only shared information about students during Parent/Teacher Conferences. • All flyers, letters and notices needed to be approved by the principal or other designated administrator • First Day of School-Parents drop children off and leave.* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different families benefit from different information based on their specific situation. Take into account families' literacy skills, socio economic status, primary language spoken, family living arrangements, and families of children with special needs. • Schools make information presented at school meetings, parent group meetings, workshops and other events available to the families who can not attend. (Post on web site, record workshops, etc.) • Schools make information presented at school meetings, parent group meetings, workshops and other events available to the families who can not attend. (Post on web site, record workshops, etc.) • Schools survey parents to find out what information they want and need; and also how they would like to receive information. • Schools make a great effort to know individual families in order to better serve the students. • Communications, workshops and presentations are provided in languages representative of families in a particular school • Adult interpreters are available through your district. They are culturally sensitive and aware of confidentiality requirements • Electronic telephone systems and e-mail are widely used as well as telephone trees. • Teachers also want information from families about students and information about family culture and dynamics. • Flyers and notices still need to be approved by the designated administrator. Allow plenty of time for review of time sensitive materials. • Activities are planned for parents, staff and children.

*Although first day of school activities can be planned differently for every school, there are some things that you may want to do:

- Invite parents to meet their child's teacher
- Receive information about what their children will learn this new school year
- Gather in the cafeteria to meet staff who are new to the school
- Learn about after school programs, volunteer opportunities and school district updates.

To promote good communication:

- Be a good listener-give your full attention, try not to interrupt. Don't think about your response while the other person is still talking.
- Don't make accusations- when upset or confused, ask questions, do not make judgments. Resist making snap responses when you have little or limited information. Get the facts.
- Smile- our tone of voice and body language speaks volumes!
- Opinions vs. facts- do not make decisions based on opinions. If someone states an opinion as fact, rather than arguing, ask for the data (factual information) to support it. Gather information. Use data and facts rather than opinion.

B. Reaching All Families

An important part of effective communication is the ability to reach all families. In a diverse city, many races, religions, education levels and socio-economic backgrounds are represented. It is essential to reach out to all groups in order to have a parent group that is representative of the families in the district. The more diversity that is represented in your group, the more you open yourself up to new ideas, ways of thinking and problem solving solutions. There are often barriers to reaching all families. This section will address those barriers, and suggest ways to overcome them.

Earlier in this chapter new ways of effectively communicating with families were discussed. How do you reach families that are unresponsive to these methods? First you must determine why these families are not responding to typical methods of communication. It could be any one of a number of factors. It is unrealistic to try to determine why specific families are harder to reach than others. So instead, familiarize yourself with the demographics of your school. Use the school website (www.providenceschools.org) to review school data sheets in order to know the specific demographics of your school. Then you can design your communications accordingly.

Listed below are some typical hurdles to effective communication with families and some suggestions on how to overcome those hurdles

1. Language barriers

- Provide all written communication in languages that are commonly used by families in your district.
- Provide interpreters for meetings, conferences and other important oral communications.
- Make sure families know where they can obtain translation services if necessary - i.e. FACE office.
- Pair ELL families with a bilingual buddy family

2. Low literacy levels

- Use simple language for written communication.
- Keep them at a 5th to 8th grade reading level.
- Keep in mind that some families may have notes and announcements read to them by their students.

3. Cultural barriers

- Don't assume that families aren't interested in their children's education just because they don't get involved. Many cultures believe it is disrespectful for parents to "interfere" with teachers' work.
- Make an effort to learn about the cultures of the families in your school.
- Let them know all families are welcome, needed and appreciated.

4. Parent's educational background

- Parents who haven't had educational opportunities themselves may not know how to support their child in their educational career.
- Let them know that their involvement can be the key to a better future for their children.

5. Lack of time

- Many parents are struggling to find time to spend with their children, and do not have a lot of time to be involved in a parent group.
- Keep meetings and communications as concise as possible.
- Hold meetings at varying times so parents with all different schedules have an opportunity to attend.

6. Socio-Economic barriers

- Parents may feel that they don't have the financial resources to be a productive member of the group.
- Let families know that committing their time is just as important as monetary contributions.
- Keep dues reasonable or optional.
- Offer scholarships when appropriate.

7. Lack of interest

- Regardless of how hard you try there will always be some families that are just not interested. Don't give up, keep trying!
You never know when you'll succeed.



C. Reaching Families that are Raising Children with Disabilities and Special Needs

Meaningful home/school communication is a critical component for student success for ALL children. Parents that are raising children with disabilities and/or special needs often face additional challenges that other families do not encounter. That is why it is even more important to do effective outreach.

1. Local Advisory Committee (LAC)

Using the Providence LAC may be an effective way to outreach to families. The Providence LAC, <http://www.providenceschools.org/for-parents/local-advisory-committee>, is a volunteer group of parents and professionals that advise the district on the unmet needs of students with disabilities. They provide monthly meetings in which they host educational workshops and trainings on various topics. The LAC helps connect families to resources and supports, as well as to other families.

2. Providence Public School District website/ Special Education

In addition to the LAC, the Providence School Department's website has a Special Education link, www.providenceschools.org/for-parents/special-education which offers information on a wide variety of topics, including;

- Referral and eligibility
- Overview of Special Education
- Child Outreach
- Early Childhood & Special Education
- Individualized Education Program
- Dispute Resolution
- Disproportionality

3. Special Education Advisory Network

Twice a year, members from the Providence LAC are invited to a statewide Special Education Advisory Network (SEAN) dinner meeting. At this meeting, members enjoy hearing and sharing best practices in education that are being implemented around the state.



Families that are raising children with disabilities often experience time constraints due to additional medical or therapeutic appointments.

Keeping flexibility for families when scheduling meetings and identifying best times and days as well as best mode of communication (by phone, email, hand written notes, etc.) are helpful for families.

Families need to share information with their teachers and school personnel so that accommodations can be provided.



Communications CHECKLIST ✓

•Use Many Ways to Communicate

- Send communications home in backpacks*
- Use school and classroom newsletters*
- Post communications on school website*
- Use social networking sites*
- Use telephone trees*
- Use district phone messaging system*
- Mail communications home*
- Post flyers in libraries, laundromats, grocery stores, community centers, etc*
- Put announcements on the radio and in newspapers*
- Reminder notices should be flyer and/or electronic messaging system*
- Have your group represented at parent/teacher conferences*

• Encourage Two Way Communication: School-to-Home and Home-to-School

- Provide a process for parents to communicate with the school staff*
- Provide school staff email addresses to families*
- Teach parents important questions to ask during parent-teacher conferences*
- Respond to parents' communications in a timely manner*
- Have a suggestion box*
- Respond to suggestions within 24 hours*
- If you cannot act on suggestions, explain why*
- When you can act on suggestions, be sure to let everyone know that you did*

•Make Communications Meaningful to ALL Families

- Give all families packets of information about the school and the community*
- Ask families what kind of information they want*
- Find out how families want to receive information from you*
- Send all communications in a timely manner*
- Give families at least two weeks notice about events/meetings*
- Consider how long it will take for your letter/flyer to be approved by the principal*
- Color code communications (green for PTA/PTO; pink for LAC; white from principal, etc)*
- Write to a grade 5-8 reading level*
- Write at a professional level when writing to legislature or other political body*
- Write school policies that parents can understand (parent involvement policy, bullying policy, homework, etc.)*
- Oral and written communications are free of acronyms unless you explain what they stand for*
- Oral and written communications are free of education and other professional jargon*
- Translate written materials in languages families can understand*
- Provide interpreters for English Language Learners*
- Make notes from parent meetings available to everyone (email, website, etc.)*

Chapter 8

Parent Trainings



You have decided that you want to develop parent leaders at your school. You may be asking yourself a couple of questions.

- *What should a parent leader know?*
- *What should a parent leader be able to do?*
- *What can we offer to all parents?*

This section will answer these questions.

In any organization proper training is important for leaders and members alike. In chapter six you read about the important role effective leadership plays in any group. Leadership skills are not naturally present in everyone. Most people can become effective leaders with the right training. Members can benefit from training, too.

Workshops and classes can prepare members to be more effective participants of the group. However, it can also be beneficial for group members to attend more general classes. These classes can provide parents with essential skills to be more fully participating members of the community.

In this chapter...

- Leadership Trainings*
- Parent Trainings*
- Where to Obtain Trainings*
- Parent Universities*

Before scheduling parent trainings, be sure to speak with your principal about what events are held annually. These events may include School Report Night, Parent-Teacher Conferences, Title I Annual Meeting, or an Open House. Knowing these events may help in selecting topics to offer in the Leadership and Parent Trainings. Consider how these training topics can help your parent group to support these annual events.

A. Leadership Trainings

In Chapter Six you learned that developing leadership traits is an evolving process and takes time. This process can be actively supported by providing on-going opportunities for leadership training to group leaders. These trainings can be in-house workshops or classes, as well as trainings found in the community. There are many workshops that will prove beneficial to group leaders. Some suggestions are:

- Effective Leadership
- Working with Volunteers
- Project Management
- Managing Money
- Diversity Awareness and Sensitivity
- Public Speaking
- Grant Writing
- Professionalism

B. Parent Trainings

Other trainings will offer support to members of the group who do not necessarily hold leadership positions. Many parents will benefit from general classes that are more focused on helping them deal with daily struggles. Your parent group will be more successful if all members of the community have access to classes and workshops that support their needs. These trainings may cover topics such as:

- Helping Kids with Homework
- Communicating with your Child's Teacher
- Advocating for Children with Special Needs
- Children's Development
- Character Building Classes
- English as a Second Language
- GED Courses
- Citizenship Classes
- Planning a Household Budget
- Locating Community and Government Resources



C. Where to Obtain Trainings

Once you decide what types of trainings you want to offer to your leaders and members, you need to find out where they are offered. There are many resources available to your parent group. Many organizations offer workshops and classes that will prove beneficial to your members. Some places to start are:

- Office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) - offering math and literacy workshops for parents.
- RI Parent Information Network (RIPIN) - offering Mega Skills®, Kindergarten readiness, Homework and Study Skills, and many more.
- RI Parent Information Network - Family Leadership Development Institute - offers training to parents to help them become effective leaders.
- Parent Support Network (PSN) - offering “Taking Charge of your Child’s Education”, Peer Mentoring Certification as well as an assortment of trainings aimed at advocacy and leadership.

D. Parent University

An outstanding way to ensure that all parents have access to these trainings and workshops is the implementation of a parent university or parent academy. Many successful school districts across the country have created parent universities. The districts often seek out and partner with community sponsors. This helps strengthen the ties between the school district and local businesses and can also help defray costs for your activities.

