

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

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Number of Specific Recommendations: 7

Preamble

Almost a half-century of research has shown that when families are involved in education, those children tend to perform and behave better than their peers. Put another way, families have the power to make their children successful. Conversely, an absence of family involvement--whether through lack of time, resources, or understanding--has the power to undermine everything the school is trying to provide.

Where schools and families work together, schools become more family-like and families become more school-like until the same consistent message about high academic expectations is delivered to the student from every corner of the community. Several aspects of parent involvement must be addressed in order for this to occur, but when it does, the outcome is SUCCESS.

Support Understanding Comfort Communication Education Satisfaction System

Support

While the school district has a role in encouraging and supporting family involvement, there are also many community agencies and organizations who would love to help. One area where schools can help is in assessing the needs of their parent and family populations--whether it be in basic parenting skills, helping with homework, transportation, babysitting, education in SBDM governance--and then coordinating with the appropriate agency or community group to deliver that service.

Understanding

There is much research indicating that different cultures have different views of the roles of parents and schools, and likewise the views of families with special-needs children often differ from those who don't. Therefore a "one-size-fits-all" approach to engaging with parents and families will most likely fail with some segment of the population. Cultural/special-needs responsive training for both teachers and family members can help both sides understand the views and objectives of the other.

Comfort

Before any real communication can take place, parents and family members must be comfortable talking with teachers and administrators. The more reasons there are for families to interact with school employees, whether through school events, home visits, or phone calls, the more comfortable they become. Group interactions also increase the number of families who develop social networks that revolve around school activities, thus increasing their mutual participation and support.

Communication

Communication between the school and family is critical to success, specifically in two areas: communication about the school and communication about the student. Communication about the school lets the family know what the school's objectives and expectations are; what the policies are regarding such things as behavior and homework; events and activities taking place; surveys and requests for input; etc. Communication about the student lets families know how their child is progressing, what help is expected, areas to be encouraged, etc. Communication does not take place when the message is sent; only when it is received. Therefore schools need to make an effort to understand the best ways to communicate with their families and create communication paths that include feedback to ensure that messages are being received. They also need to be accessible and encouraging in as many ways as possible to enable family members to initiate conversations with them.

Education

With each new child entering the school system to be educated comes a family also needing to be educated. Most parents of pre-schoolers come to school less prepared to be properly involved family members than their children are prepared to be successful kindergartners. We know from recent research done by the Youth News Team that the type of family involvement needed to enhance academic performance at the high school level differs in many ways from that needed at the elementary level. A school district focused on family involvement might think about creating a "curriculum" based on these aspects of involvement with plans to deliver that education at appropriate times as family members progress through the school system with their children.

Satisfaction

It is not enough for a school to be comforting and welcoming; it must also provide customer satisfaction. Many times a family member's initial contact with a school will be to ask a question or get a problem resolved, either in person or over the phone. In these situations a school becomes no different from any other service business, and poor customer service can have a negative impact that lingers long beyond the initial incident. Research in the business literature shows that efficiently and effectively solving problems is one of the best methods for developing customer loyalty, and loyalty can provide a "halo effect" that creates positive feelings, develops reputation, enhances cooperation, and creates a willingness to accept experimentation and a tolerance for mistakes.

System

To be truly effective, all of the above must be done in a systematic way with proper feedback loops, metrics, and processes for continuous improvement. Initiatives that simply rely on expecting someone at the school to "go the extra mile" are not sustainable and quickly deteriorate with personnel changes. In addition, while Fayette County has a district family involvement policy, it is rather loosely interpreted by many schools. To be of any value, metrics must reflect real measures of family involvement, not just booster club volunteer

hours or PTA memberships, and there must be someone responsible on an ongoing basis for ensuring that those metrics are appropriate, accurately measured, and used for continuous improvement in increasing family involvement.

Our hope is that the attached 2020 Vision Family Involvement recommendations can be a starting point for developing processes, metrics, and initiatives that will integrate family involvement as a key component of a world-class academic environment. For without family involvement, not only is the success of our children at risk, but that of many of the other 2020 Vision recommendations.

