

*Guam Department of Education
District Action Plan
to Improve Reading, Math, and Language Arts*

HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION

Parents play a pivotal role in the ensuring that their children succeed in school. Research studies on parent involvement conducted over the past two decades have reached the same conclusion: parent involvement increases student achievement and self-esteem. Significant findings conclude that:

- Regardless of income, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' education level, student achievement goes up when parents are involved and the more involved the parent, the higher the student achievement.
- Students whose parents are involved receive good grades, perform well on tests, have higher graduation rates and better chances of going on to college.
- Parents of disadvantaged children can help their children reach high standards by becoming involved in all aspects of their education.
- Improving student achievement is not dependent on income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to (1) create a home environment that encourages learning; (2) communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and (3) become involved in their children's education at school and in the community.

Parents will spend more time with their children over the course of their lifetime than teachers will. They are their children's first teachers and can play a positive role in the education of their children. By working

together with the schools, parents can have an even greater influence. They can encourage their children to do their best, help them build their confidence and self-esteem, and reinforce skills being taught in the classroom.

In designing parent involvement programs, the district will be guided by national standards in the same way that it has advocated the emulation of national standards in regards to curriculum, teacher and principal quality, and professional development. The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs were developed by the National Parent Teachers Association. The six standards are:

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

strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

Home~School Communication

The focus of the Home-School Connection component is on the first standard. Frequent and meaningful communication is the basis of a solid home-school partnership. Not every parent has the time nor the confidence to volunteer in the classroom, go on field trips or become members of parent organizations. A majority of parents will never actually set foot in the school building, nor will they attend workshops. Parents who have inadequate literacy skills are extremely hesitant to express their feelings to teachers and principals who are very educated, and are leery of institutions in general. Parents whose children are failing or on the verge of failing are the least likely to attend conferences or visit the school. Schools must deal with this reality by reaching out to these parents, instead of waiting for them to make initial contact. These parents are reachable via less time consuming and friendlier means of communication such as the telephone, fax, e-mails, or regular mail. What is important is consistent two-way contact, though not necessarily face to face.

The district will encourage schools to promote effective and frequent two-way communication with parents by providing the means needed to create the environment that will facilitate that interaction. This may include:

- Installing telephone lines in areas easily accessible to teachers;
- Establishing home-school communication centers equipped with a variety of communication tools--phone, fax, and computers;
- Providing rewards to teachers for reaching the most number of parents;
- Employing paid parent volunteers to assist in two-way communication efforts.

Schools assume that once information is sent home with students, communication has taken place. To dispel that notion, schools must put in place a policy that defines two-way communication and follow it up with action steps. Effective two-way communication paves the way to meaningful parent involvement. It requires that teachers, principals, and parents share ideas, give input, and solve educational problems together. Mutual benefit is derived from such a positive relationship.

Education Is Important! Campaign

The goal of the “Education is Important!” campaign is to provide parents or care-givers of the 32,000 students enrolled in our schools with information about how they can help their children be successful in school. An island-wide media and outreach campaign will be conducted to educate parents about the factors under their control that influence their children’s chances of succeeding in school and the importance of: 1) good parenting skills, 2) reading and math to academic achievement, and 3) education in general. The assumption is that not all parents are provided with up to date research and information that will help them understand how they can help their children do well in school. Dissemination methods may include: TV and radio spots, print ads, website postings, notices posted in neighborhood stores, businesses and government offices, and mass mailings.

Comprehensive Parent/Family Involvement Program

By including home-school connection as part of its improvement efforts and focusing on two-way communication, the district has reflected its belief in the importance of parent involvement. However, a comprehensive parent involvement program and policy remains to be fully developed. The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs standards will serve as a basis for planning high quality programs and activities. The following steps will be taken to initiate the process:

- Establish a parent involvement committee to include parent and community representatives;
- Review existing parent/family involvement policies, procedures, and programs, identify successful practices;
- Review planned parent involvement programs in school action plans;
- Research parent involvement models and practices that have been documented as successful in improving student achievement;
- Develop a comprehensive parent/family involvement plan;
- Draft a parent/family involvement policy;
- Assign coordination of parent/family involvement program to a district office or administrator;
- Identify immediate and potential financial resources;
- Facilitate training for teachers and other staff;
- Monitor effectiveness of plan; adjust accordingly.



HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION

ACTION PLAN

Objective: To increase parent involvement at the schools.					
Activities	Status	Responsibility	Resources	Timeline	Documentation
1. Develop media and outreach campaign to educate parents about how they can help their students succeed in school. Translate into various languages.	Planned	Parent Involvement Committee	Media expenses; printing costs.	Aug. 2003 - Aug. 2004	Media messages produced and broadcasted; campaign print materials created and disseminated.
2. Assist schools in establishing a home-school two way communication system by: a) installing telephone lines in areas easily accessible to teachers. b) establishing home-school communication centers equipped with a variety of communication tools--phone, fax, and computers. c) providing rewards to teachers reaching the most number of parents. b) employing paid parent volunteers to assist in two-way communication efforts.	Planned	District Administration	Federal: telephone lines, equipment, compensation for parent volunteers, rewards.	Aug. 2003 - Aug. 2004	System in place: telephone lines installed, centers equipped, rewards granted to teachers; volunteers hired and compensated.
3. Develop comprehensive parent/family involvement plan.	Planned	Parent Involvement Committee	Federal: supplies and materials.	Apr. 2003 - Aug. 2003	Parent / family involvement plan developed.