Boston, Massachusetts sponsors a Parent University. It offers classes at no cost to the community members. Childcare, transportation, and snacks or meals are provided. Classes are held at various locations throughout the city. All of these accommodations make the valuable classes that are offered by Boston’s Parent University very accessible to parents. Some examples of the classes offered are:

- **Parents are Teachers** - focuses on how children learn and grow and approaches to learning and teaching in the Boston Public Schools
- **Parents are Advocates** - helps parents advocate for their child, understand learning expectations and support learning at home
- **Parents are Leaders** - helps parents develop leadership skills so they can assume roles in the schools and in the community
- **Parents are Learners** - helps parents develop skills for personal and professional growth

Providence Schools are already implementing some of these practices. It is noted in the *Final Report: Evaluation of the Providence School District’s Family Engagement Activities* from June 2009, that Providence School District offered a parental literacy workshop, provides free childcare at all training sessions and district level meetings that parents are invited to attend and distributes a list of community partners to schools. It is also noted that these community partners played a strong role “in the design and delivery of district-level conferences and workshops for parents.” FACE also offers parent engagement and basic informational workshops on specific departments and district initiatives. This is a great start and a perfect foundation from which to begin building a parent university that is unique to Providence.

Chapter 9

School Activities for Families



PTO's often take the lead in organizing family events at schools. You may be asking yourself a few questions.

- *What kind of activities will families enjoy?*
- *Should PTO sponsored events that include academic activities?*
- *How will I manage all the details of planning such a large event?*

This section will answer these questions.

The importance of school activities cannot be overemphasized. Just as research has shown that when parents are involved children do better in school, school activities can also give families a gathering place to create bonds and form partnerships.

Vary your school activities so that you can reach your maximum audience. You may want to split your activities, have some that focus on academics, and some that are non-academic and are just for fun.

Examples can include health and safety, parenting or cultural awareness events. You also may want to focus on building partnerships within the school. Work with your principal for best results.

In this chapter...

- Benefits of Having School Activities*
- Calendar of Suggested Events*
- Descriptions of Suggested Events*
- Event Planning Checklist*

A. Benefits of Having School Activities

School activities for families can create a sense of community which in turn can translate to a better learning and developmental environment for students. Having fun at school with other families and school staff can lead to parents toward a deeper involvement in school projects. These activities can also:

- Develop positive attitudes towards school
- Build community partnerships
- Help parents network with other families
- Create stronger relationships between home and school
- Inform parents about what students are leaning
- Celebrate student and school successes
- Provide fun activities based on classroom learning
- Give parents and teachers a chance to get to know each other
- Build a sense of school spirit

B. Calendar of Suggested Events

This calendar highlights suggested parent/family events that support the creation of a home/school partnership. Events highlighted with a 😊 are currently taking place in the Providence School District and have been well attended and successful. Activities noted with a * are appropriate for the middle school and high school level. Since parents are already familiar with these events, it may make sense to continue with some of the following themes, but remember you are not limited to only these ideas. Many Providence Schools also hold monthly coffee hours and workshops for parents which are not listed on this calendar. Evaluate what is best for your school with the help of your principal. The activities listed are suggestions. They don't necessarily have to be presented in the month given.

<p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 😊 Back to School Event Ice Cream Social Picnic / Pot luck Breakfast *😊 New Parent Orientation 😊 College Planning Nights <p>September</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 😊 Bop 'n Bingo 😊 Family Movie Night Family Game Night 😊 Open House Story Telling <p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 😊 Fall Festival 😊 Halloween Parties * Homecoming Activities 😊 Homework Help Night Hispanic Heritage Month 	<p>November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 😊 Math Night * Internet Safety Night Swap Night 😊 Food Baskets for Families 😊 Taste of Thanksgiving <p>December</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 😊 Music Night 😊 Holiday Concerts 😊 Family Dances 😊 Cookies with Santa <p>January</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Sports Night 😊 Roller skating Bowling Fitness Night 	<p>February</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Go Green Initiative 😊 Valentine Party * Film Festival Black History Month 😊 Kindergarten Readiness <p>March</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 😊 Family Literacy Night 😊 Author Night * March Madness Basketball Night 😊 Walk-a-thon <p>April</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 😊 Multicultural Night/ International Festival * Social Studies/Science Fairs Dr. Seuss's Birthday Party * Career Day *😊 Art Show 😊 Garden Beautification 	<p>May</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *😊 Talent Show 😊 Teacher Appreciation Week Mother's Day Breakfast <p>June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Play Dates 😊 Community Resource Fair *😊 Honors Recognitions ↑*😊 Promotion Celebrations
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Symbol Legend

- 😊 – Providence District Event
- * – Activities that are appropriate for middle school and high school
- ↑ – Some high schools in Providence recognize their honor roll students after each grading period with a breakfast that parents are invited to.

C. Descriptions of Events

The list below offers some suggestions for activities, and describes of how these events have been used in Providence Schools. Activities are designated as **E** for Elementary, **M** for Middle and **HS** for High School, but keep in mind that these are only recommendations.

Academic Events	Grade Level	Events held in Providence Schools
Monthly Parent Workshops - Ask local agencies to offer training for parents. Some suggested titles are: Homework Help, Internet Safety and Financing College Tuition. <i>See Chapter 8 for more information.</i>	E, M, HS	Sodexho and Kids First presented a workshop on Healthy Eating Habits.
New Parent Orientation - Welcome new parents and help them to become part of the school community. Consider pairing them up with a family who is already familiar with the school.	E, M, HS	
College Planning Night - Work with the school counselor or outside agencies, such as College Planning Center of RI to help parents start the planning process.	HS	
Homework Help Night - Invite parents to hear strategies to help their children succeed in school. Outside agencies can be utilized to conduct the workshop or solicit a counselor or teacher from your school.	E	
Math Night - Hold events for parents to learn about the curriculum and get tips on how to help with math. Include fun activities where students and parents work together to create math toys that can be taken home.	E	Munchkin Math Night, math and literacy nights on the same night.
Internet Safety Night - Ask Information Technology professionals to show parents how to keep kids safe on the internet.	E, M, HS	
Kindergarten Readiness - Involve your school counselor and/or local agencies to show parents what they can do to help their child get ready to enter Kindergarten.	E	
Family Literacy Night - Add literacy into a fun family evening. Examples of this are dressing up as characters from books or reading in PJ's day. Ideas are limitless.	E	A Reader's Theatre, have a fair and give students a stamp for each activity they complete, host a reading week with literacy activities every day, showcase local writers, with awards to students.
Multicultural Night / International Festivals - Welcome all families with this very popular event in Providence School District. There are many ways to coordinate this event.	E, M	Pot Luck Dinner with classes performing dances or presenting projects
Social Studies / Science Fair - Work with Science and Social Studies teachers on an evening event that highlights student projects, or for student demonstrations of science experiments.	E, M, HS	
Career Day - Involve parents and the community with this event. Students visit different rooms and listen to parents and local professionals speak about their work. You can set up a passport system and ask students get signatures or stamps as they visit each speaker.	E, M, HS	
Community Resource Fair - Invite local organizations to come into the school and share information about resources available for students and their families. You may want to focus on one theme for each event, for example, health or summer learning opportunities for students.	E, M, HS	
Honors and Recognitions - Hold recognition events throughout the school year.	E, M, HS	Awards Breakfast recognizes high school honor students after every grading period, promotion ceremony

Non-Academic Events	Grade Level	Events held in Providence Schools
Monthly Parent Coffee Hours - Utilize the school's Parent Zone to have a monthly coffee hour. This will provide parents with a place to meet, plan and feel welcome. Remember to stagger days and times so that you can reach parents with varied schedules.	E, M, HS	
Back to School Ice Cream Social/Picnic/Pot Luck - Capture parent's interest at the beginning of the school year. This can be done prior to the first day of school, or during Meet the Teacher day ... an excellent opportunity to outline the year's activities.	E, M, HS	6th graders and their parents entering middle school, a barbecue welcomes 9th grade families to high school
Bop 'n Bingo - Fun filled evening of dance music, games and bingo. You may just want to hold the bingo, or add other options to individualize the event for your school.	E, M	
Family Movie, Trivia or Game Night - Arrange classrooms like movie theaters or cafes. Popcorn can be served and board games played. With supervision, this could be a good event for entertaining students during parent meetings.	E	
Fall Festival - Celebrate fall. Set up a carnival atmosphere. These events require a great deal of time and commitment but can be successful fundraisers. Find information on the internet to help you achieve your goals.	E	Scary Readers Theatre, Halloween party with trick or treat bags , pumpkin and face painting
Open House - The school usually organizes this event, but it can provide the PTO with an opportunity to set up a table and recruit parent leaders and volunteers..	E, M, HS	Open House in the first month of school gives parents the opportunity to meet with teachers.
Swap Night - Families bring in their gently used items to school and create a swap night. Some things to consider are uniforms, sports equipment, and books.	E, M, HS	
Food Baskets for Needy Families - Collect canned items and deliver to local food banks in the month of November or create baskets that can be delivered to local families.	E, M, HS	Family Thanksgiving Feast.
Music Night/Talent Show - Showcase student talent with this popular event.	E, M, HS	Currently held in some Providence schools.
Holiday Activities - Celebrate the holidays with a family activity.	E	Cookies with Santa and a viewing of the Polar Express , winter activities , holiday concert
Family Dances - Hold a family dance. Consider inviting a local dance studio to come join the festivities and maybe teach a few line dances or "moves" to the group.	E	Some Providence schools hold these annually during the holidays and again at the end of the school year.
Sports Night/ Basketball Night for March Madness - Have groups sign up as teams and participate in a play off. During basketball playoffs in March have a basketball game with students playing against faculty or the school could have a student dunk contest.	E, M, HS	
Roller Skating/Bowling - Contract with local roller skating rinks or bowling alleys for special pricing and invite families to participate.	E	
Walk-a-thon - These events build good community awareness and it's healthy!	E	Walk- a-thon fundraisers
Dr. Seuss's Birthday - This is a great Kindergarten event. Read Dr. Seuss books, serve green eggs and ham for lunch, and have a parent dress up as "The Cat in the Hat".	E	
Garden Beautification - Who doesn't love spring? Invite families to clean up and plant flowers.	E, M, HS	Event is currently held at various Providence Schools.
Art Show - Be creative with this fun family event.	E, M, HS	Art show with poetry and student violinist



Event Planning CHECKLIST ✓

•Before the Event

- ___ Discuss with the principal the type of event you would like to have.
- ___ Form a subcommittee who will be in charge of planning the details of the event.
- ___ Select a chair or co-chairs for the event and assign different tasks to different people. Don't limit yourself to just parents. Extended families can help too.
- ___ Decide how you are going to advertise for the event. Will you be sending home flyers? Can you use your school's website or automated phone system? Consider sending personal invitations. Use as many media outlets as possible.
- ___ Invite faculty and staff members.
- ___ Will you be offering incentives for attending? Examples include a Pizza Party for class with most parents or drawings for prizes.
- ___ Approve a budget for the event and work out how expenses will get reimbursed.
- ___ Create a program of events to inform families of the evening's activities.
- ___ Will there be some kind of performance or music?
- ___ Will you need AV equipment? Who do you need to contact to ensure it is available?
- ___ Provide signs and a map of all areas utilized during the events.
- ___ Ensure directions to the rest rooms are visible. Talk with the principal and custodial staff on which rest rooms should be used on the night of the event.s

•Planning the Event Location

- ___ Work together on selecting a date and ensuring that the building or designated location will be available.
- ___ Your principal will fill out a building request form that gives you permission to use the building. Ask about any of the building use procedures or restrictions.
- ___ Visit the location. Is the room set up appropriately for your event?
- ___ Who will be responsible for setting up the room to your specifications? Meet with the appropriate person(s) to make sure you understand your responsibilities while using the room.
- ___ Does a school administrator need to be present at the event?