The 2020 Vision Family Involvement Workgroup
October, 2005

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Group Recommendation Number: ____1____

Specific Recommendation:

Support: Identify community-based resources that could be used to facilitate coordination of family involvement with public school staff.

Cochran & Niego write “Although our society expects parents to accept full responsibility for rearing its future workers, citizens, and leaders, ... we discern the wisdom of an alternative view. In particular, the growing body of research linking social networks to parenting demonstrates that the actions of communities, states, and society as a whole are a decisive factor in determining whether parents have the resources necessary for fulfilling our expectations of them.”

There are many organizations and agencies willing to help and many suggestions for using them. For example, Roehlkepartain provides separate suggestions for friends and neighbors, schools, family-serving organizations, child-care providers, congregations, health-care providers, employers, community leaders, policy makers, and funding organizations. The school district can leverage these resources by categorizing aid and services into a framework such as Epstein’s, which categorizes parent involvement into basic parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Such a framework would allow schools to assess specific deficiencies in family involvement and coordinate with community resources to provide the proper training and assistance. Implementation steps presume the existence of a district family involvement liaison and family involvement committees at each school (see Recommendation 7).

Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:

- Cochran, M. & S. Niego (1995), “[Parenting and Social Networks](#),” in M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of Parenting, Volume 3: Status and Social Conditions of Parenting*, pp. 393-418.
- Roehlkepartain, E. et al (2002), [Building Strong Families: An In-Depth Report on a Preliminary Survey on What Parents Need to Succeed](#), YMCA of the USA and Search Institute.
- Epstein, J. (2001), [School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools](#), Westview.

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Implementation Steps for Recommendation # 1	Person Responsible for Completing Steps	Possible Resources?	Start Date	End Date
1. Survey families and school staff to determine strengths and weaknesses.	District Family Involvement Liaison	District Funds	Fall 2006	
2. The Family Involvement committee of each school could review community organizations in the neighborhoods near their school site and open discussion with them about ongoing partnering opportunities.	Individual school committee		Fall 2006	
3. Making use of television, newspapers, radio, transportation services, libraries, faith-based organizations, community service organizations, universities, etc., run an extensive Public Relations campaign to make the entire public aware of need for community support.	District Family Involvement Liaison		Fall 2006	
4. District Family Involvement Liaison will assess response of PR campaign and begin to pull resources according to needs presented in survey responses and other data generated.	District Family Involvement Liaison		Fall 2006	

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Group Recommendation Number: ____2____

Specific Recommendation:

Understanding: Implement joint parent/teacher culturally responsive training district-wide, as originally recommended in the One Community One Voice Report.

It is clear from research that there are cultural differences in the family’s view of the school, thus it is important for both families and school employees to understand those differences in order to have effective family involvement.

Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:

There are excellent examples of programs that already exist within the Fayette County Public School system that can be used as models. Research illustrating cultural differences includes:

- Coll, C. et al (2002), “[Parental Involvement in Children’s Education: Lessons from Three Immigrant Groups,](#)” *Parenting: Science and Practice*, 2(3), pp. 303-324.
- Powell, D. et al (1990), “[Designing Culturally Responsive Parent Programs: A Comparison of Low-Income Mexican and Mexican-American Mothers’ Preferences,](#)” *Family Relations*, 39, pp. 298-304.

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Implementation Steps for Recommendation # 2	Person Responsible for Completing Steps	Possible Resources?	Start Date	End Date
1. Continue district-wide the culturally responsive training that has already begun at some schools				
2. Engage in dialogue with family members representing the various cultures and special needs of the school to understand the various perspectives of these groups relative to family involvement				
3. Use the information obtained in Step 2 above to help shape the Family Involvement component of the school’s CSIP				

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Group Recommendation Number: ____3____

Specific Recommendation:

Comfort: Increase the number of reasons for the school to interact with the family -- home visits, phone calls, neighborhood SBDM and other committee meetings, awards and recognition events, talent shows, social functions, etc.