Event Planning CHECKLIST ✓

•Planning the Event Location (continued)

- _____ *Will custodians be available for you? What is the cost for custodians and fire/police detail?*
- _____ *What are your responsibilities when you leave? Where are the trash receptacles, do you have access to liners?*

•Refreshments

- _____ *Consider who will provide refreshments. Will you seek donations from families? Will you shop for the event on your own? Will you partner with food services?*
- _____ *Set up a grid to keep track of families that are coming and what they are bringing. (See sample Donation Log in Appendix)*
- _____ *Have a plan for paper goods. Will your organization be purchasing products? Should you ask for donations?*
- _____ *Decide if the school will be providing drinks. If not, indicate the information on event advertisements.*
- _____ *Will you be collecting money to cover the cost of paper goods and or drinks? Make sure you have change at the door and a safe place for your money. Have someone in charge of the funds. (See Chapter 5 for more information)*
- _____ *Assign someone the task of informing people where to place their foods at the event. Do you need separate tables for desserts or drinks?*
- _____ *Provide a label so that parents can describe their dish. Remember many individuals may have food allergies.*

•Tracking Attendance and Volunteer Needs

- _____ *How will you keep track of responses to the event? You may create some type of tear and return slip so that you can have a rough count of how many families will be attending. (See sample Event Flyer and Event RSVP Log in Appendix)*
- _____ *Ask for volunteers. You may consider having someone to volunteer at the sign in table, others to volunteer directing the event and a volunteer clean up team.*
- _____ *Set up a grid with volunteers and assignments. Make sure to include contact information for last minute changes. Distribute the list of assignments to those volunteering at the event.*



Event Planning CHECKLIST

•Tracking Attendance and Volunteer Needs (continued)

- ___ *Keep the school principal and the administration team up to date on how the planning for your event is going.*
- ___ *If responses seem low, work with the principal to strategize on how to get more families involved.*

•During the Event

- ___ *Have a welcome table staffed with a volunteer to greet families. It will allow you an opportunity to register parents, tell them about future events, and volunteer opportunities. (See sample Parent Sign In Sheet in Appendix)*
- ___ *Follow a schedule of events. Have an agenda or brochure for your event. If you have student performers make sure to recognize them.*
- ___ *Make sure that you thank all the faculty and principal for attending. Don't forget to thank your volunteers.*
- ___ *Post volunteers at designated areas of the event to provide directions and to keep the program on pace.*

•After the Event

- ___ *Evaluate your event with your team. What went right? What went wrong? How would you change things?*
- ___ *Make sure you write a report or keep notes for next year's chairperson. Try to enlist one of your volunteers to organize the event for next year.*
- ___ *Turn in all remaining event related receipts to the organization's treasurer for reimbursement.*
- ___ *Send a thank you to those that helped with your event. Don't forget to thank the custodians*
- ___ *In your next newsletter, thank families for attending your event. Write an article recapping the event and recognize your volunteers. Report any funds that may have been raised at the event and what they will be used for.*

Chapter 10

Resources



Many models and areas of parent involvement and parent leadership have been explored through research.

Reviewing research allows parent groups to learn through the trial and error of other's efforts. There is also the opportunity for parent groups to use tools and models that are already in existence.

In this chapter...

- A. *Parent Involvement Resources*
- B. *Community Resources*
- C. *Parenting Resources*
- D. *Parenting Magazines*
- E. *Spanish Resources*
- F. *Special Education Resources*
- G. *Special Education Videos*

A. Parent Involvement Resources

Beyond the Bake Sale: The essential guide to family-school partnerships

Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies

This book is a comprehensive look at a successful parent involvement model. It includes examples of parent involvement policies, home school compacts, and multiple types of surveys. (Contains checklists and surveys about climate, attitudes, needs, etc.)

School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, Third Edition

National Network of Partnership Schools, John Hopkins University

A comprehensive framework for organizing an Action Team for Partnerships, a parent and professional team that plans parent engagement. This book contains organizational tools for leadership teams. (Contains TIPS: Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork program, Starting Points inventory of partnerships, six types of involvement, sample team training workshop, communication ground rules worksheet, team contact worksheet, team leaders worksheet)

School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools

Joyce L. Epstein

Research and theory on partnerships between school, family, and community.

Principals Matter

Steve Sheldon and Mavis Sanders

Research guide about the role that principals play in school community partnership. Also addresses the role of fathers in education.

Working with Parents

Ruby Payne

Lists tips for school personnel who work with students and/or families to understand the seven different sub groups of families.

Creating Welcoming Schools: A Practical Guide to Home-School Partnerships with Diverse Families,

JoBeth Allen

Details how diverse families can partner with schools for the success of students.

Promising Practices for Family and Community Involvement during High School

Parent Involvement resources focusing on the high school population.

Promising Partnership Practices (all editions), National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University

Emerging successful practices from around the country organized by academic area, type of family/community event, leadership, and climate.

Engaging All Families: Creating a Positive School Culture by Putting Research into Practice

Steve Costantino

Research, assessment, and planning for customized parent involvement.

SEDL Toolkit

Contains tools for meeting Title 1 requirements such as writing a parent involvement policy.

The Secret to Better Schools: A New Mindset for Engaging the Community

Deb Lukovich

A new way of thinking about how and where to get resources.

Building Successful Partnerships: A Guide for Developing Parent and Family Involvement Programs

National PTA

Organized around the PTA's 6 standards of parent/family involvement. Systematic plan to encourage parent involvement. (Contains surveys, evaluations, action plan, planning calendar)

Including Every Parent: A Step-by-Step Guide to Engage and Empower Parents at Your School Project for School Innovation

Teachers for Teachers Series NO.8

Specific steps for teachers to involve parents in events/communications/volunteering.

Developing Home-School Partnerships: From Concepts to Practice

Susan McAllister Swap

Outlines some of the benefits, barriers, and different models of parent involvement.

MegaSkills® books

www.megaskillshsi.org

Tips for building life long skills in children that lead to school success.

Channing Bete

www.channing-bete.com

Inexpensive materials to order-for parents in English and Spanish.

www.infoworks.ride.ri.gov

This website is a clearinghouse of data and demographics from Rhode Island Schools on topics like student achievement, safe and supportive schools, families and communities, funding and resources, and teaching.

www.colorincolorado.org

A bilingual site about literacy for families and educators of English language learners.

www.annenberginstitute.org/VUE/

This website brings together educational stakeholders with a wide range of viewpoints to air differences and seek common ground about vital issues in urban education.

www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/

National Network of Partnership Schools

Research done by Johns Hopkins University. Promising practices of parent involvement are highlighted. TIPS, teachers involve parents in schoolwork, program is described.

www.ptotoday.com

Supports for parent groups. Tools, advice, resources, and file sharing with other groups.

www.pta.org

Learn all about the PTA. Read policy briefs on topics that affect education and parent involvement.

schools.nyc.gov/offices/ofea/parentleadership/

This website contains templates to help with your parent group's operational procedures.

B. Community Resources

www.health.ri.gov

RI Department of Health

www.dhs.ri.gov

RI Department of Human Services

(A-Z guide to programs in RI)

riddc.org

RI Developmental Disabilities Council

www.thriveri.org

RI's Coordinated School Health Programs

www.rifoundation.org/Default.aspx

RI Foundation

(grants, non profit group capacity building: workshops, training)

www.ripin.org

RI Parent Information Network

(special education, parent involvement, parent workshops, leadership development, bylaws)

www.psnri.org

Parent Support Network

(supports children's behavioral, emotional, and mental health)

C. Parenting Resources

Get Organized Without Losing It

Janet S. Fox

A book that teaches students how to organize their locker, backpack, and study schedule.

Knowing and Doing What's Right

Pamela Espeland and Elizabeth Verdick

The benefits of making good decisions. Activities that build skills.

How to talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk

Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

Tips for having positive conversations with our children that have an impact.

How to Talk so Teens Will Listen and Listen so Teens Will Talk

Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish (also in Spanish)

Tips for having positive conversations with our teens that have an impact.

Surviving your Adolescents: How To Manage And Let Go Of Your 13-18 Year Olds

Thomas Phelan PhD

Parenting teens. Learn what to let go of and how to handle teen behaviors.

Parenting your Strong Willed Child

Rex Forehand PhD

Parenting tips for behavior management.

1-2 3 Magic

Thomas Phelan PHD

Discipline tips for younger children.

SOS Help for Parents

Lynn Clark (also in Spanish)

A practical guide for handling common everyday behavior problems.

Raising your Spirited Child: A Guide for Parents Whose Child Is More Intense, Sensitive, Perceptive, Persistent, Energetic

Mary Sheedy Kurcinka

How to understand the unique temperament of your child.

Siblings without Rivalry

Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

Tips for raising siblings without conflict..

Your ? Year Old

Louise Bates Ames

A book on each age of childhood (Your 2 Year Old, Your 3 Year Old, etc) based on the development issues and milestones of that specified age.

www.positiveparenting.com

Resources and information about parenting.

D. Parenting Magazines

Parents

Parenting

Parent & Child

Padres

E. Spanish Resources

Padres Participantes: Talleres de apoyo entre los vínculos de la Escuela/Hogar/Familia
(*Parent Partners: Workshops to Foster School/Home/Family Partnerships*)

Jacqueline Barber with Lynn Barakos and Lincoln Bergman

Este libro contiene direcciones paso a paso para implementar tres talleres para padres; reformas matemáticas, como aprenden los niños, y el proceso de pruebas y evaluación. Folletos están incluidos. (This book has step-by-step directions for how to hold three parent workshops; mathematical reforms, the ways in which students learn, and the process of testing and assessment. Handouts are included.)

Cómo Lograr que sus Hijos Triunfen en la Escuela (Helping Your Child Succeed in School)

Michael H. Popkin, Ph.D.; Bettie B. Youngs, Ph.D.; and Jane M. Healy, Ph.D.

Este libro se trata de maneras creativas y divertidas para enseñar y apoyar a sus hijos. (This book contains creative, supportive ways to help your child learn that are also fun.)

Ayude a sus Hijos a Tener Éxito en la Escuela (Help Your Children Succeed in School)

Mariela Dabbah

Este libro ayuda a los padres latinos a entender mejor la sistema escolar en los EEUU y les enseña como sacar lo mejor educación para sus hijos. (This book helps Latino parents better understand the school system in the U.S., and teaches them how to get the most out of the system for their child.)

Ayude a Sus Hijos a Triunfar en la Escuela Secundaria y Llegar a la Universidad
(*Help Your Children Succeed in High School and Go to College*)

Mariela Dabbah

Este guía habla de la importancia de la educación y ofrece consejos a los padres para que sus hijos logran a asistir a la universidad. (This guide talks about the importance of education and provides guidelines for parents to follow in order to help their children get to college.

F. Special Education Resources

All Kinds of Minds

Melvin D. Levine, M.D.

(www.allkindsofminds.org)

Each child discovers the unique strengths which enable him or her to overcome the difficulties caused by having a “different” kind of mind.

Learning Outside the Lines

Jonathan Mooney and David Cole

A practical guide to help kids jump through the necessary hoops to achieve whatever larger, post school goals they may have.

Asperger's: What Does It Mean to Me (also in Spanish)

Catherine Faherty and Gary B. Mesibov

A workbook explaining self awareness and life lessons to the youth with high functioning autism or Asperger's Syndrome.

Children With Hearing Loss: A Family Guide

David Luterman

The new reality facing parents today: early detection, sophisticated amplification whether by hearing aid or implant, and integrated school placement.

How To Behave So That Your Children Will Too

Sal Severe, PhD and Tim McCormick

Commonsense advice gathered from an educator that has worked with children who have behavior disorders.

The Explosive Child

Ross W. Greene, Ph.D.

Direct dialog to the parents of children with explosive behavior.

Freak the Mighty

Rodman Philbrick

A story of triumph over imperfection, shame, and loss. Children's book for ages 9 and up.

G. Special Education Videos

Transitions to Post Secondary Learning

www.proedinc.com

Transitions to High School

www.proedinc.com

"Transitions to Employment" www.proedinc.com

Transitions for students with learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder.

There is a New Kid in School

www.oraldeafed.org

Intended for educators of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Length: 10 minutes.

Dreams Spoken Here

Narrated by Sharon Orrecks

Meet oral deaf children and their families.

How Difficult Can This Be?

The F.A.T. City Workshop

This program looks at the world through the eyes of a child with learning disabilities.

Including Samuel (also in Spanish)

Dan Habib

www.includingsamuel.com

Exploration about the concept of educational and social inclusion of youth with disabilities as a civil rights issue.

A Boy in the World

Jessica Jennings

A documentary that follows four-year-old Ronen, a young boy with Down syndrome, who attends a fully inclusive early childhood education center.

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Parent Teacher Survey

One of the goals of the parent group is to enhance academic achievement; another is to support teachers and staff. This survey will help us go in the right direction. Please take a few minutes and fill this survey out. We know your time is valuable so thank you in advance for your feedback. Please return completed surveys by _____.

Main Goals:

What do you see as a priority that the parent group should look at?

What can the parent group do to promote the curriculum and assist in bringing up test scores?

Family/School Events

What are your favorite events or programs that past parents group have done?

What events or programs could we consider that would enhance a lesson plan? What time of year would this event take place?

Are there any specific times of the year that we should avoid planning family nights or other school events?

Teacher Relationships:

How would you prefer to ask the parent groups for support?

- Wishing well (central collection to submit short request)
- Wish Book in office
- Submit a form to the parent group
- In-person at meetings or email request
- Any other ideas

Do you have a preferred way of being recognized for the good work you do?

Is there a preferred method of submitting things to the parent group like labels, box tops, order forms, or correspondence?

- Parent group mailbox
- Parent group central location in teacher's lounge or another location
- Other idea

Parent Relationships:

Do you have any ideas about how the parent group can promote, encourage, and engage other parents to participate? Past successes or new ideas are welcomed.

What other ways can parents get involved in their child's education that is not necessarily related to the parent group, but can be promoted by the parent group?

Parent Group Fundraising

As you know fundraising is often necessary to support events and supplies: What types of fundraisers would you prefer the parent group to participate in?

- Passive fundraising (box tops, labels, etc.)
- Traditional fundraising (selling items)
- Fundraising School Events (carnivals, basket bazaars)
- Fundraising that enhances academics/community/family
- Non-standard fundraising (using parents resources)

Do you have any other ideas for fundraising?

In your opinion, how many fundraisers should be held during a school year?

General:

Are there supply or equipment needs that the parent group should set a goal to obtain?

What are some ideas you have that would make the school a better place?

Do you have any other suggestions or comments?

Vision and Mission Statements

PTA Vision:

What the future will look like if PTA accomplishes its mission. Making every child's potential a reality.

PTA Mission:

- A powerful voice for all children,
- A relevant resource for families and communities, and
- A strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child.

www.pta.org

Sample Vision:

All students will have a positive educational experience.

Sample Mission:

Parents and Teachers will work on this PTO in partnership to enhance academic programs, extracurricular activities, and home school partnerships. The PTO will work to strengthen communications and relationships of trust. The principal will serve as a liaison from the PTO to the staff and school improvement team.

Sample Vision:

We envision a school community that _____.

or

We envision a school community where _____.

Sample Mission:

To create a school community where (vision) we will _____.

Bylaws of [Our School PTO]

ARTICLE I: NAME, DESCRIPTION, & PURPOSE

Section 1: NAME—The name of the organization shall be [PTO's official name]. The PTO is located at [school name and address].

Section 2: DESCRIPTION—The PTO is a nonprofit organization that exists for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes, including the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Section 3: PURPOSE—The purpose of the PTO is to enhance and support the educational experience at [our school], to develop a closer connection between school and home by encouraging parent involvement, and to improve the environment at [our school] through volunteer and financial support.

ARTICLE II: MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be automatically granted to all parents and guardians of [our school] students, plus all staff at [our school]. There are no membership dues. Members have voting privileges, one vote per household.

ARTICLE III: OFFICERS

Section 1: EXECUTIVE BOARD—The Executive Board shall consist of the following officers: President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Communications Secretary, and Treasurer. Officer positions can be shared. The school Principal, or his/her designee, is a voting member of the Executive Board.

Section 2: TERM OF OFFICE—The term of office for all officers is one year, beginning August 1 and ending July 31 of the following year.

I.1. Most PTOs use the school's name in their name, but check with your principal to be sure that's OK. Your group can use the label "PTO" or any other term to indicate your purpose, except "PTA," which is reserved for dues-paying chapters of the National PTA.

I.2. This section makes it clear that you will function as a nonprofit group and positions you for future recognition by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charity. It also says you can donate to other nonprofits. The language is awkward but correct.

I.3. Your PTO is required to have a purpose statement. This one covers all the bases of a typical independent parent group.

II. You must define who is eligible for membership and how dues, if any, are set. In this example, everyone is included in the group, no dues required.

III.1. There are many valid variations on this executive board makeup. Carefully consider what makes the most sense for your PTO. Choosing an odd number helps avoid tie votes.

III.2. Be clear about when the term of office begins and ends so everyone knows what is expected. It's usually best to have the new officers in place so they can work together over the summer. It's also a good idea to have the term match the fiscal year.

Section 3: QUALIFICATIONS—Any PTO member in good standing may become an officer of the PTO.

Section 4: DUTIES

Executive Board: Develop the PTO's annual budget, establish and oversee committees to conduct the work of the PTO, establish fundraising programs, and approve by majority vote of the Board unbudgeted expenditures of no more than \$100.

President: Preside at general PTO meetings and Executive Board meetings, serve as the official representative of the PTO, and retain all official records of the PTO.

Vice President: Oversee the committee system of the PTO, assist the President, and chair meetings in the absence of the President.

Recording Secretary: Record and distribute minutes of all Executive Board meetings and all general PTO meetings, prepare agendas for official PTO meetings, and hold historical records for the PTO.

Communications Secretary: Manage communications and marketing for the PTO, including but not limited to PTO newsletters, email broadcasts, website, bulletin boards, etc.

Treasurer: Serve as custodian of the PTO's finances, collect revenue, pay authorized expenses, follow all financial policies of the PTO, and hold all financial records.

Section 5: BOARD MEETINGS—The Executive Board shall meet monthly during the school year, or at the discretion of the President.

Section 6: REMOVAL—An officer can be removed from office for failure to fulfill his/her duties, after reasonable notice, by a majority vote of the Executive Board.

Section 7: VACANCY—If a vacancy occurs on the Executive Board, the President shall appoint a PTO member to fill the vacancy for the remainder of the officer's term.

III.3. You might also want to consider defining term limits or formal succession lines as additional qualifications for your PTO officers.

III.4. Executive Board: Setting a limit on the Board's authority to spend unbudgeted money is a good way to balance the powers between the membership and the Board. Early in the life of your PTO, because your budget will be less precise, you might want to set the limit higher so business is not stalled between general membership meetings.

III.4. Vice President: It's good to give your VP a specific duty, such as overseeing committees, managing volunteers, or fundraising, so she has meaningful responsibilities.

III.4. Recording Secretary and Communications Secretary: Some PTOs combine the two common roles into one secretary position. As your PTO matures, you might want to consider splitting the job into two positions as described here—there's plenty of work for two.

III.4. Treasurer: List the basic overall responsibilities here. More detailed policies are spelled out in Article V.

III.5. By putting the meeting schedule in your bylaws, all future officers know what's expected of them.

III.6 and III.7. It might sound unlikely today, but someday your PTO might need to remove an underperforming officer. Section 7 ensures the vacancy will be filled according to consistent rules.

ARTICLE IV: MEETINGS

Section 1: GENERAL PTO MEETINGS—General PTO meetings shall be held to conduct the business of the PTO. Meetings shall be held monthly during the school year or at the discretion of the Executive Board.

Section 2: VOTING—Each member in attendance at a PTO meeting is eligible to vote, one vote per household. Absentee and proxy votes are not allowed.

Section 3: QUORUM—Seven (7) members of the PTO present and voting constitute quorum for the purpose of voting.

ARTICLE V: FINANCIAL POLICIES

Section 1: FISCAL YEAR—The fiscal year of the PTO begins August 1 and ends July 31 of the following year.

Section 2: BANKING—All funds shall be kept in a checking account in the name of [our PTO], requiring two signatures of the Executive Board and held at a local financial institution.

Section 3: REPORTING—All financial activity shall be recorded in a computer-based or manual accounting system. The Treasurer shall reconcile the account(s) monthly and report all financial activity monthly. The PTO shall arrange an independent review of its financial records each year.

Section 4: ENDING BALANCE—The organization shall leave a minimum of \$2,000 in the treasury at the end of each fiscal year.

Section 5: CONTRACTS—Authority to sign contracts is limited to the President or the President's designee.

IV.1. It's common for PTOs to meet monthly. This bylaw ensures that it happens as planned.

IV.2. Be sure to specify whether you allow one vote per member, or one vote per household, or some other specific voting policy. Generally, absentee and proxy votes overcomplicate PTO business. It's a good idea to make it clear they are not allowed.