Students who drop out of school report that their parents rarely attended school events (Rumberger). By having increased opportunities for interaction, parents not only become familiar with the school, they interact with other parents and families, developing a social network that can have a positive effect on student achievement (Sheldon).

Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:

- Sheldon, S. (2002), “[Parents’ social networks and beliefs as predictors of parent involvement](#),” *The Elementary School Journal* 102(4), pp. 301-34.
- Rumberger, R. et al (1990), “[Family influences on dropout behavior in one California high school](#),” *Sociology of Education*, 63, pp. 283-299

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Implementation Steps for Recommendation # 3	Person Responsible for Completing Steps	Possible Resources?	Start Date	End Date
Develop a portfolio of methods for contacting and engaging parents.				
Develop a “parent engagement strategy” based on school/family/neighborhood demographics, feedback from parent surveys, etc.				
Identify hard-to-reach families and ensure that <i>all</i> families are contacted and engaged in some way by someone at the school.				

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

- **Group Recommendation Number:** 4

Specific Recommendation:

Communication: Research clearly shows that school communication with families improves academic achievement (Marlatt, 2005). It also shows that parents prefer frequent and informal communication (Hornby, 2000), and want to receive information about programs and activities at the school, information about the school itself (Elam, Rose, & Gallup 1993), and information on ways they can positively respond to the educational process (Schurr, 1992).

In each school, establish clear lines of two-way communications between the school and the family that include strategies to verify that messages are being received. Focus implementation steps on two general areas: (1) communications about the school - including objectives, expectations, policies, events and activities, surveys and requests, etc., and (2) communications about the student - academic progress, successes, areas to be encouraged, issues.

Emphasize **two-way** communication: all approaches should include provisions for feedback to ensure that messages are being received.

Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:

- Elam, S. M. et al (1993), “[The 25th Annual Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitude Toward the Public Schools](#),” Phi Delta Kappan 75(2), pp. 137-157.
- Hornby, G. (2000), [Improving Parental Involvement](#), Cassell, New York.
- Institute for Families in Society, [South Carolina Parent Involvement Instrument Project - Final Report](#), University of South Carolina, 2002.
- Marlatt, C. (2005), “[The Effect of School to Home Communication: A Study of Perceptions](#),” Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, University of Toronto.
- Schurr, S. L. (1992), “[Fine Tuning Your Parent Power Increases Student Achievement](#),” *Schools in the Middle* 2(2), pp. 3-9.

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Implementation Steps for Recommendation # 4	Person Responsible for Completing Steps	Possible Resources?	Start Date	End Date
Develop a document for each school that clearly spells out information about school operations, issues, needs, objectives and expectations (to create informed families), and explanations of whom to contact, when and how, for specific questions and concerns about the school and the student	FCPS Central Administration with each School Administration individualizing the document for their school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School handbook • School Directory • Web Pages 		
Establish a time-line of events during the school year (Beginning of the Year Open House, Parent Teacher Conferences, at the end of each grading period, Grade Level Meetings at the beginning of each semester) that will focus on communication about the student	FCPS Central Administration would establish a list of events and a general timeline which would be incorporated by each School Administration into that school’s calendar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters • Local media • Channel 13 		
Require families to confirm receipt of written communications; identify those who fail to respond and follow up with personal contacts	Classroom / Home Room Teachers with assistance from school’s Office Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone • Notes home • Email 		
Set expectations at Open Houses, Grade Level Meetings and Parent Teacher Conferences by focusing on the importance of two way communication between the family and the school	Individual Principal/s and Classroom Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos • Web Site • Professional Development 		
Follow up individually with families who do not attend the Open House and/or the Parent Teacher Conference, and establish a preferred method of communication	Classroom / Home Room Teachers, with assistance from Office Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone • Notes home • Email 		

Provide Homework Hotlines and On-Line Grading Reports in each school	School Administration and faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web Page • Volunteer Phone Banks 		
Establish in each school a culture in which rewards for effort and improvement across all levels of academic achievement and behavior are recognized and communicate “good news” to parents in a monthly email “Blast”, recognizing that some families may need a hard print version	<u>Entire</u> school staff would be a part of this culture with Classroom teachers conveying the “good news”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning announcements • Awards ceremonies • Talent Shows 		

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Group Recommendation Number: 5a

Specific Recommendation:

Education: Parent involvement tends to decline over time (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Dornbusch & Glasgow, 1996; Izzo et al, 1999) and the types and strategies of parent and family involvement that best affect academic performance change as children progress from elementary through middle and high school (Youth News Team, 2005). There needs to be a parent education curriculum that tracks with the child’s curriculum so that parents and family members are continually being educated in involvement strategies appropriate to the child’s age.

Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:

- Dornbusch, S. M. & K. L. Glasgow (1996), “[The Structural Context of Family-School Relations](#),” in A. Booth & J. F. Dunn (Eds.) *Family-School Links: How Do They Affect Educational Outcomes?*, pp. 35-44, Lawrence Erlbaum Associate, Mahwah, NJ.
- Eccles, J. S. & R. D. Harold (1996), “[Family Involvement in Children’s and Adolescents’ Schooling](#),” in A. Booth & J. F. Dunn (Eds.) *Family-School Links: How Do They Affect Educational Outcomes?*, pp. 3-34, Lawrence Erlbaum Associate, Mahwah, NJ.
- Institute for Families in Society, [South Carolina Parent Involvement Instrument Project - Final Report](#), University of South Carolina, 2002.
- Izzo, C. V. et al (1999), “[A Longitudinal Assessment of Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Children’s Education and School Performance](#),” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 27(6), pp. 817-839.
- Youth News Team (2005), “[High School Students Have Parents Too](#),” Kentucky Conference for Community and Justice and the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Implementation Steps for Recommendation # 5a	Person Responsible for Completing Steps	Possible Resources?	Start Date	End Date
1. Develop a parent/family training curriculum that tracks with the student’s grade level				
2. Publicize this curriculum and offer courses or workshops at schools and/or various other locations throughout the year				
3. Special emphasis needs to focus on middle and high schools, where family involvement tends to drop off or shift into non-academic areas.				

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Group Recommendation Number: ___5b___

Specific Recommendation:

Education related to School Governance: Improve the impact of SBDM councils by:

- providing training that qualifies parents to serve on councils and is delivered before they are elected
- occasionally holding SBDM and subcommittee meetings in neighborhood locations rather than at the school
- encouraging issue-based SBDM elections -- curriculum, budget, activities, etc.

The success of school-based management varies widely where it has been implemented across the country (Fullan & Watson), with the more successful programs having heavy parent and community involvement. Training such as the Prichard Committee’s Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL) provides a baseline of training that prepares parents for an SBDM decision-making role (Henderson, 2004)..

Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:

- Fullan, M. and N.Watson (2000), “[School-Based Management: Reconceptualizing to Improve Learning Outcomes](#),” *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 11(4), pp. 453-473.
- Henderson, A. et al (2004), [The Case for Parent Leadership](#), Prichard Committee.

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Implementation Steps for Recommendation # 5b	Person Responsible for Completing Steps	Possible Resources?	Start Date	End Date
1. Provide semi-annual comprehensive (yet consumer-friendly) training (such as that done by the Prichard Committee) for all interested persons in locations and times that are convenient for even non-traditional SBDM prospects.	Director of District-Level SBDM Office	District Funds	Fall 2006	Continuous
2. Look at where the majority of students live and then schedule at least 35% of SBDM and subcommittee meetings at community buildings in those neighborhoods, ex.—community centers, public libraries, houses of worship, etc.	Each school principal and SBDM council		Fall 2006	
3. Perform a periodic analysis of attendance records and meeting minutes to assess when and where attendance has been greatest. Use that info to determine time/place for future activity.	School to report to District SBDM office		Fall 2006	
4. Encourage schools to center elections around issues for the coming year, not just hold elections as annual events with no context.	Director of District-Level SBDM Office		Fall 2006	Continuous

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Group Recommendation Number: ____6__

Specific Recommendation:

Satisfaction: Create a family-friendly culture by applying research on effective customer service learned in the business world. This would include training for administrative and office staff in both central office and schools, as well as developing and implementing “customer surveys” of students and families to measure satisfaction and identify what is being done well and what needs to be improved. There is research (Davies, Falbo) indicating that a TQM approach to customer satisfaction can be used by schools as well as businesses, and that measuring customer loyalty can be fairly simple (Reichheld).

Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:

- Davies, B. and L. Ellison (1995), “[Improving the Quality of the Schools—Ask the Clients?](#)” *School Organisation*, 15(1), pp 5-12.
- Falbo, T. et al (2003), “[Parent Satisfaction with School Quality: Evidence from One Texas School District,](#)” University of Texas at Austin.
- Reichheld, F. (2003), “[The One Number You Need to Grow,](#)” *Harvard Business Review*, December.

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Implementation Steps for Recommendation # 6	Person Responsible for Completing Steps	Possible Resources?	Start Date	End Date
Locate appropriate PD and make known to Administration and office staff at both It’s About Kids and schools	It’s About Kids staff accountable for family involvement	Refer to research	ASAP	Ongoing /new staff and new offerings
***Create team(s) to develop questions for the student and family surveys	Same as above	Survey consultant org Refer to research	1/2006	3/2006
Send surveys out	Same as above	Use guideline used in other surveys	3/2006	3/2006
Tally the surveys	Same as above		5/2006	5/2006
Compare surveys for schools rated high vs. those rated low	Same as above		6/2006	7/2006
Determine what the high rated schools are doing right	Same as above	‘Customer’ input	6/2006	7/2006
Create and implement an action plan with the staff of the low rated schools	Same as above	What ‘customers’ like at other schools	8/2006	9/2006
For every school, understand the causes behind the highest scores and the lowest scores and use this information to help define the family involvement component of the CSIP	Same as above	‘Customer’ input	6/2006	9/2006
Repeat the survey annually	Same as above	###Previous year’s survey	3/XX	3/XX

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Group Recommendation Number: ____7____

Specific Recommendation:

System: Research shows that in order for a school (or any organization) to be a learning organization, there needs to be constant monitoring, feedback, assessment, and change in order to foster a culture of continuous improvement (Brandt, 2003). In order for there to be a constant focus on family involvement in our district, there needs to be a full-time person dedicated to this area (Ouimette et al, 2004). Thus the district should create a position of Family Involvement Liaison. This role would be responsible for:

1. Coordinating the district’s family involvement message and services with outside agencies and community organizations (see Recommendation 1).
2. Coordinating the implementation of parent/family education (see Recommendation 5a).
3. Helping to define and review family involvement customer surveys to ensure consistency of content and implementation and to look for district-wide patterns (see Recommendation 6).
4. Devise and encourage implementation of metrics that truly measure family involvement (survey response rates, percent *non*-participation in parent-teacher conferences, open house events, number of parents who have never been contacted by the school, etc.)

Research Rationale for how this change will help kids:

- Brandt, Ron (2003), “[Is This School a Learning Organization? 10 Ways to Tell,](#)” *Journal of Staff Development* 24(1), pp. 10-16.
- Ouimette, M. et al (2004), “[Engaging Parents in an Urban Public High School: A Case Study of Boston Arts Academy,](#)” Center for Collaborative Education, Boston, MA.

2020 VISION: “*Changing the Face of Education in Fayette County*”

WORK GROUP: *Family Involvement*

FINAL REPORT

Implementation Steps for Recommendation # 7	Person Responsible for Completing Steps	Possible Resources?	Start Date	End Date
1. Define the role of family involvement liaison for the district.	Superintendent and Staff		01/06	08/06
2. Staff the defined role above.	Superintendent and Staff		01/06	08/06
3. Encourage the creation of parent/family involvement coordinators at the school level, possibly using parent volunteers.	Superintendent and Staff			Ongoing
4. Develop appropriate metrics, assessments, and feedback loops to ensure that achievement-enhancing family involvement is occurring and increasing throughout the district.	Family Involvement Liaison		08/06	Ongoing