IV.3. "Quorum" is the official minimum number of members needed to be present and voting in order for the PTO to conduct business. Quorum ensures your PTO is not controlled by a tiny group. As your PTO grows, you might want to increase the quorum number to reflect the active size of your group.

V.1. "Fiscal year" defines the financial year for your PTO, which should coincide with the terms of your officers and be related to the school year. Ultimately, you may need to report your financial activity to the IRS according to this period.

V.2. Include this policy so there's no question about where your PTO will keep its money, and adhere to the two-signature rule—it's one of the most basic and essential financial controls.

V.3. This lays out the most essential job responsibilities for your treasurer and emphasizes the importance of an annual end-of-year financial review.

V.4. This statement ensures that you will have some startup money available so you don't have to start fundraising the first day of school. It is a common misconception that a nonprofit must spend down to zero every year. Not true.

V.5. This clause makes it clear that the president controls the signing of contracts on behalf of the PTO.

ARTICLE VI: BYLAWS AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the bylaws may be proposed by any PTO member. Amendments presented at a PTO meeting shall be considered for voting at a subsequent meeting. Two-thirds (2/3) approval of all members present and voting is required to adopt an amendment to the bylaws.

ARTICLE VII: DISSOLUTION

In the event of dissolution of the PTO, any funds remaining shall be donated to [our school].

ARTICLE VIII: PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The authority for this organization shall be Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised.

These bylaws were adopted on (MM/DD/YY).

Amended (date): _____

VI. Bylaws will need to be changed as your PTO evolves over time, so you need to spell out the rules for amending them. The waiting period prevents stealth bylaws changes. Robert's Rules of Order recommends a two-thirds approval rather than a simple majority because bylaws are so important to the group.

VII. If your group ever dissolves, your PTO's money must be donated to a recognized nonprofit charity, typically the school. The IRS requires this clause, so you might as well include it in your initial bylaws.

VIII. If other issues come up that aren't specifically addressed in your bylaws, then you refer to Robert's Rules of Order for guidance. RRO is the standard for managing meetings, running organizations, elections, voting, and more. It's wise to purchase a summary version of RRO at the local bookstore so you have it readily available for your PTO.

Insert the date when your PTO adopts its bylaws. Going into the future, list the date for each set of amendments. Keep one clean, current version on hand at all times, and don't try to show all the additions, changes, and deletions in the master version.

Complete Sample Bylaws

While there are certainly smart (and not-so-smart!) ways to write bylaws, the exact wording of your bylaws is up to your group. One hundred groups could each have bylaws worded differently and yet operate very well and quite similarly.

Here is a sample set of PTO bylaws covering a broad range of rules that PTOs typically include—and that we recommend. Feel free to adopt or adapt them for your own group. You'll find links to a number of other samples in the File Exchange on ptotoday.com.

Article I – Name

The name of the organization shall be the ABC Elementary PTO, Inc.

Article II – Purpose

The corporation is organized for the purpose of supporting the education of children at ABC Elementary by fostering relationships among the school, parents, and teachers.

Article III – Members

Section 1. Any parent, guardian, or other adult standing in loco parentis for a student at the school may be a member and shall have voting rights. The principal and any teacher employed at the school may be a member and have voting rights.

Section 2. Dues, if any, will be established by the executive board. If dues are charged, a member must have paid his or her dues at least 14 calendar days before the meeting to be considered a member in good standing with voting rights.

Article IV – Officers and Elections

Section 1. Officers. The officers shall be a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

Reminder: While most states only require a president, secretary, and treasurer, we recommend you also have a vice president, to assist the president and provide for succession. Many state laws do not allow the same person to serve as president and secretary.

a. President. The president shall preside over meetings of the organization and executive board, serve as the primary contact for the principal, represent the organization at meetings outside the organization, serve as an ex officio member of all committees except the nominating committee, and coordinate the work of all the officers and committees so that the purpose of the organization is served.

b. Vice President. The vice president shall assist the president and carry out the president's duties in his or her absence or inability to serve.

c. Secretary. The secretary shall keep all records of the organization, take and record minutes, prepare the agenda, handle correspondence, and send notices of meetings to the membership. The secretary also keeps a copy of the minutes book, bylaws, rules, membership list, and any other necessary supplies, and brings them to meetings.

d. Treasurer. The treasurer shall receive all funds of the organization, keep an accurate record of receipts and expenditures, and pay out funds in accordance with the approval of the executive board. He or she will present a financial statement at every meeting and at other times of the year when requested by the executive board, and make a full report at the end of the year.

Section 2. Nominations and Elections. Elections will be held at the second to last meeting of the school year. The nominating committee shall select a candidate for each office and present the slate at a meeting held one month prior to the election. At that meeting, nominations may also be made from the floor. Voting shall be by voice vote if a slate is presented. If more than one person is running for an office, a ballot vote shall be taken.

Section 3. Eligibility. Members are eligible for office if they are members in good standing at least 14 calendar days before the nominating committee presents its slate.

Section 4. Terms of Office. Officers are elected for one year and may serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms in the same office. Each person elected shall hold only one office at a time.

Section 5. Vacancies. If there is a vacancy in the office of president, the vice president will become the president. At the next regularly scheduled meeting, a new vice president will be elected. If there

is a vacancy in any other office, members will fill the vacancy through an election at the next regular meeting.

Section 6. Removal From Office. Officers can be removed from office with or without cause by a two-thirds vote of those present (assuming a quorum) at a regular meeting where previous notice has been given.

Article V – Meetings

Section 1. Regular Meetings. The regular meeting of the organization shall be on the first Tuesday of each month during the school year at 7 p.m., or at a time and place determined by the executive board at least one month before the meeting. The annual meeting will be held at the April regular meeting. The annual meeting is for receiving reports, electing officers, and conducting other business that should arise. The secretary will notify the members of the meetings in a flyer sent home with the students at least one week prior to the meeting.

Section 2. Special Meetings. Special meetings may be called by the president, any two members of the executive board, or five general members submitting a written request to the secretary. Previous notice of the special meeting shall be sent to the members at least 10 days prior to the meeting, by flyer and phone calls.

Section 3. Quorum. The quorum shall be 10 members of the organization.

Reminder: It's a good practice to give notice of all meetings. Some states require a minimum notice prior to a meeting, but not usually for meetings held on the same day and at the same time each month (i.e., your regular monthly meetings).

Article VI – Executive Board

Section 1. Membership. The Executive Board shall consist of the officers, principal, and standing committee chairs.

Section 2. Duties. The duties of the Executive Board shall be to transact business between meetings in preparation for the general meeting, create standing rules and policies, create standing and temporary committees, prepare and submit a budget to the membership, approve routine bills, and prepare reports and recommendations to the membership.

Section 3. Meetings. Regular meetings shall be held monthly, on the same day and at the same time each month, to be determined by the board. Special meetings may be called by any two board members, with 24 hours notice.

Section 4. Quorum. Half the number of board members plus one constitutes a quorum.

Reminder: Most states prohibit boards of directors from voting by proxy, mail, or email ballot unless the decision is made in writing and is unanimous. The thinking is that boards should meet and confer before making decisions, unless all board members agree.

Article VII – Committees

Section 1. Membership. Committees may consist of members and board members, with the president acting as an ex officio member of all committees.

Section 2. Standing Committees. The following committees shall be held by the organization: Fundraising, Hospitality, Membership, Communications, Arts and Enrichment, Family Events, Nominating, and Auditing.

Section 3. Additional Committees. The board may appoint additional committees as needed.

Article VIII – Finances

Section 1. A tentative budget shall be drafted in the fall for each school year and approved by a majority vote of the members present.

Section 2. The treasurer shall keep accurate records of any disbursements, income, and bank account information.

Section 3. The board shall approve all expenses of the organization.

Section 4. Two authorized signatures shall be required on each check over the amount of \$200. Authorized signers shall be the president, treasurer, and principal.

Section 5. The treasurer shall prepare a financial statement at the end of the year, to be reviewed by the Audit Committee.

Section 6. Upon the dissolution of the organization, any remaining funds should be used to pay any outstanding bills and, with the membership's approval, spent for the benefit of the school.

Section 7. The fiscal year shall coordinate with the school year.
Reminder: State laws often dictate what records must be made available to an organization's members and to the general public. Also, federal law requires that a nonprofit tax-exempt organization's IRS Form 1023 and copies of the organization's annual information returns (IRS Form 990 or 990EZ) for the most recent three years be available for public review when requested.

Article IX – Parliamentary Authority

Robert's Rules of Order shall govern meetings when they are not in conflict with the organization's bylaws.

Article X – Standing Rules

Standing rules may be approved by the Executive Board, and the secretary shall keep a record of the standing rules for future reference.

Article XI – Dissolution

The organization may be dissolved with previous notice (14 calendar days) and a two-thirds vote of those present at the meeting.

Article XII – Amendments

These bylaws may be amended at any regular or special meeting, providing that previous notice was given in writing at the prior meeting and then sent to all members of the organization by the secretary. Notice may be given by postal mail, e-mail, or fax. Amendments will be approved by a two-thirds vote of those present, assuming a quorum.

Article XIII – Conflict of Interest Policy

Section 1. Purpose. The purpose of the conflict of interest policy is to protect this tax-exempt organization's interest when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of an officer or director of the organization or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state and federal laws governing conflict of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable organizations.

Section 2. Definitions.

a. Interested Person. Any director, principal officer, or member of a committee with governing board-delegated powers who has a direct or indirect financial interest, as defined below, is an interested person.

b. Financial Interest. A person has a financial interest if the person has, directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or family:

- i. An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which the organization has a transaction or arrangement;
- ii. A compensation arrangement with the organization or with any entity or individual with which the organization has a transaction or arrangement; or
- iii. A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which the organization is negotiating a transaction or arrangement. "Compensation"

includes direct and indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial.

A financial interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. Under Section 3b, a person who has a financial interest may have a conflict of interest only if the appropriate governing board or committee decides that a conflict of interest exists.

Section 3. Procedures.

a. Duty To Disclose. In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest, an interested person must disclose the existence of the financial interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all material facts to the directors and members of committees with governing board-delegated powers who are considering the proposed transaction or arrangement.

b. Determining Whether a Conflict of Interest Exists. After disclosure of the financial interest and all material facts, and after any discussion with the interested person, he/she shall leave the governing board or committee meeting while the determination of a conflict of interest is discussed and voted upon. The remaining board or committee members shall decide whether a conflict of interest exists.

c. Procedures for Addressing the Conflict of Interest.

i. An interested person may make a presentation at the governing board or committee meeting, but after the presentation, he/she shall leave the meeting during the discussion of, and the vote on, the transaction or arrangement involving the possible conflict of interest.

ii. The chairperson of the governing board or committee shall, if appropriate, appoint a disinterested person or committee to investigate alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement.

iii. After exercising due diligence, the governing board or committee shall determine whether the organization can obtain, with reasonable efforts, a more advantageous transaction or arrangement from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest.

iv. If a more advantageous transaction or arrangement is not reasonably possible under circumstances not producing a conflict of interest, the governing board or committee shall determine by a majority vote of the disinterested directors whether the transaction or arrangement is in the organization's best interest, for its own benefit, and whether it is fair and reasonable. In conformity with the above determination, it shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the transaction or arrangement.

d. Violations of the Conflict of Interest Policy.

i. If the governing board or committee has reasonable cause to believe a member has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, it shall inform the member of the basis for such belief and afford the member an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.

ii. If, after hearing the member's response and after making further

investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the governing board or committee determines that the member has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

Section 4. Records of Proceedings. The minutes of the governing board and all committees with board delegated powers shall contain:

a. The names of the persons who disclosed or otherwise were found to have a financial interest in connection with an actual or possible conflict of interest; the nature of the financial interest; any action taken to determine whether a conflict of interest was present; and the governing board's or committee's decision as to whether a conflict of interest in fact existed.

b. The names of the persons who were present for discussions and votes relating to the transaction or arrangement; the content of the discussion; including any alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement; and a record of any votes taken in connection with the proceedings.

Section 5. Compensation.

a. A voting member of the governing board who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the organization for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member's compensation.

b. A voting member of any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the organization for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining to that member's compensation.

c. No voting member of the governing board or any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the organization, either individually or collectively, is prohibited from providing information to any committee regarding compensation.

Section 6. Annual Statements. Each director, principal officer, and member of a committee with governing board-delegated powers shall annually sign a statement which affirms that such person:

- Has received a copy of the conflict of interest policy;
- Has read and understood the policy;
- Has agreed to comply with the policy; and
- Understands that the organization is charitable and that in order to maintain its federal tax exempt status it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes.

Section 7. Periodic Reviews. To ensure that the organization operates in a manner consistent with charitable purposes and does not engage in activities that could jeopardize its tax-exempt status, periodic reviews shall be conducted. The periodic reviews shall, at a minimum, include the following subjects:

a. Whether compensation arrangements and benefits are reasonable, are based on competent survey information, and are the result of arm's length bargaining.

b. Whether partnerships, joint ventures, and arrangements with management organizations conform to the organization's written policies, are properly recorded, reflect reasonable investment or payments for goods and services, further charitable purposes, and do not result in inurement, impermissible private benefit, or an excess benefit transaction.

Section 8. Use of Outside Experts. When conducting the periodic reviews as provided for in Section 7, the organization may, but need not, use outside advisers. If outside experts are used, their use shall not relieve the governing board of its responsibility for ensuring that periodic reviews are conducted.

PTO Members Wanted

Families and Teachers join together to support our school!

Why should I join the PTO?

You will be able to share your ideas on how to improve our school.

You will be part of a team.

You will have the opportunity to share your skills.

You will get to know teachers.

You will stay informed about your child's education.

You will make a big difference.

PTO Member Description:

No experience necessary. PTO members should have a willingness to learn and contribute. Ideal members will want to participate in a team setting and be willing to work in partnership with others. Training will be provided to new volunteers. Ongoing professional development will also be available to PTO members.

This opportunity is available to:

(Fill in who's eligible for membership)

We need members who are available on:

(Fill in meeting dates, times and length)

Other opportunities to participate:

(Describe the opportunities for parents who cannot attend meetings)

If you are interested or have questions please contact:

Contact Person:

Phone Number:

E-mail:

EXECUTIVE BOARD JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Parent Group President/Chairperson Job Description

Duties/Responsibilities:

- Attends and leads all meetings - general and executive board meetings
- Coordinates the work of officers and committees
- Provides timely correspondence to members
- Sets agendas for meetings
- Reviews all flyers and PTO/PTA communications for accuracy
- Helps to organize events and activities
- Coordinates fundraisers
- Monitors monthly budgets
- Recruits and trains new members to help with leadership transitions
- Acts as a liaison between administrators and staff and the parent group
- Co-signs all checks
- Coordinates the yearly independent audit before the end of the fiscal year
- Trains and mentors incoming officers
- Keeps a procedure book

Skills:

- Ability to remain unbiased
- Ability to keep the best interest of the organization in mind
- Ability to multi-task
- Confident in leading a group
- Skilled listener
- Ability to work cooperatively
- Highly organized
- Maintains detailed records
- Ability to meet deadlines

Time Obligation:

- Attends all parent group meetings and executive board meetings
- Plans agendas for meetings
- Meets regularly with school principal
- Attends sub-committee meetings
- Available to respond to the needs of membership via telephone and email
- Flexible time to meet the needs of all parents/students

**Parent Group Vice President/Vice Chairperson
Job Description**

Duties/Responsibilities:

- Performs the duties of the president in the president's absence or inability to serve
- Attends and is an active participant at all meetings
- Facilitates meetings in the absence of president
- Provides timely correspondence to members
- Helps to organize events and activities
- Performs other duties as assigned by the president or organization
- Keeps detailed membership records
- Coordinates volunteer needs for the group
- Trains and mentors incoming officers
- Keeps a procedure book

Skills:

- Ability to remain unbiased
- Ability to keep the best interest of the organization in mind
- Ability to multi-task
- Confident in leading a group
- Skilled listener
- Ability to work cooperatively
- Organized
- Maintains detailed records
- Ability to meet deadlines

Time Obligation:

- Attends all parent group meetings and executive board meetings
- Attends sub committee meetings as needed or assigned
- Available to respond to the needs of membership via telephone and email
- Flexible time to meet the needs of all parents/students
- Many tasks like record keeping and correspondences may be completed at home

Parent Group Secretary Job Description

Duties/Responsibilities:

- Attends and is an active participant at all meetings
- Provides timely correspondence to members
- Helps to organize events and activities
- Available to train and mentor incoming officers
- Performs other duties as assigned by the president or organization
- Provides a sign in sheet for participants/Keep record of attendance
- Records the minutes of all meetings
- Makes notes of items that were approved, motioned or tabled
- Brings a copy of the group's bylaws to all meetings
- Types, proofreads, and distributes the meeting minutes in a timely manner
- Seeks approval and/or makes necessary changes to the minutes
- Keeps an accurate and permanent record of notes (minutes) of all group meetings signed by the secretary
- Prepares several copies of the minutes for organization's meeting
- Receives all correspondence and presents them at organization's meeting (awards, certificates, letters, notes etc.)
- Prepares announcements for meeting or weekly newsletters
- Creates and distributes meeting reminder notices
- Updates organization's contact list
- Posts minutes on website and/or news board
- Keeps a procedure book

Skills:

- Ability to keep the best interest of the organization in mind
- Ability to multi-task
- Skilled listener
- Ability to maintain detailed records
- Knowledge of word processing, email, and internet
- Ability to meet deadlines

Time Obligation:

- Attends all parent group meetings and executive board meetings
- Attends sub committee meetings as needed or assigned
- Available to respond to the needs of membership via telephone and email
- Many tasks like record keeping and correspondences may be completed at home

Parent Group Treasurer Job Description

Duties/Responsibilities:

- Attends and is an active participant at all meetings
- Helps to organize events and activities
- Trains and mentors incoming officers
- Performs other duties as assigned by the president or organization
- Deposits funds in the group's insured bank account
- Provides a written financial statement to the board at all group meetings
- Presents an annual report of the financial status of the organization
- Collects and disperses all funds of the organization
- Signs all checks and maintains an accurate checkbook
- Maintains files of all requests for reimbursements and bank deposit slips
- Documents all requests for reimbursements are accurate and approved within the budget
- Develops and updates a monthly spreadsheet of income and expense report
- Prepares the group's budget which must be approved by members
- Assists in the independent audit
- Reconciles monthly bank statements
- Prepares all tax forms or establish a professional to assist if necessary
- Prepares all necessary paperwork to maintain incorporation, non-profit or tax exempt status
- Provides cash boxes with bill/coins for making change at organizational events as needed
- Keeps a procedure book

Skills:

- Ability to keep the best interest of the organization in mind
- Ability to maintain detailed records and is well organized
- Knowledge of money management programs (spreadsheets and excel)
- Ability to meet deadlines
- Trustworthy, honest, and accurate

Time Obligation:

- Attends all parent group meetings and executive board meetings
- Attends sub committee meetings as needed or assigned
- Available to respond to the needs of membership via telephone and email
- Ability to provide and deposit funds during business hours as needed
- Many tasks like record keeping may be completed at home

Robert's Rules of Order and Parliamentary Procedure

Background

Parliamentary procedure (or law) originally referred to the customs and rules for conducting business in the British Parliament and later referred to deliberative assemblies in general. In Great Britain, these procedures form a part of the unwritten law of the land, and in our own legislative bodies they are the authority in all cases where they do not conflict with existing rules or precedents.

Henry Martyn Robert was an engineering officer in the regular U.S. Army in the late 1800s. Without warning he was asked to preside over a church meeting, and to his embarrassment he realized that he did not know how. This situation, familiar to many of us who have been in heated or disorderly union meetings, left him determined never to attend another meeting until he knew something of parliamentary law.

Ultimately, he discovered and studied the few books then available on the subject. As he was transferred to various parts of the United States during his military service, he found virtual parliamentary anarchy, since people from different parts of the country had differing ideas about correct procedure.

In 1876, General Robert set out to bring the rules of parliamentary law (by then adopted by the U.S. Congress) to members of ordinary societies and organizations with the publication of the *Pocket Manual of Rules of Order*. It sold half a million copies before it was completely reworked in 1915 and published as *Robert's Rules of Order Revised* and made Robert's name synonymous with the orderly rules in deliberative societies. In 1970 it was substantially expanded and became *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

The rules of parliamentary law are constructed upon a careful balance of the rights of the majority, of the minority (especially a strong minority greater than one-third), of individual members and of absentees.

Fundamentally, under the rules of parliamentary law, a deliberative body is a free agent--free to do what it wants to do with the greatest measure of protection to itself and of consideration for the rights of its members.

The current edition of *Robert's Rules* has been developed through a process of updating the book with the growth of parliamentary procedure. All editions of the work issued after the death of the original author have been the work of persons who either knew and worked with the original author or knew and worked with persons who did.

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised is designed to provide an answer to nearly any possible question of parliamentary law. It is, therefore, quite detailed. The average person may only occasionally be confronted with the small points that are necessarily dealt in the book, but if you attend many union meetings, you will probably want to own a copy (visit the official Robert's Rules of Order Web site, <http://www.robertsrules.com/>, for information and to order a hardback or paperback copy).

Parliamentary procedure is a time-tested method of conducting business at meetings and public gatherings. It can be adapted to fit the needs of any organization. Today, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* is the basic handbook of operation for most unions, clubs, organizations and other groups, so it's important that everyone know these basic rules!

The Basics of Parliamentary Procedure

1. The purpose of parliamentary procedure is to make it easier for people to work together effectively and to help groups accomplish their purposes. Rules of procedure should assist a meeting, not inhibit it.
2. A meeting can deal with only one matter at a time. The various kinds of motions have therefore been assigned an order of precedence
3. All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations. One of the chairperson's main responsibilities is to use the authority of the chair to ensure that all people attending a meeting are treated equally--for example, not to permit a vocal few to dominate the debates.
4. A majority vote decides an issue. In any group, each member agrees to be governed by the vote of the majority. Parliamentary rules enable a meeting to determine the will of the majority of those attending a meeting.
5. The rights of the minority must be protected at all times. Although the ultimate decision rests with a majority, all members have such basic rights as the right to be heard and the right to oppose. The rights of all members--majority and minority--should be the concern of every member, for a person may be in a majority on one question but in minority the on the next.
6. Every matter presented for decision should be discussed fully. The right of every member to speak on any issue is as important as each member's right to vote.
7. Every member has the right to understand the meaning of any question presented to a meeting and to know what effect a decision will have. A member always has the right to request information on any motion he or she does not thoroughly understand. Moreover, all meetings must be characterized by fairness and good faith. Parliamentary strategy is the art of using procedure legitimately to support or defeat a proposal.

Conducting a Meeting

Members express themselves in a meeting by making motions. A motion is a proposal that the entire membership take action or a stand on an issue. Individual members can:

- Call to order
- Second motions
- Debate motions
- Vote on motions

There are four basic types of motions:

- **Main motions:** The purpose of a main motion is to introduce items to the membership for their consideration. They cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor, and they yield to subsidiary, privileged and incidental motions.
- **Subsidiary motions:** Their purpose is to change or affect how a main motion is handled, and is voted on before a main motion.
- **Privileged motions:** Their purpose is to bring up items that are urgent or important matters unrelated to pending business.
- **Incidental motions:** Their purpose is to provide a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions and must be considered before the other motion.

How motions are presented

Obtain the floor

- Wait until the last speaker has finished.
- Rise and address the chairperson by saying, "Mr./Ms. Chairperson" or "Mr./Ms. President."
- Wait until the chairperson recognizes you.

Make your motion

- Speak in a clear and concise manner.
- Always state a motion affirmatively. Say, "I move that we..." rather than "I move that we do not..."
- Avoid personalities and stay on your subject.

Wait for someone to second your motion

- Another member will second your motion or the chairperson will call for a second.
- If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.

The chairperson states your motion

- The chairperson will say, "It has been moved and seconded that we ...," thus placing your motion before the membership for consideration and action.
- The membership either debates your motion, or may move directly to a vote.
- Once your motion is presented to the membership by the chairperson, it becomes "assembly property" and cannot be changed by you without the consent of the members.

Expanding on your motion

- The time for you to speak in favor of your motion is at this point in time, rather than at the time you present it.
- The mover is always allowed to speak first.
- All comments and debate must be directed to the chairperson.
- Keep to the time limit for speaking that has been established.
- The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished unless called upon by the chairperson.

Putting the question to the membership

- The chairperson asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
- If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
- On a motion to move the previous question may be adapted.

Voting on a motion

The method of vote on any motion depends on the situation and the bylaws of your organization. There are five methods used to vote by most organizations, they are:

- **By voice**--The chairperson asks those in favor to say "aye," those opposed to say "no." Any member may move for an exact count.
- **By roll call**--Each member answers "yes" or "no" as his name is called. This method is used when a record of each person's vote is required.
- **By general consent**--When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the chairperson says, "If there is no objection..." The membership shows agreement by their silence; however, if one member says, "I object," the item must be put to a vote.
- **By division**--This is a slight verification of a voice vote. It does not require a count unless the chairman so desires. Members raise their hands or stand.

- **By ballot**--Members write their vote on a slip of paper; this method is used when secrecy is desired.

There are two other motions that are commonly used that relate to voting.

- **Motion to table**--This motion is often used in the attempt to "kill" a motion. The option is always present, however, to "take from the table", for reconsideration by the membership.
- **Motion to postpone indefinitely**--This is often used as a means of parliamentary strategy and allows opponents of motion to test their strength without an actual vote being taken. Also, debate is once again open on the main motion.

Parliamentary procedure is the best way to get things done at your meetings. It will only work, however, if you use it properly. Remember to:

- Allow motions that are in order.
- Have members obtain the floor properly.
- Speak clearly and concisely.
- Obey the rules of debate.
- Most importantly, BE COURTEOUS.

Sources: AFT national rep Bob Brown, Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, Robert's Rules of Order Web site (www.robertsrules.com)

Sample Agenda

School-wide PTO Meeting

Wednesday, October 13, 2010

School Library

6:00 p.m.

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Principal's Update
3. Volunteering
 - Opportunities for upcoming events
4. Fundraising
5. PTO Budget Update
6. Open Discussion
 - School Questions and Concerns
7. Next Meeting
 - Date/Time/Location

Treasurer's Report
Elementary School
4/8/10

Beginning Balance **\$4000.00**
Anticipated Income

Event	Revenue Received	Amount Paid Out	Profit
Box Tops	\$ 825.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 775.00
Fall Fundraiser	\$7000.00	\$3200.00	\$3800.00
Fall Book Fair	\$3000.00	\$2100.00	\$ 900.00
Holiday Shop	\$4325.00	\$3265.00	\$1060.00
School Photos	\$1280.00	\$ 0.00	\$1280.00
Spring Fundraiser	\$4350.00	\$2825.00	\$1525.00
Stop & Shop Program	\$ 126.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 126.00
Totals Income:	\$20,906.00	\$11,440.00	\$9466.00

Total Profit w/balance **\$13,466.00**

Anticipated Expenses

Event	Revenue Received	Amount Paid Out	Total Expense
Bounced Check Fee	\$ 0.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 50.00
Children's Activities	\$ 534.00	\$ 826.00	\$ 292.00
Cultural Arts	\$ 0.00	\$ 1800.00	\$1800.00
Field Trips	\$ 0.00	\$5500.00	\$5500.00
Miscellaneous	\$ 0.00	\$ 148.00	\$ 148.00
Office Supplies	\$ 0.00	\$ 123.00	\$ 123.00
Requests	\$ 0.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 50.00
Taxes Prep Fee	\$ 0.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
Total Expenses:	\$ 534.00	\$8697.00	\$8163.00

Totals: **\$21,440.00** **\$20,137.00** **\$5303.00**

Parent-Teacher Organization

PTO Meeting Minutes

October 13, 2010

School Cafeteria

Call to order at 6:15 p.m.

Approximately 25 present

- Parent Specialist unable to attend to present parent involvement workshop.
- Principal Update: The principal presented an overview of the recent NECAP testing and other assessments. Discussed how the testing fits into the overall assessment and curriculum of the school. Discussed upcoming programs and initiatives including a Lego Robotics program, Chinese program and guitar. The principal has about \$8,000 in federal funds to develop afterschool programs and would like input from parents about what we would like to see.
- Academic Affairs
 - Scholastic Book Fair scheduled for Nov. 15-19. Event chairs gave an overview of the project, including the need for parent volunteers and donations of gently used books.
 - Room Parent Program: Update on the Room Parent Initiative. Only 5 rooms are currently without a designated room parent. Room parents help teachers communicate with parents, help with special programs, coordinate volunteers. Role varies by room. Please contact the PTO if interested in volunteering.
 - Holiday Wish Lists: PTO would like to implement teacher wish lists, where teachers could request class supplies and other materials needed at the school.
 - Overview of the afterschool program held at the school, including an introduction of AmeriCorps volunteers.
- Fundraising
 - Fall Raffle: Goal is to sell 10,000 tickets (20 per student). Will sell tickets at Stop and Shop on October 30 at 8:00 a.m. Volunteers needed.
 - Parents and Teacher's Night Out: November 3, 2010 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$20 and include a beverage and appetizers.
- Salad Bar Initiative: Whole Foods, with support of the school community raised the \$2600. This makes us eligible to move to the second phase of the program and request a grant for the program. An additional \$600 raised at the school will be held in escrow for this program.

- Upcoming Events:
 - Family Fun Night: discussed having a fall costume party in lieu of movie nights. Details still being finalized.
 - Winter Music Celebration: December PTO meeting will be a winter celebration with performances by our students.
 - Open Houses will be held in January, February and March. Need parent volunteers to represent the school to prospective families.
- Playground: playground project is almost complete. Will plan a dedication once complete (about three weeks).
- Garden Workday: There will be a garden workday on Saturday, Nov. 6 to winterize the garden and build raised beds. Volunteers needed.
- Volunteers: Discussion of working with a local university for student volunteers.
- Budget Overview: the PTO has approximately \$6,000, with about half dedicated for specific projects including the garden and music program. Harvest Fest raised \$850, raffle income at \$730, and t-shirts \$460 (does not exclude anticipated expenses for raffle and t-shirts). Fundraising target for year is \$25,000. Last year, \$20,000 raised.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

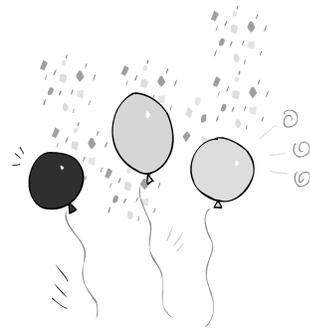
Next meeting: Wednesday, November 10 at 6:00 p.m.

Join us for

Date: _____

Location: _____

Time: _____



Please return the bottom part of this form to your child's teacher by _____.

We hope you can join us for this family event!

All children must be supervised by a responsible adult.



Student's Name: _____

Classroom Teacher: _____

Number of people attending: _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

I would like to volunteer. Please contact me.

I would like to make a donation of _____.

When schools and families work together students perform better and enjoy school more. If you have a school related problem the action steps below will help us work together and come to a resolution. **Please make sure you write down the name of everyone you speak with and keep all documents related to your problem.**

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Action Steps</u>	<u>Result</u>
Academic	For help with homework and student progress	→ Contact a TEACHER
Academic	For help with discipline, safety and any unresolved school issues	→ Contact the PRINCIPAL
Academic	For help with graduation requirements, attendance and college access	→ Contact a GUIDANCE COUNSELOR for middle & high school
Volunteer	For help with organizing events and volunteering	→ Contact the PTO
Programs and Services	For Special Education services and evaluations, 456-9263	→ Contact SPECIAL EDUCATION
Programs and Services	For school assignments and transfers, 456-9297	→ Contact REGISTRATION
Programs and Services	For bus passes and pick-up or drop-off times, 456-9311	→ Contact TRANSPORTATION

If you still need help or answers call or visit → **Department of Family and Community Engagement, 456-0686**

Please refer to pages 22 of the Parent Handbook for more detailed information.
The Parent Handbook 2011-12 is available at our Web site: www.providenceschools.org

Contact or visit the Department of Family & Community Engagement (FACE),
located at 379 Washington Street, Providence, RI 02903 (401) 456-0686

Providence Schools

Opportunities for parents to get involved at (school name)



Parent involvement is needed in various ways at our school. Volunteering in school can be a rewarding and fun experience! Plus, students enjoy having their parents in school. Let us know if you're interested in getting involved and a parent or school staff member will contact you with more information.

Parents can get involved:

- in parent groups (PTO/PTA)
- in the Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
- in the School Improvement Team
- in after-school programs
- by helping in the classroom
- by chaperoning field trips
- by assisting with parent recruitment
- by planning and assisting with school activities

We know that it may be difficult to participate because of other obligations, but helping out, even for an hour, makes a huge difference in our school and to your child. Please return the bottom portion of this flyer to your child's teacher. If you have questions, speak to the principal or call the Parent Resource Center at 456-0686. For more information, please visit www.providenceschools.org



Parent and Family Engagement Form

NOTE TO PARENTS: This information is requested in order to contact you and keep you informed of important school and district events and meetings. Thank you for completing this form - please return it to your child's teacher. Together we can make our school the best it can be!

STUDENT NAME: _____ GRADE: _____

PARENT NAME: _____

HOME PHONE: _____ BEST TIME TO CALL: _____

CELL PHONE: _____ BEST TIME TO CALL: _____

WORK PHONE: _____ BEST TIME TO CALL: _____

E-MAIL: _____

INTERNAL USE: School staff who receive this form should forward it to the main office.

School Improvement Team (S.I.T.)

Providence Schools value and welcome parents, families and community members. We welcome you to join school staff to work on improving student achievement as well as increase parent participation by becoming involved in the School Improvement team at your child's school.

What is the Mission of the School Improvement Team?

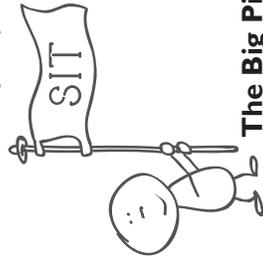
To focus the school on student performance and a process of continuous school improvement that involves and informs all members of the school community in this work.

What are the Components of a School Improvement Plan?

- Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- Goals
- Strategies and Action Plans
- Monitoring Plan

School Improvement Teams should include:

- The Principal
- Union Delegate
- and a representative number of:
 - Parents
 - Students
 - Teachers
 - Teacher Leaders
 - Support Staff
 - Business and/or Community Representatives



The Big Picture

It's all about the kids. Schools will be better able to help students learn and achieve through effective and shared leadership by the SITs.

What is the Role of the School Improvement Team?

“Each school improvement team shall assist in the preparation and evaluation of the school improvement plan and each school improvement team shall provide such assistance as the principal may request in preparing the annual budget and plan as required by law.” - The Rhode Island School Improvement Act of 2000

What are the Responsibilities of the School Improvement Team?

- Organize and manage a school-wide self-study process to identify important issues
- Create action plans (Providence One Plan or POP) to organize the improvement process
- Lead school-wide implementation of action plans
- Regularly collect academic and data information, and reflect on student progress
- Monitor and adjust action plans to better address student needs
- Evaluate and review the effectiveness of the action plans
- Report information to parents and central office
- Begin self-study process again

Providence Schools

For more information, about SIT

Contact the principal of your child's school. You can also obtain copies of the SIT meeting notes at the Main Office or Guidance Office of your child's school.

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Providence Schools is committed to increase parent engagement throughout the district. It will do so by holding all administrators accountable for increasing and encouraging families to become active partners in their child’s education. The district is required to meet certain expectations as well as comply with city, state and federal mandates. Principals as leaders of their schools are most of the time a parent’s first point of contact. It is critical that principals understand that parents are very interested in their child’s education but because of individual circumstances it can be a challenge to be as involved as they would like. The district is committed to increasing parental involvement and the Office of Family and Community Engagement will continue to assist principals with resources to:

- Guide their parent engagement strategies and activities
- Better guide parents who are interested in helping with parent engagement at their child’s school
- Provide tips for parents to help increase student achievement and how to support their children at home

District Commitment to Parent Engagement

Providence Schools understands the importance of parent engagement and is responsible for complying with city, state and federal education mandates such as the No Child Left Behind Act, Title 1, the Providence Effective Schools Initiative as well as applying the “Keys to Successful Partnerships: Six Types of Involvement” developed by Dr. Joyce Epstein, John Hopkins University. All these concepts support and guide the work of the Family and Community Engagement Office. The district established a Family and Community Engagement Center to better assist families and the district. Today the Parent Center helps the district increase parent engagement by assisting schools, administrators and the community in general with parent concerns, district and curriculum information and resources to families. The Parent Center also has a conference room available for group meetings/workshops/trainings. Parents, principals, teachers, administrators and the community are welcome to reserve the space as needed.

Providence Schools Family and Community Engagement Resource Center

The Department of Family & Community Engagement is responsible to strengthen communication with families and the community and oversee the District’s plan for engaging families and the community. The office proactively supports parents, teachers, school leadership as well as district community partners. The focus is to ensure all parents are informed, involved and empowered through the resources provided as well as the sensitivity and time placed on each individual family who either calls or visits the office. In addition, the office engages in outreach to community partners and supporters for collaboration and strengthening student achievement efforts. The department is responsible to assist schools in the best way possible to ensure families are made to feel welcome and equal partners at each of our schools.

The Parent Center offers the following resources to parents and community:

- Assistance to parents, both individually and in groups, who have questions about or are experiencing problems with the school department;
- A resource library, with up-to-date materials, which assist parents in understanding curriculum and how to help their children learn;
- Parent meeting room for school personnel to meet with parents in a comfortable, non-threatening setting;
- Parent workshops and training opportunities;
- An in-house parent call center with extended hours to provide families with immediate assistance;
- Meeting space for parent organizations; and
- Applications for agencies interested in becoming district community partners.

Staff members include:

Janet Pichardo	Director for Family and Community Engagement
Kai Cameron	Facilitator for Community Partnerships
Ida Valentin	Parent Specialist
Youa Hang	Parent Specialist
Lesbia Pabon	Parent Specialist
Yvonne Grullon	Administrative Assistant

Contact Information:

The Parent Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm. Please call the office at 401-456-0686 to inquire about future meetings with regard to: Parent Advisory Council, Community Partners, Parent Workshops and district- wide Parent Conference dates.

DISTRICT PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (PAC)

What is the Parent Advisory Council (PAC)?

The PAC is a district wide parent organization. Its purpose is to ensure that parents have an organized voice in the district; that parents are involved in decision-making processes and procedures, as appropriate and permitted by law; and, that parent needs, concerns and issues are communicated, addressed by, and resolved before the School Board and Superintendent regularly and effectively.

Who comprises the PAC?

The PAC shall be primarily comprised of parent members, with one from each school in the district. There shall also be one member from the Special Education Local Advisory Committee and one member selected by the Superintendent from the community-at-large.

What are the duties and/or responsibilities of the PAC?

- Review and provide input on proposed and/or new district initiatives
- Meet regularly with Superintendent to discuss district and school issues
- Solicit and report parent concerns to raise at PAC meetings
- Report activities of PAC and other pertinent information back to other parents in the school
- Assist in planning and recruiting parents to district parent events

How does one apply to be a part of the PAC?

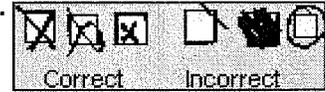
Per the District Parent Involvement Policy, the Parents within each school shall devise a method for engaging and/or selecting one Parent representative, as well as one alternate should the representative be unable to make a meeting.

If there are more than two interested parents from each school, then the principal will work with parents from that school to devise a selection process to choose the representative and alternate. Principals can work through existing parent groups or pull together a special committee of parents to oversee this process. The Principal will maintain a list of all parents participating in the selection process.

Principals must submit names and details of the selection process to the
Family and Community Engagement Office by **November 1, 2011**.

Providence Parent Survey

The Providence School District wants to know about parent involvement. Please help them by completing this survey. **IMPORTANT: DO NOT** mark any place on the form except on the squares and in the text boxes. For the following questions please consider only the child that attends this school.



Name of child's school:

1. When you attend school events, what types of events do you attend? (Please mark an X in all that apply.)

- I don't attend school events
- Open House
- Workshops
- Parent meetings
- Parent Teacher conferences
- Other

If 'other', please describe in the box:

2. What keeps you from attending school events? (Please mark an X in all that apply.)

- I do attend school events
- I don't feel welcome at the school
- No transportation
- I have small children at home
- I don't receive information about the events
- Language barrier
- No time to attend
- Other

If 'other', please describe in the box:

3. What do you do when you volunteer for the school? (Please mark an X in all that apply.)

- I do not volunteer for the school
- Help the teacher in the classroom
- Go on field trips
- Work in the office
- Belong to a committee, team, or parent group (school improvement team, PTO, PTA)
- Help with fundraising
- I do tasks at home (make phone calls, prepare materials, bake)

4. What keeps you from volunteering? (Please mark an X in all that apply.)

- I do volunteer
- I did not know that volunteers are needed
- I do not know how to become a volunteer
- I don't feel that I can do what they need
- I do not have transportation
- I have small children at home
- There is a language barrier
- I don't have time to volunteer
- I don't feel welcomed in the school
- I signed up to volunteer but no one called me
- I tried to volunteer but had a bad experience

5. What do you do to help your child do well in school? (Please mark an X in all that apply.)

- Get my child to school every day
- Talk with my child about how important education is
- Communicate regularly with my child's teacher
- Attend Parent Teacher conferences
- Attend school events
- Provide my child with time to do homework
- Other

If 'other', please describe in the box:

6. What keeps you from helping your child as much as you would like to? (Please mark an X in all that apply.)

- I don't have enough time
- I do not understand the subject or class work
- I do not read or speak English very well
- I don't know how to help
- I think it's the teachers job, not mine
- Other

If 'other', please describe in the box:

Providence Parent Survey

7. How do you find out about upcoming school or district events? (Please mark an X in all that apply.)

- Announcements come in the mail
- Announcements come home with my child
- Signs are posted around town
- Announcements in the newspaper or on the radio
- Someone from the school calls or emails me
- The school's electronic phone system calls me
- From other people
- My child tells me
- School website
- I never know about upcoming events

8. What type(s) of school events would you like to attend? (Please mark an X in all that apply.)

- Academic events (math night, reading night, awards night)
- Family events (movie night, game night, cultural night)
- Parent workshops and trainings (parenting information, child development, adult learning)
- Parent group meeting (PTO, PTA)
- Other

If 'other', please describe in the box:

9. What is the best way for your child's teacher to communicate with you? (Please mark an X in all that apply.)

- Email
- Telephone
- Notes
- Other

If 'other', please describe in the box:

10. What keeps you from communicating with your child's teacher? (Please mark an X in all that apply.)

- I do communicate with the teacher
- Teacher is hard to reach
- I do not use email
- Language barriers
- Teacher does not reply to me (calls, emails, notes)
- Other

If 'other', please describe in the box:

11. What is the primary language that you speak at home?

- English
- Spanish
- Khmer
- Hmong
- Lao
- Portugese
- Other

If 'other', please describe in the box:

