09/11/2013
SENATE FINANCE EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

<TARGET><BILL></BILL><SUBJECT>09-11-2013 SENATE FINANCE EDUCATION
SUBCOMMITTEE</SUBJECT><COMM>SFIN28</COMM></TARGET>

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senator Mike Dunleavy, Chair
Senator Anna Fairclough, Member
Senator Berta Gardner, Member

Senator Pete Kelly, Member
Senator Gary Stevens, Member

Senate Finance Education Subcommittee

Agenda for September 11, 2013 Meeting

The times listed are estimates and may change during the meeting.

8:30 Welcome
Senator Mike Dunleavy, Chair

8:35 Jim Merriner, State Board of Education, Chair
Mike Hanley, Department of Education and Early Development, Commissioner
Future of Alaska K-12 Education
Changes and Issues for the Committee to Ponder

9:15 Statewide Education Associations
Ron Fuhrer and LaDawn Druce, NEA-Alaska, President and Vice-President
Sue Hull, Association of Alaska School Board, President
Bruce Johnson, Alaska Council of School Administrators, Executive Director
Where Are Alaska Schools Headed Educationally?
What Do Our Students Need from a K-12 Educational System?
What Are Five Things You Would Like to Change?

10:15 Break

10:30 Urban and Rural Superintendents
Deena Paramo, Mat-Su Borough School District, Superintendent
Jacob Jensen and Dan Walker, Lower Kuskokwim School District, Superintendent
Bob Crumley, Chugach School District, Superintendent
Where is Your/Alaska Schools Headed Educationally?
What Do Your Students Need from a K-12 Educational System?
What Are Five Things You Would Like to Change?

12:00 Lunch

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senator Mike Dunleavy, Chair
Senator Anna Fairclough, Member
Senator Berta Gardner, Member

Senator Pete Kelly, Member
Senator Gary Stevens, Member

Senate Finance Education Subcommittee

Agenda for September 11, 2013 Meeting

The times listed are estimates and may change during the meeting.

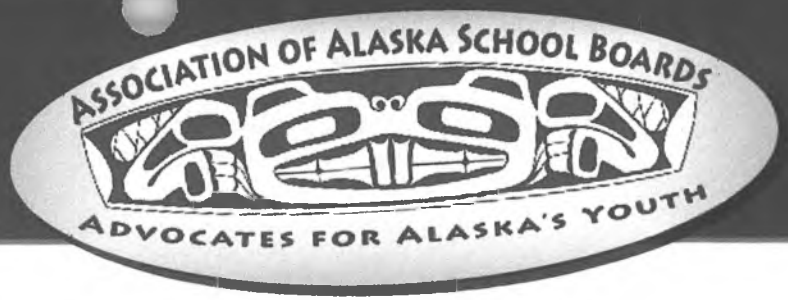
1:30 Parents of K-12 Students
Samantha Moore, Alaska PTA, President
Public Home School/Correspondence Study Program Parents
Where Are Alaska Schools Headed Educationally?
What Do Our Students and Parents Need or Want from a K-12 Educational System?
What Are Five Things You Would Like to Change?

2:15 Community Perspectives on K-12 Education
Donny Olson, Alaska State Senate, Golovin
David Boyle and Bob Griffin, Alaska Policy Forum

2:45 Break

3:00 Business Perspectives on K-12 Education
Rebecca Logan, Alaska Support Industry Alliance, General Manager
Crystal Nygard, Mat-Su Business Alliance, Managing Director
Alicia Amberg, Alaska Miners Association, Projects Manager

4:00 Public Comments on Today's Discussion Topics



Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB)
Testimony to the
Senate Finance Education Subcommittee
By Sue Hull, AASB President

September 11, 2013

"Wisdom is knowing what to do.
Skill is knowing how to do it.
Virtue is doing it."

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS

ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

Question #1

Where Are Alaska's Schools Headed Educationally?

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS
ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

The Perfect Storm

Alaska:

Higher Standards
More Rigorous Assessments
New Teacher Evaluation Systems
New Star Rating System for Schools
90% Graduation Rate Goal

Nationally:

Personalized Learning
Rapid Expansion of 1 to 1 Programs
"Raising the Bar" ***(Common Core & etc.)***

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS

ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

"The Best Way to Predict Your Future Is to Create It."

Abraham Lincoln

Creating Our Future

Ten Years Ago...

AASB Began Creating the Future
By Putting Together the
Consortium for Digital Learning.

Now

Alaska Stands on the Brink of
Leading the Nation
By Igniting Digital Learning in Our Schools

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS

ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

Question #2

What Do Our Students Need from a K-12 Education System?

The Answer... & More Questions

Our students need to be academically prepared for success in a rapidly-changing world.

How do we do it?

What will their world look like? How do we meet each student's needs?
How do we keep them engaged?
How do we support their teachers and empower their families?
How do we make sure they come to school ready to learn?
And...how do we fund it?

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS
ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

Question #3

What Are Five Things You Would Like to Change?

Early Childhood Development

Every Student Ready to Learn

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS

ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

Working Together

BEST BEGINNINGS

Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

Parents as Teachers

Innovation

Schools Have to Change.

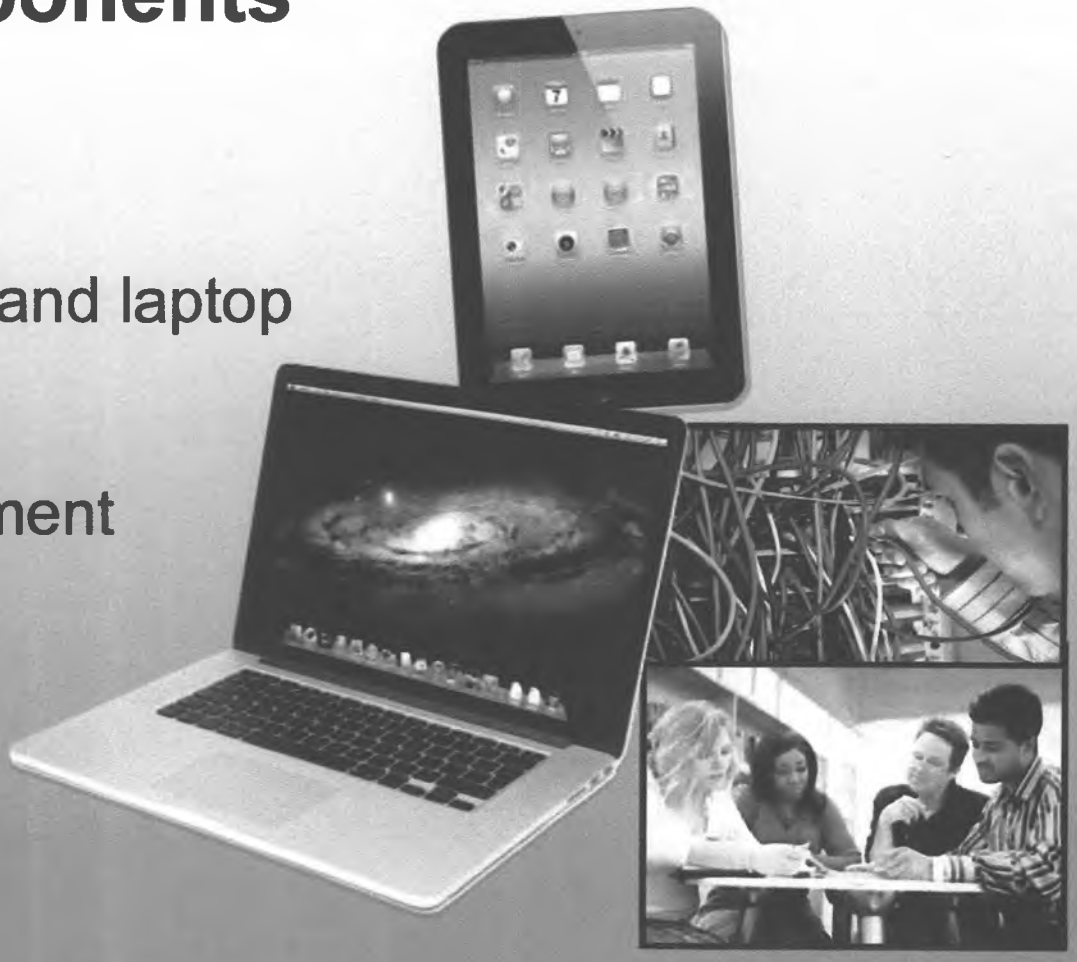
The strategies are limitless,
but one enhances and enables most all of the others…

Alaska 1:1 Digital Learning Initiative

What is the 1:1 Initiative?

Base Project Components

- Students: mobile device
- Teachers: mobile device and laptop
- Ongoing Support:
  - Professional Development
  - Technical Services



Reason #1

Expanded Resources

Digital Resources

Web Based Resources

Google

KHAN ACADEMY

National Library of Virtual Manipulatives

CTAMT.NET Computing Technology for Math Excellence

State Digital Repositories

SLED

State Library Electronic Database

ALASKA DIGITAL SANDBOX

Digital Sandbox

iTunes U

Digital Texts

Kno

amazon.com

iBooks

Apps

iTunes

95, 000+ Education Apps

Reason #2

Deeper Learning & Increased Engagement

The Need for Engagement

"Most challenging issue for Alaska schools is **student engagement.**"

What Dropouts Say

- **47%** Major reason for dropping out: classes not interesting.
- **69%** Not motivated or inspired to work hard.
- **43%** Missed too many days, could not catch up.
- **70%** Confident they could have graduated if they tried.

Increased Engagement and Deeper Learning

Visualization and Simulations

The Elements

Rich Resources

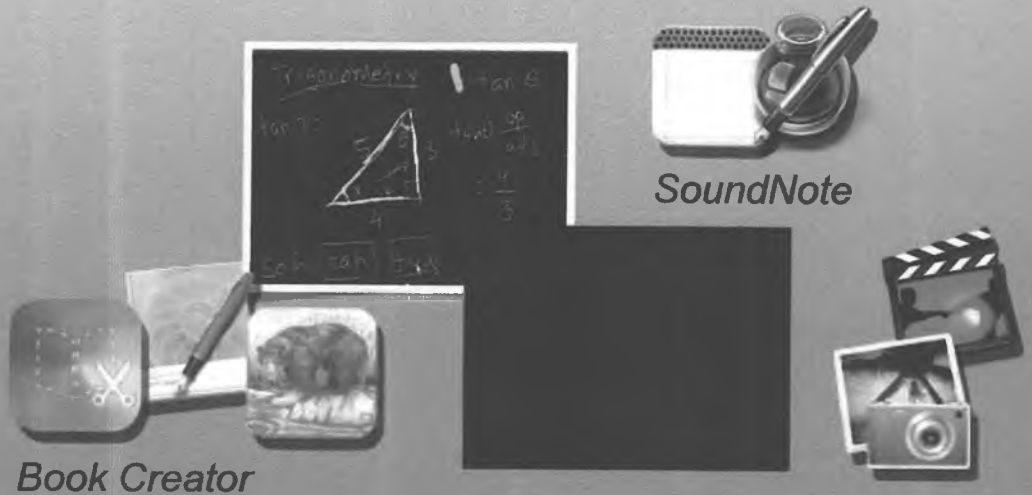
Life on Earth

Multi-language

Milly and Molly series

Interactive Content

Graphics, Movies, Images, Audio



SoundNote

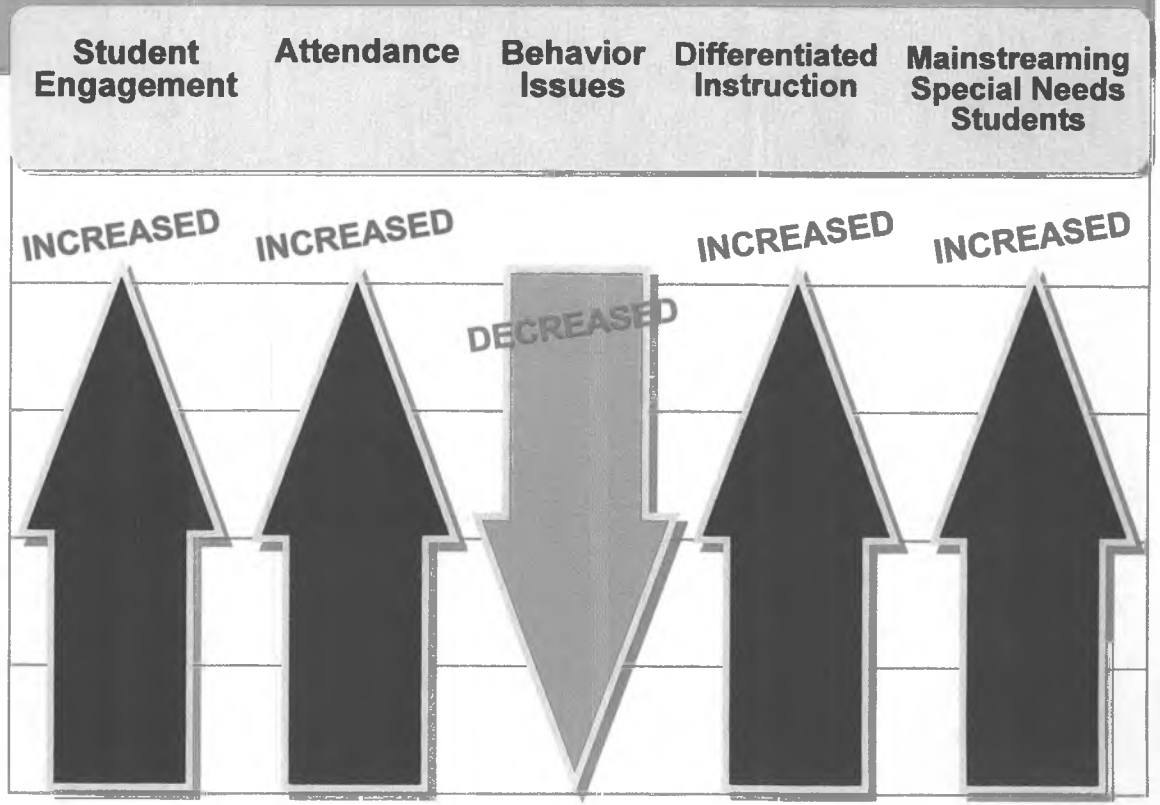
Book Creator

Teachers Tell Us

Digital Learning Outcomes

Educators
from CDL districts
across Alaska
report results:

Source:
CDL Project Summary Report
Ohler 2011

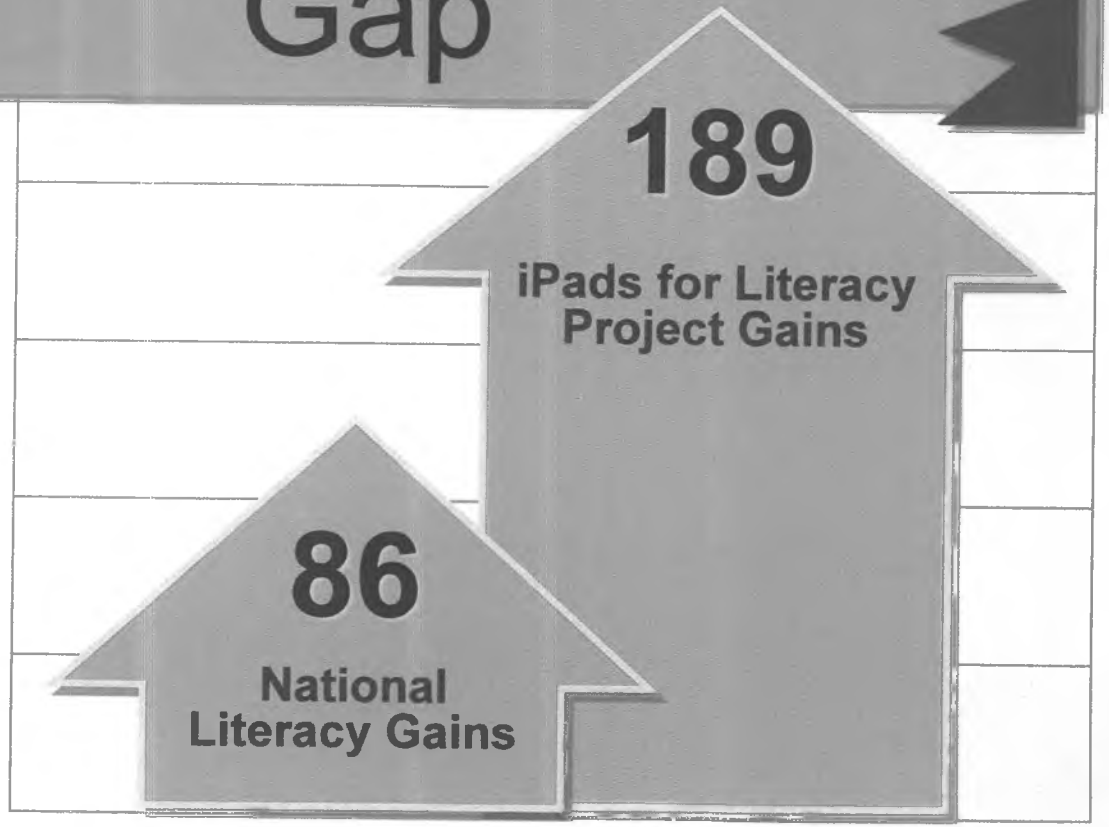


A Focus on Literacy

Closing the Education Opportunity Gap

3rd grade students **more than doubled** their growth in literacy **in one year** using iPads.

Source: UAF report



Reason #3

Transformed Instruction

Changing the Picture of Education

And What If...

What If Parents Could Check-out an iPad for Their Preschoolers by Attending Regular Parent Meetings?

Reason #4

Personalized Learning

Diverse Group of Students

Each with Different Needs

Instruction Can Adapt to the Learner

Reason #5

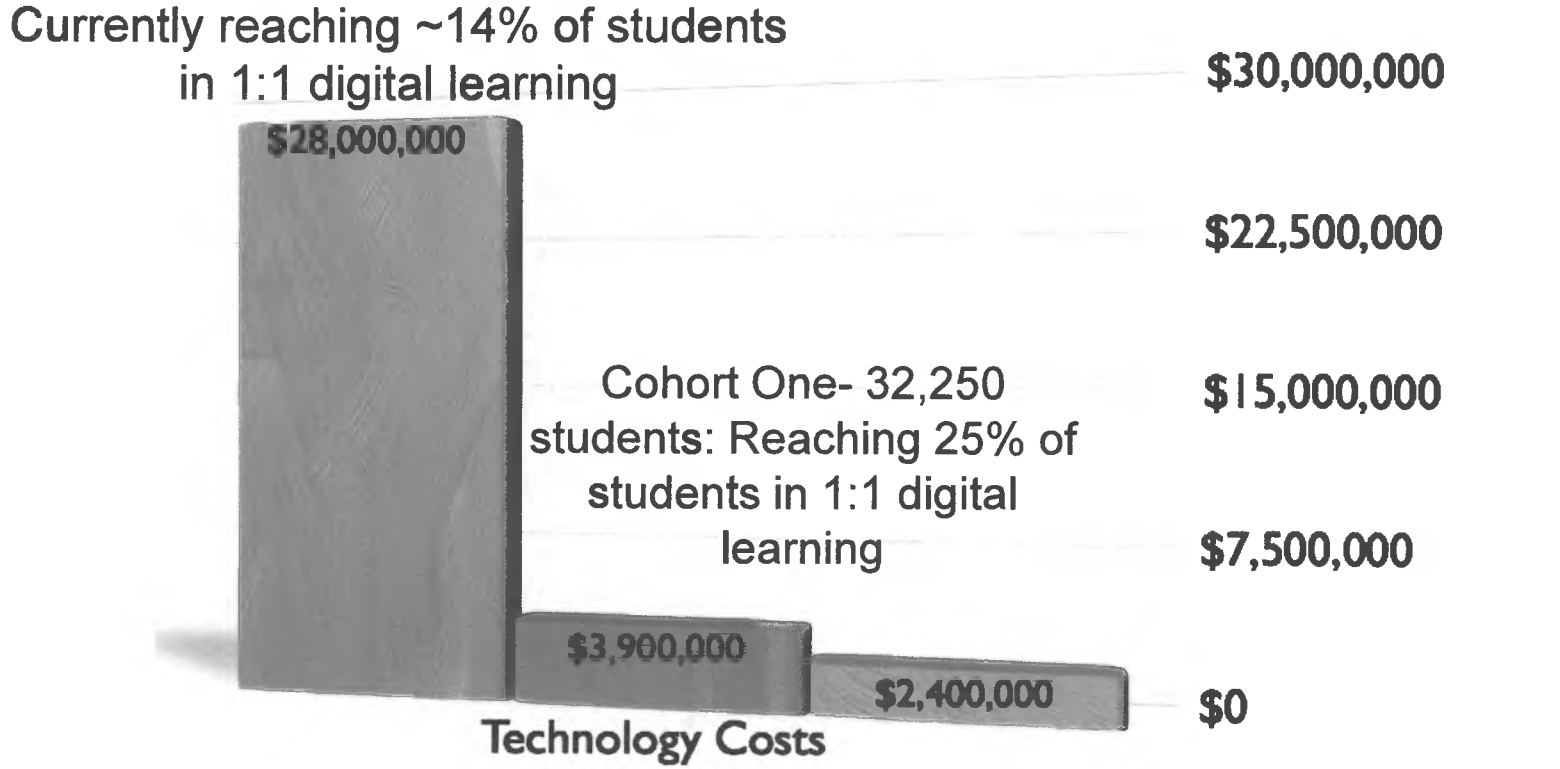
Cost Effective

"Bump to Pivot"

Cost Effectiveness

K12 School Districts Spend Money on Technology

A Statewide Initiative Reaches More for Less



A Small Investment for Big Impact

.003

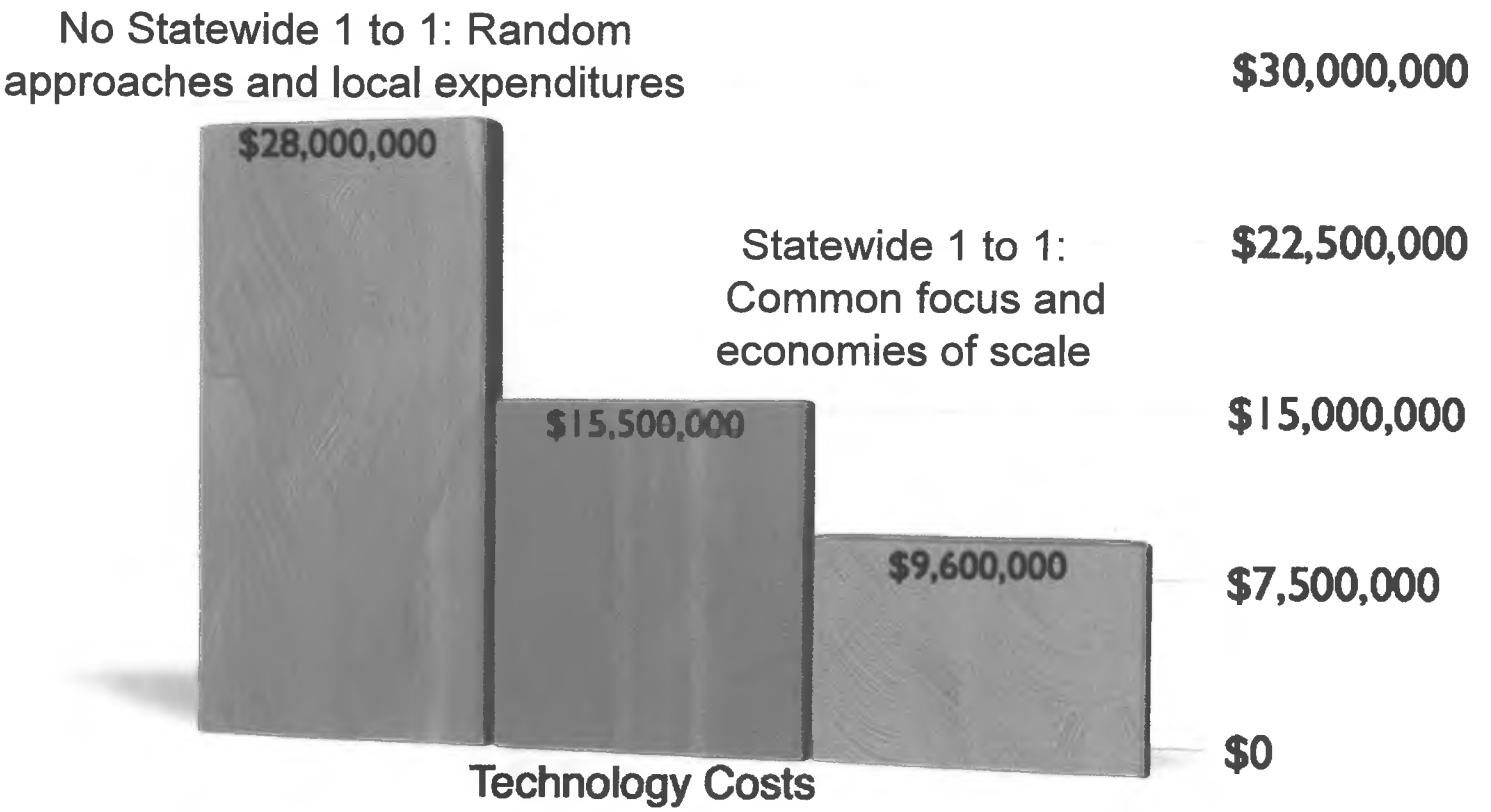
Represents the portion of Foundation Formula funding for the state contribution of each cohort

New Economies of Scale

- **Creates economies of scale**
  - hardware
  - instructional content
  - professional development for teachers
  - technical services for schools
- **Unifies focus**
- **Attracts new talent**

Economies of Scale

A Statewide Initiative Realizes Economies of Scale and Develops Common Vision



- Total Technology Expenditures per year
- State Cost on 4 year Lease for all students
- District Cost on 4 year lease for all students

Potential Cost Savings

Paperwork Reduction and Copier Costs

Reduced Costs for Digital Content versus print

Reduced Costs for Consumable Materials

Reason #6

WE CAN DO IT!

We have the know-how, experience, infrastructure, and support to make it happen.

CDL Projects Statewide

Laptop Projects
- 28 School Districts
- 100+ School Sites
- 12,000+ Users

HD6 iPad Project
- 9 School Districts
- 40 School Sites
- 600 Users

"Know-How" for Success

Specifically Written for Alaska Schools

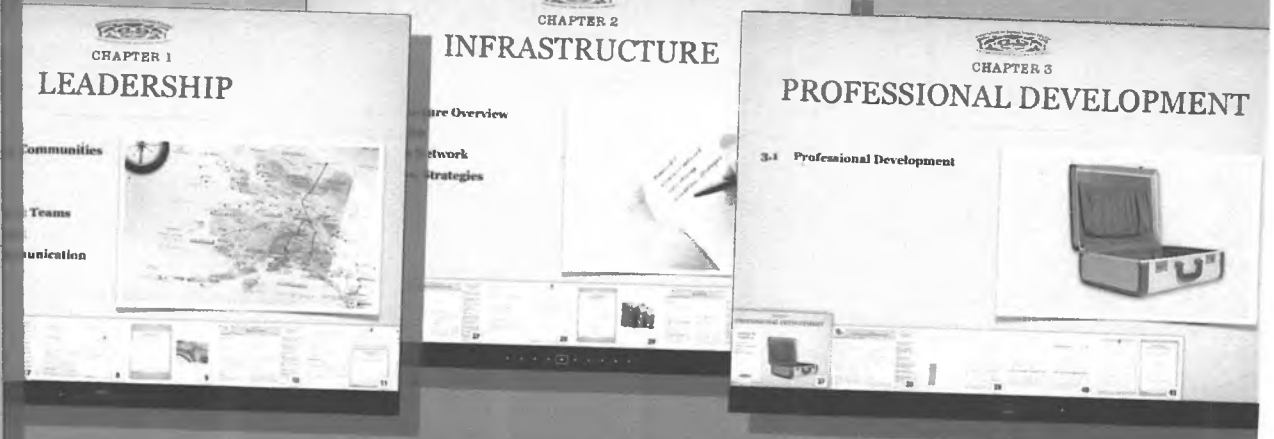
One to One 101

The Journey to a Successful Digital Learning Project

By Dr. Robert Whicker & Steve Nelson

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS
ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

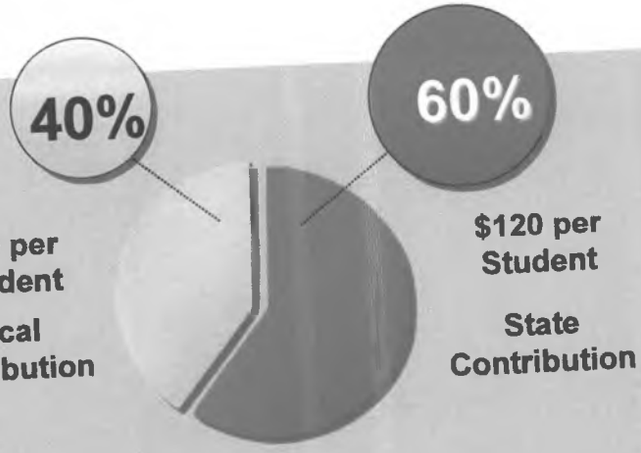
CONSORTIUM FOR DIGITAL LEARNING



Available Free
AASB iTunes U
www.cdl.aasb.org

Financial Structure

Sharing the Opportunity Cost

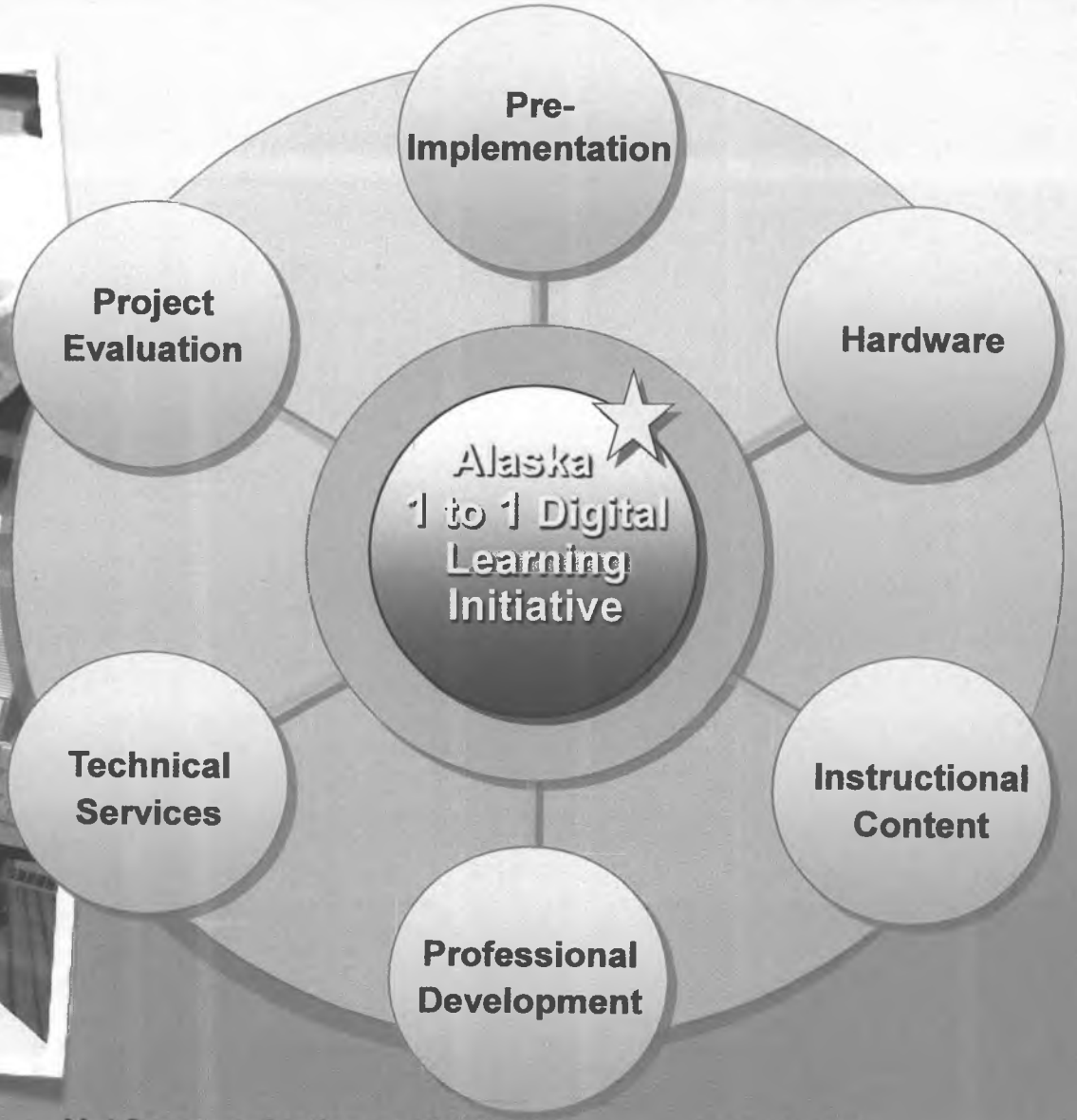


Total Cost: $200 Per Student Per Year

4 Year Lease

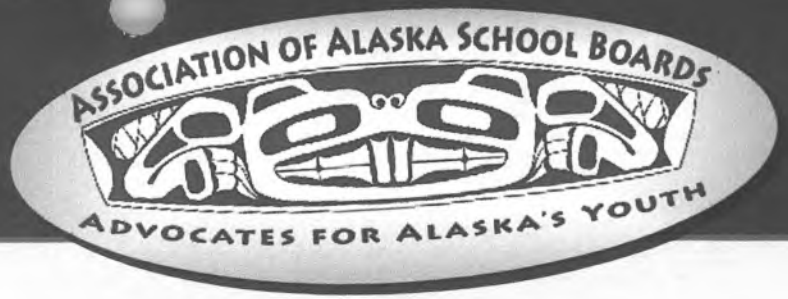
- Offers Flexibility to Take Advantage of New Technologies
- Enables Ability to Recapture Equity
- Gives Opportunity to Develop Flexible Refresh Schedules

1:1 Initiative Components



Classroom of the Future

- CDL Repair Depot
- Demonstrations
- Teacher Professional Development
- Vendor Showcase
- Institute for 21st Century Learning
- Student Classes
- Certification Programs
- Distance Delivery
- Research

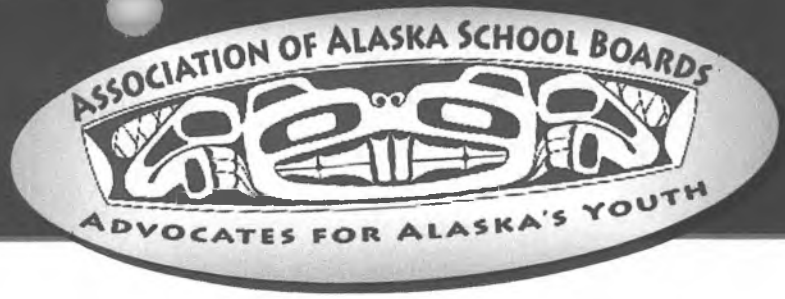


Next Steps...

Alaska Could Lead the Nation in Access to the Tools of the Future…

Think What That Could Mean for Their Future…And Ours

For more information about the Alaska 1 to 1 Initiative go to http://cdl.aasb.org/



AASB Priorities

Funding

Alaska's Schools Need ***Adequate, Equitable & Predictable Funding.***

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS

ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

Constitutional Mandate

The Framers Understood How Important Education Would Be

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS

ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

Cuts in Recent Years

In Fairbanks:

Website Manager
Ledger Clerk
Payroll Clerk
Warehouse Staff
16 Custodians
Principal Interns
Printshop Personnel
IT Teachers

Counselors
Human Resources Tech.
Systems Administrator
Activities Coordinator
Tech Support Specialist
Network Specialist
46 Teachers
and more

We Can't Cut Our Way to Excellence.

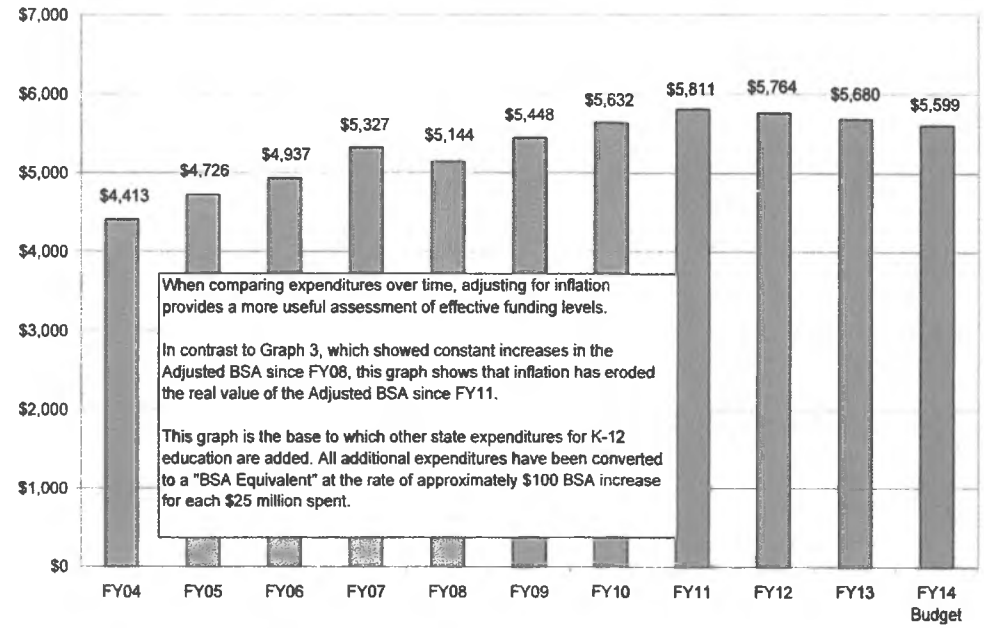
ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS
ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

Stagnant Operating Funds

- *Adequate*
- *Equitable*
- *Predictable*

Investing in Education is Investing in Alaska's Economic Future

C4: Adjusted BSA in FY13 Dollars



ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS
ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

One More...for Good Measure

The Terms of Engagement

We're Partners with a Common Goal.

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS

ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

Thank You for Asking Good Questions.

Let's
"Create Our Future"

"Wisdom is knowing what to do.
Skill is knowing how to do it.
Virtue is doing it."

Senate Finance Subcommittee for Education
September 10-11, 2013

Bruce Johnson, Executive Director
Alaska Association of School Administrators

Education Direction

- Collision course: Aspirations vs. Resources
- Individual learning plan (ILP) approach
- Delivery of education services changing exponentially
- Increased accountability at all levels
- Increasingly difficult and unique challenges of small, rural schools/districts threaten survival

Student Needs/Wants/Likes

- Everything we do now, and more
- Preparation for careers and post-secondary options
- Course rigor with relevancy & high interest that values local culture, norms and desires
- Caring teachers/administrators focused on student needs
- Ubiquitous technology
- Enriching partnerships that create opportunities

AASA – Five Desired Changes

- Greater awareness of the impending collision course (aspirations vs. resources) and potential impact
- Increased flexibility to ensure that highly valued staff are retained
- Increased support from the State and EED to create greater capacity and efficiencies
- Predictable and stable funding
- Recognition that all initiatives – legislative or EED – incur an implementation cost

Senate Finance Education Committee

September 11, 2013

By Ron Fuhrer, President
& LaDawn Druce, Vice President

NEA-ALASKA

Affiliated with the National Education Association

Introductions

- Ron Fuhrer
  - 30+ year teacher in Anchorage
  - Taught at Clark MS and McLaughlin School
  - President of NEA-Alaska

NEA-Alaska
Affiliated with the National Education Association

Introductions

- LaDawn Druce
  - 18 year teacher in Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
  - 12 years at Soldotna High School and as a counselor at Ninilchik School and River City Academy
  - Vice President of NEA-Alaska

NEA-Alaska
Affiliated with the National Education Association

Introductions

- NEA-Alaska
  - Represents nearly 13,000 teachers and support personnel across Alaska
  - 64 local associations
  - Organization direction set by 30 member Board of Directors and approx. 350 member who attend yearly Delegate Assembly

NEA-Alaska
Affiliated with the National Education Association

Introductions

Mission statement:

NEA-Alaska exists to be an advocate for an excellent public education for each child in Alaska and to advance the interests of public school employees.

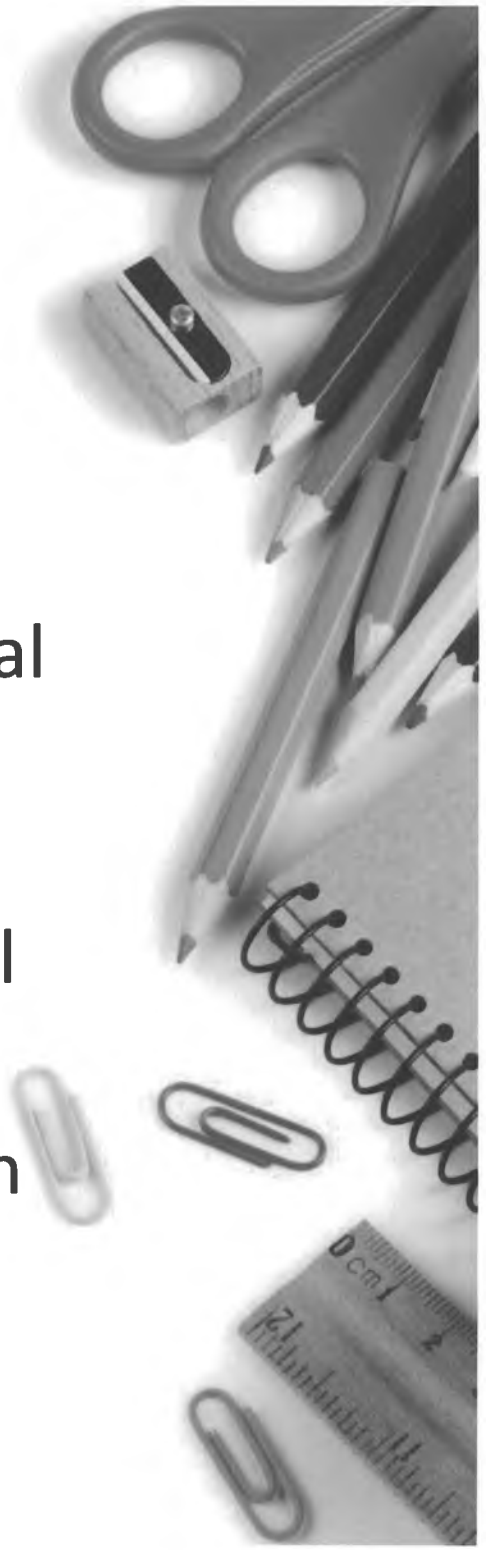
A child's learning conditions are a teachers' working conditions.

NEA-ALASKA
Affiliated with the National Education Association

Where are schools headed educationally?

Status of Public Education

- Progress has been made
  - Over 10 years graduation rate has increased by 10%, 3x faster than national average[1]
  - One-third of Alaska's public school students enter school with no preschool experience[2]
  - State is 3rd in nation for growth between 4th and 8th grade



NEA-ALASKA
Affiliated with the National Education Association

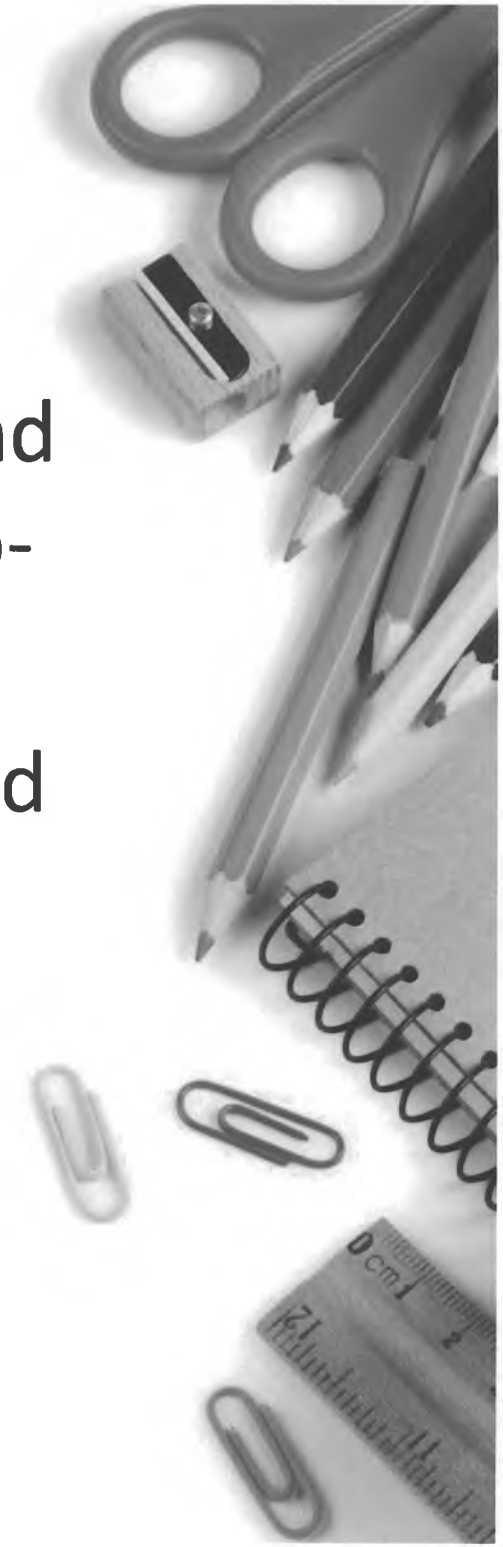
Status of Public Education

- Progress has been made (cont.)
  - Drop out rates have decreased by 20% since 2004-05 school year[3]
  - Alaska students score higher than the national average on ACT and SAT tests[4]

NEA-ALASKA
Affiliated with the National Education Association

Challenges

- Over 41% of students receive free and reduced lunch because of their socio-economic status[5]
- Between the 2009-10 school year and the 2010-11, student homelessness increased by 31%[6]



NEA-ALASKA
Affiliated with the National Education Association

Challenges

- Increased diversity – more students English Language Learners
- From 2006 until 2011, Alaska has seen on average a yearly 20% turnover rate of teachers. Teacher turnover in rural Alaska is greater than double that of urban areas[7]

NEA-ALASKA
Affiliated with the National Education Association

What do our students need from a K-12 system?

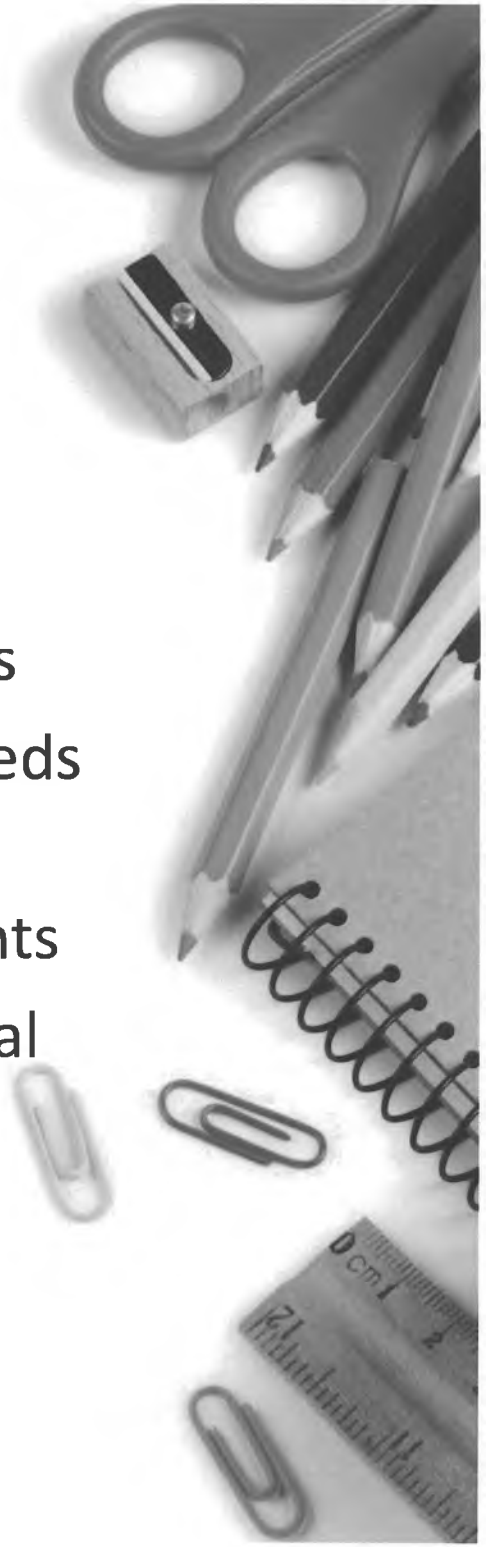
What our Kids Need

- Highly Effective Teachers
  - Educational Policies that:
    - Support team building
    - Increase instructional time
    - Increase individualized student contact
    - Embrace student diversity

NEA-ALASKA
Affiliated with the National Education Association

What our Kids Need

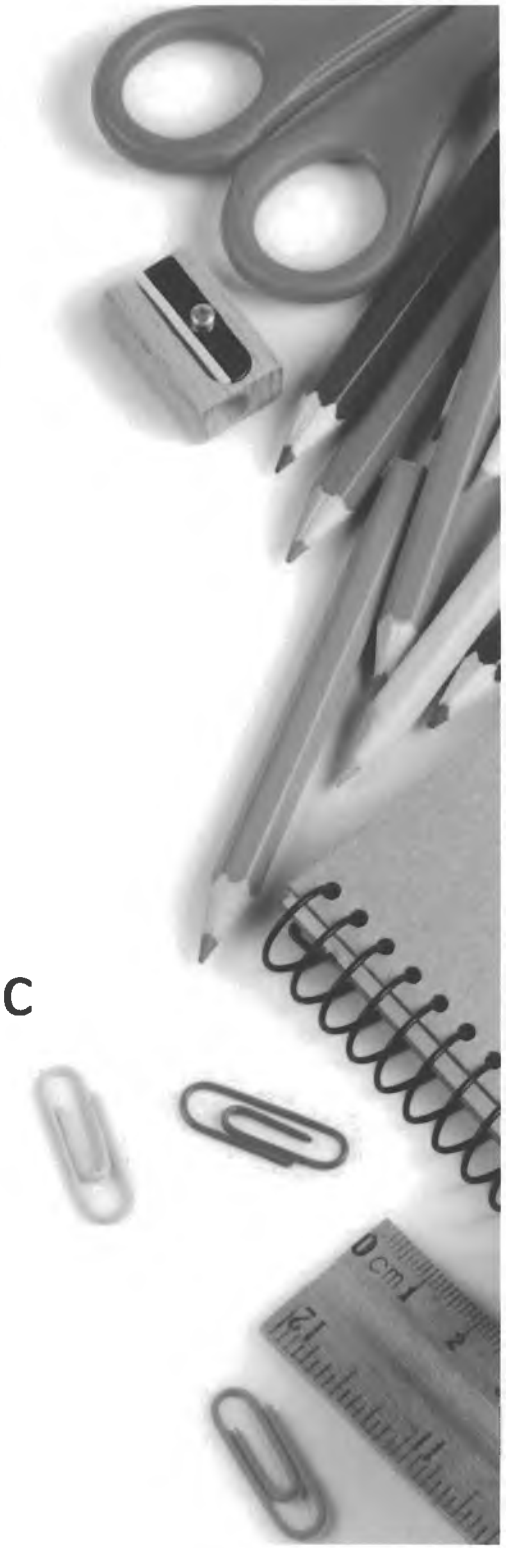
- A Rich and Varied Curriculum
  - Curriculum that:
    - Meets the expectations of the communities
    - Engages the broad spectrum of student needs and interests
    - Is relevant to the experiences of the students
    - Encourages curiosity, exploration and critical thinking
    - Is innovative and responsive to community and student needs



NEA-ALASKA
Affiliated with the National Education Association

What our Kids Need

- Effective School-Family-Community Partnerships
  - Empowered communities
  - Educators connected to community resources
  - One-size-fits-all solutions weaken public schools



NEA-Alaska
Affiliated with the National Education Association

Five Things to Change

A Partner in Finding Solutions

1) Improve and enhance teacher evaluation system (e.g., peer review, etc.)
2) Develop an Alaskan state of the art Teacher Preparation Program
3) Invest in quality Early Childhood Education
4) Provide a defined benefit retirement system
5) Develop a long-range, state education plan

NEA-ALASKA
Affiliated with the National Education Association

NEA-Alaska is eager to be a partner with the Legislature in developing plans to ensure all Alaska's public school students receive the highest quality education opportunity no matter their geography, socio-economic status, or challenges.

NEA-ALASKA
Affiliated with the National Education Association

"There is a place in America to take a stand: it is public education. It is the underpinning of our cultural and political system. It is the great common ground. Public education after all is the engine that moves us as a society toward a common destiny... It is in public education that the American dream begins to take shape."
—Tom Brokaw

NEA-ALASKA
Affiliated with the National Education Association

Endnotes

[1] Lyndsey Layton, "High School graduation rate rises in U.S.," Washington Post, March 9, 2012.

[2] G. Williamson McDiarmid and Alexandra Hill, "Alignment of Alaska's Educational Programs from Pre-School through Graduate Study: A First Look," ISER Working Paper 2010.1, pg. 5.

[3] Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, State Report Cards, various years.

[4] Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, Kids Count Alaska 2011-12, pg. 37.

[5] Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, Kids Count Alaska 2011-12, pg. 22.

[6] Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, Kids Count Alaska 2011-12, pg. 7.

[7] Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, Kids Count Alaska 2011-12, pg. 36.

NEA-ALASKA

Affiliated with the National Education Association

LKSD

LKSD is the largest REAA in terms of students and schools

- 22 Villages
- 27 Schools
- Over 900 Employees
- Over 400 Certified Staff
- Geographical area the size of Ohio

Lower Kuskokwim School District

Where are Rural Schools headed educationally?

Over the past three years LKSD has developed an instructional framework in collaboration with principals, teachers and communities. This framework is the culmination of many hours of work and piloting different instructional strategies to meet the needs of our students. (handout).

We are also working with the Alaska Staff Development Network through an ANEP grant to bring state and national level consultants to work with LKSD staff to increase capacity in these instructional strategies and nationally recognized programs.

Administrators work an average of 6 Saturdays each year for district paid professional development. In addition to the standard 10 State allowed professional release days, LKSD also incorporates 3 additional contract days for professional development for all certified staff.

LowerKuskokwim School District

Where are Rural Schools headed educationally?

More college and career ready opportunities

- CTE

More hybrid and blended learning opportunities

- Online courses
- Live interactive two way video conferencing
- Blended learning – combination of online, VTC, and face-to-face
- Hybrid dorm setting (combination of the traditional dorm setting but staying connected to home communities)

Lower Kuskokwim School District

Where are Rural Schools headed educationally?

More early childhood

- Why? Language deficit issues are our biggest challenge with young students.
- Weak L1 (First Language) and high LEP population

More technology infused teaching and learning

- The world is becoming flat as more people have access to technology and internet

Core academics

- Standards aligned curriculum
- RTI Matrix (handout)
- Focus on acceleration rather than remediation

Lower Kuskokwim School District

What do our students need/want/like?

College and career ready opportunities

STEM, Aviation, Health, Construction trades, Technology, Education

Technology

Many of our students are LEP. Technology can be a means of breaking down barriers to overcoming language challenges

Students want safe and supportive learning environments

Lower Kuskokwim School District

What five things would rural superintendents like to change?

Forward fund education (We ***must*** know what we are going to get funding wise at least a fiscal year ahead of time)

- With 2.4 million in one time funding it is difficult to budget from year to year
- LKSD highly depends on Federal Impact Aide and sequestration is having a serious impact on our budget
- We need to know what we will have from year to year

Technology infrastructure

- LKSD has a 100Mb terrestrial internet connection and 12-14 Mb connections between each of our villages and the district office.
- Cost – 22 million/year
- LKSD share – 2+ million/year

Law enforcement

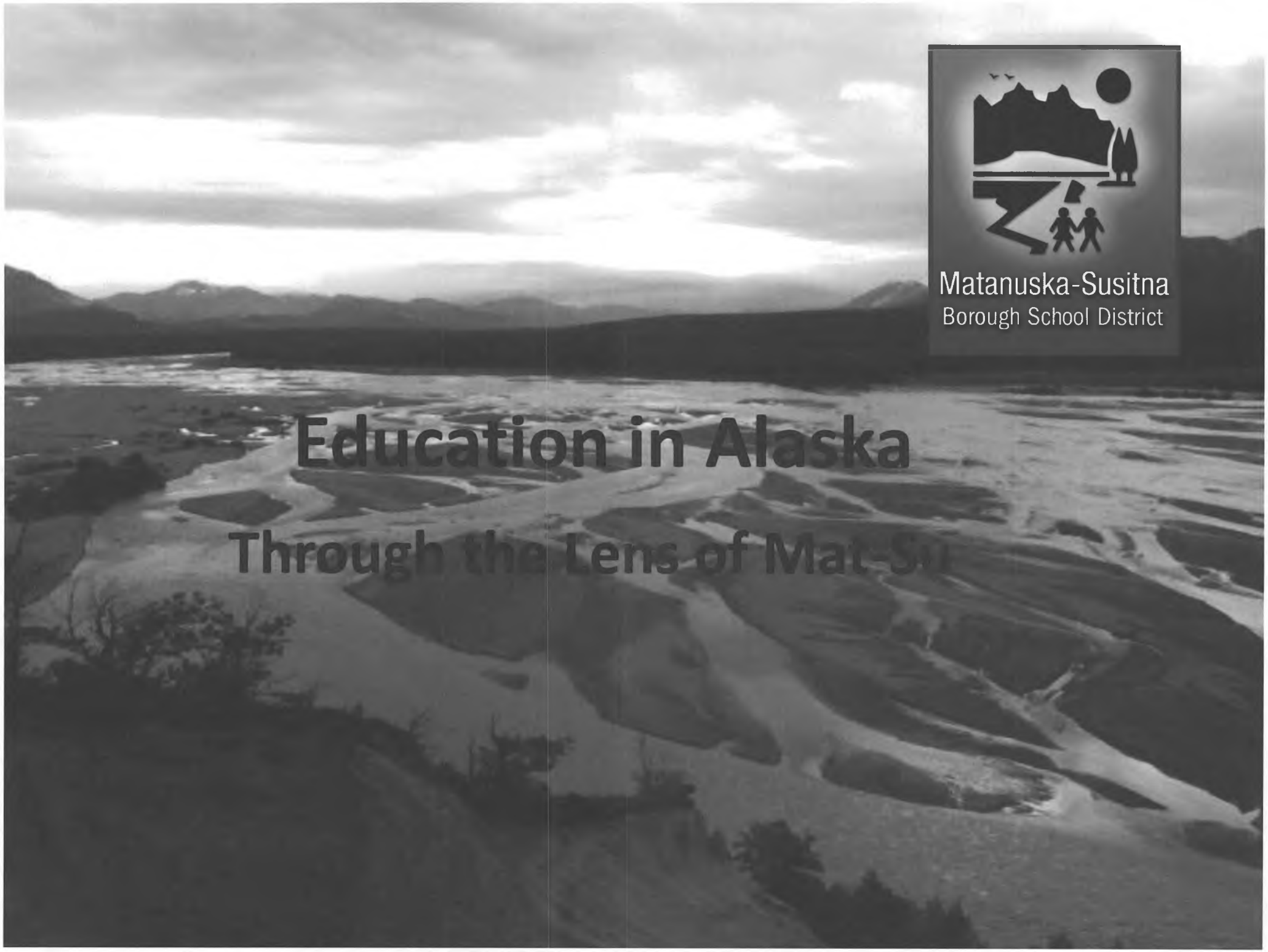
- Trauma rates
- Impact on learning

Lower Kuskokwim School District

What five things would rural superintendents like to change?

- Teacher housing
  - There is a large need for new teacher housing
  - Impact on teacher retention
- Overall utilities infrastructure
  - Piped running water and flush toilets
  - Electricity costs and finding alternatives to diesel fuel generators

LowerKuskokwim School District


Matanuska-Susitna
Borough School District
Education in Alaska
Through the Lens of Mat-Su

Customer Service

Innovation

Choice


Preschool
Foundational Skills
Private Sector Partnerships
Access Skills
Accountability
Comprehensive


Neighborhood Schools
Special Mission Schools
Education Channels
Home School
Charter Schools
Assessments
Standards


Credit Recovery
Career Technology
Service/Leadership
Early College
Navigation Opportunities
Online
Scholarships


Funding
Certainty/Flexibility
Matanuska-Susitna
Borough School District
Intensive Funding Count
RIF Requirements
Home School
Regulations/Funding
Health Care Cost Drivers

The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3

Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley

During the 1960's War on Poverty, we were among the many researchers, psychologists, and educators who brought our knowledge of child development to the front line in an optimistic effort to intervene early to forestall the terrible effects that poverty was having on some children's academic growth. We were also among the many who saw that our results, however promising at the start, washed out fairly early and fairly completely as children aged.

In one planned intervention in Kansas City, Kans., we used our experience with clinical language intervention to design a half-day program for the Turner House Preschool, located in the impoverished Juniper Gardens area of the city. Most interventions of the time used a variety of methods and then measured results with IQ tests, but ours focused on building the everyday language the children were using, then evaluating the growth of that language. In addition, our study included not just poor children from Turner House, but also a group of University of Kansas professors' children against whom we could measure the Turner House children's progress.

All the children in the program eagerly engaged with the wide variety of new materials and language-intensive activities introduced in the preschool. The spontaneous speech data we collected showed a spurt of new vocabulary words added to the dictionaries of all the children and an abrupt acceleration in their cumulative vocabulary growth curves. But just as in other early intervention programs, the increases were temporary.

We found we could easily increase the size of the children's vocabularies by teaching them new words. But we could not accelerate the rate of vocabulary growth so that it would continue beyond direct teaching; we could not change the developmental trajectory. However many new words we taught the children in the preschool, it was clear that a year later, when the children were in kindergarten, the effects of the boost in vocabulary resources would have washed out. The children's developmental trajectories of vocabulary growth would continue to point to vocabulary sizes in the future that were increasingly discrepant from those of the professors' children. We saw increasing disparity between the extremes--the fast vocabulary growth of the professors' children and the slow vocabulary growth of the Turner House children. The gap seemed to foreshadow the findings from other studies that in high school many children from families in poverty lack the vocabulary used in advanced textbooks.

Rather than concede to the unmalleable forces of heredity, we decided that we would undertake research that would allow us to understand the disparate developmental trajectories we saw. We realized that if we were to understand how and when differences in developmental trajectories began, we needed to see what was happening to children at home at the very beginning of their vocabulary growth.

We undertook 2 1/2 years of observing 42 families for an hour each month to learn about what typically went on in homes with 1- and 2-year-old children learning to talk. The data showed us that ordinary families differ immensely in the amount of experience with language and interaction they regularly provide their children and that differences in children's experience are

strongly linked to children's language accomplishments at age 3. Our goal in the longitudinal study was to discover what was happening in children's early experience that could account for the intractable difference in rates of vocabulary growth we saw among 4-year-olds.

Methodology

Our ambition was to record "everything" that went on in children's homes—everything that was done by the children, to them, and around them. Because we were committed to undertaking the labor involved in observing, tape recording, and transcribing, and because we did not know exactly which aspects of children's cumulative experience were contributing to establishing rates of vocabulary growth, the more information we could get each time we were in the home the more we could potentially learn.

We decided to start when the children were 7-9 months old so we would have time for the families to adapt to observation before the children actually began talking. We followed the children until they turned three years old.

The first families we recruited to participate in the study came from personal contacts: friends who had babies and families who had had children in the Turner House Preschool. We then used birth announcements to send descriptions of the study to families with children of the desired age. In recruiting from birth announcements, we had two priorities. The first priority was to obtain a range in demographics, and the second was stability--we needed families likely to remain in the longitudinal study for several years. Recruiting from birth announcements allowed us to preselect families. We looked up each potential family in the city directory and listed those with such signs of permanence as owning their home and having a telephone. We listed families by sex of child and address because demographic status could be reliably associated with area of residence in this city at that time. Then we sent recruiting letters selectively in order to maintain the gender balance and the representation of socioeconomic strata.

Our final sample consisted of 42 families who remained in the study from beginning to end. From each of these families, we have almost 2 1/2 years or more of sequential monthly hour-long observations. On the basis of occupation, 13 of the families were upper socioeconomic status (SES), 10 were middle SES, 13 were lower SES, and six were on welfare. There were African-American families in each SES category, in numbers roughly reflecting local job allocations. One African-American family was upper SES, three were middle, seven were lower, and six families were on welfare. Of the 42 children, 17 were African American and 23 were girls. Eleven children were the first born to the family, 18 were second children, and 13 were third or later-born children.

What We Found

Before children can take charge of their own experience and begin to spend time with peers in social groups outside the home, almost everything they learn comes from their families, to whom society has assigned the task of socializing children. We were not surprised to see the 42 children turn out to be like their parents; we had not fully realized, however, the implications of those similarities for the children's futures.

We observed the 42 children grow more like their parents in stature and activity levels, in vocabulary resources, and in language and interaction styles. Despite the considerable range in vocabulary size among the children, 86 percent to 98 percent of the words recorded in each child's vocabulary consisted of words also recorded in their parents' vocabularies. By the age of 34-36 months, the children were also talking and using numbers of different words very similar to the averages of their parents (see the table below).

Families' Language and Use Differ Across Income Groups

Families						
Measures & Scores	13 Professional		23 Working-class		6 Welfare	
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Parent	Child
Protest score[a]	41		31		14	
Recorded vocabulary size	2,176	1,116	1,498	749	974	525
Average utterances per hour[b]	487	310	301	223	176	168
Average different words per hour	382	297	251	216	167	149

[a] When we began the longitudinal study, we asked the parents to complete a vocabulary pretest. At the first observation each parent was asked to complete a form abstracted from the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT). We gave each parent a list of 46 vocabulary words and a series of pictures (four options per vocabulary word) and asked the parent to write beside each word the number of the picture that corresponded to the written word. Parent performance on the test was highly correlated with years of education ($r = .57$).

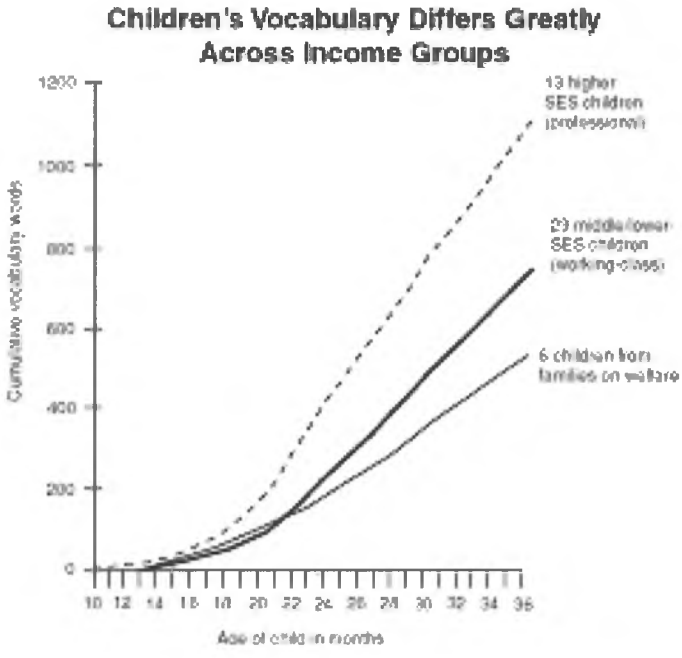
[b] Parent utterances and different words were averaged over 13-36 months of child age. Child utterances and different words were averaged for the four observations when the children were 33-36 months old.

By the time the children were 3 years old, trends in amount of talk, vocabulary growth, and style of interaction were well established and clearly suggested widening gaps to come. Even patterns of parenting were already observable among the children. When we listened to the children, we seemed to hear their parents speaking; when we watched the children play at parenting their dolls, we seemed to see the futures of their own children.

We now had answers to our 20-year-old questions. We had observed, recorded, and analyzed more than 1,300 hours of casual interactions between parents and their language-learning children. We had dissembled these interactions into several dozen molecular features that could be reliably coded and counted. We had examined the correlations between the quantities of each of those features and several outcome measures relating to children's language accomplishments.

After all 1,318 observations had been entered into the computer and checked for accuracy against the raw data, after every word had been checked for spelling and coded and checked for its part of speech, after every utterance had been coded for syntax and discourse function and every code checked for accuracy, after random samples had been recoded to check the reliability of the coding, after each file had been checked one more time and the accuracy of each aspect verified, and after the data analysis programs had finally been run to produce frequency counts

and dictionary lists for each observation, we had an immense numeric database that required 23 million bytes of computer file space. We were finally ready to begin asking what it all meant.



It took six years of painstaking effort before we saw the first results of the longitudinal research. And then we were astonished at the differences the data revealed (see the graph at left).

Like the children in the Turner House Preschool, the three year old children from families on welfare not only had smaller vocabularies than did children of the same age in professional families, but they were also adding words more slowly. Projecting the developmental trajectory of the welfare children's vocabulary growth curves, we could see an ever-widening gap similar to the one we saw between the Turner House children and the professors' children in 1967.

While we were immersed in collecting and processing the data, our thoughts were concerned only with the next utterance to be transcribed or coded. While we were observing in the homes, though we were aware that the families were very different in lifestyles, they were all similarly engaged in the fundamental task of raising a child. All the families nurtured their children and played and talked with them. They all disciplined their children and taught them good manners and how to dress and toilet themselves. They provided their children with much the same toys and talked to them about much the same things. Though different in personality and skill levels, the children all learned to talk and to be socially appropriate members of the family with all the basic skills needed for preschool entry.

Test Performance in Third Grade Follows Accomplishments at Age 3

We wondered whether the differences we saw at age 3 would be washed out, like the effects of a preschool intervention, as the children's experience broadened to a wider community of competent speakers. Like the parents we observed, we wondered how much difference children's early experiences would actually make. Could we, or parents, predict how a child would do in school from what the parent was doing when the child was 2 years old?

Fortune provided us with Dale Walker, who recruited 29 of the 42 families to participate in a study of their children's school performance in the third grade, when the children were nine to 10 years old.

We were awestruck at how well our measures of accomplishments at age 3 predicted measures of language skill at age 9-10. From our preschool data we had been confident that the rate of vocabulary growth would predict later performance in school; we saw that it did. For the 29 children observed when they were 1-2 years old, the rate of vocabulary growth at age 3 was strongly associated with scores at age 9-10 on both the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) of receptive vocabulary ($r = .58$) and the Test of Language Development-2: Intermediate (TOLD) ($r = .74$) and its subtests (listening, speaking, semantics, syntax).

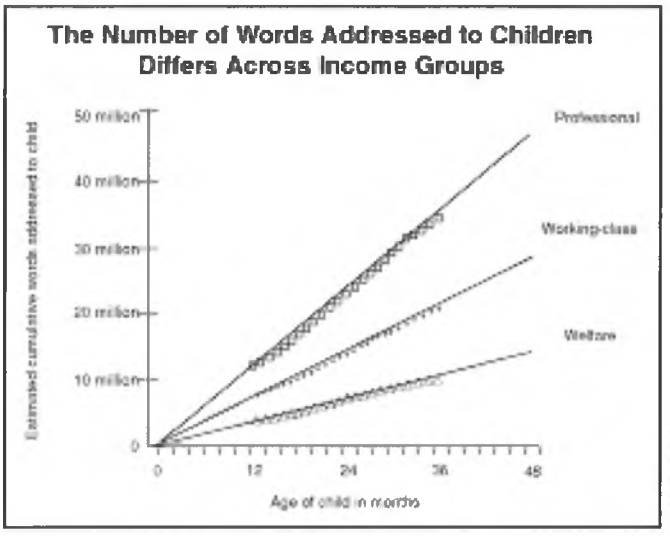
Vocabulary use at age 3 was equally predictive of measures of language skill at age 9-10. Vocabulary use at age 3 was strongly associated with scores on both the PPVT-R ($r = .57$) and the TOLD ($r = .72$). Vocabulary use at age 3 was also strongly associated with reading comprehension scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS/U) ($r = .56$).

The 30 Million Word Gap By Age 3

All parent-child research is based on the assumption that the data (laboratory or field) reflect what people typically do. In most studies, there are as many reasons that the averages would be higher than reported as there are that they would be lower. But all researchers caution against extrapolating their findings to people and circumstances they did not include. Our data provide us, however, a first approximation to the absolute magnitude of children's early experience, a basis sufficient for estimating the actual size of the intervention task needed to provide equal experience and, thus, equal opportunities to children living in poverty. We depend on future studies to refine this estimate.

Because the goal of an intervention would be to equalize children's early experience, we need to estimate the amount of experience children of different SES groups might bring to an intervention that began in preschool at age 4. We base our estimate on the remarkable differences our data showed in the relative amounts of children's early experience: Simply in words heard, the average child on welfare was having half as much experience per hour (616 words per hour) as the average working-class child (1,251 words per hour) and less than one-third that of the average child in a professional family (2,153 words per hour). These relative differences in amount of experience were so durable over the more than two years of observations that they provide the best basis we currently have for estimating children's actual life experience.

A linear extrapolation from the averages in the observational data to a 100-hour week (given a 14-hour waking day) shows the average child in the professional families with 215,000 words of language experience, the average child in a working-class family provided with 125,000 words, and the average child in a welfare family with 62,000 words of language experience. In a 5,200-hour year, the amount would be 11.2 million words for a child in a professional family, 6.5 million words for a child in a working-class family, and 3.2 million words for a child in a welfare family. In four years of such experience, an average child in a professional family would have accumulated experience with almost 45 million words, an average child in a working-class family would have accumulated experience with 26 million words, and an average child in a welfare family would have accumulated experience with 13 million words. By age 4, the average child in a welfare family might have 13 million fewer words of cumulative experience than the average child in a working-class family. This linear extrapolation is shown in the graph below.



But the children's language experience did not differ just in terms of the number and quality of words heard. We can extrapolate similarly the relative differences the data showed in children's hourly experience with parent affirmatives (encouraging words) and prohibitions. The average child in a professional family was accumulating 32 affirmatives and five prohibitions per hour, a ratio of 6 encouragements to 1 discouragement. The average child in a working-class family was accumulating 12 affirmatives and seven prohibitions per hour, a ratio of 2 encouragements to 1 discouragement. The average child in a welfare family, though, was accumulating five affirmatives and 11 prohibitions per hour, a ratio of 1 encouragement to 2 discouragements. In a 5,200-hour year, that would be 166,000 encouragements to 26,000 discouragements in a professional family, 62,000 encouragements to 36,000 discouragements in a working-class family, and 26,000 encouragements to 57,000 discouragements in a welfare family.

Extrapolated to the first four years of life, the average child in a professional family would have accumulated 560,000 more instances of encouraging feedback than discouraging feedback, and an average child in a working-class family would have accumulated 100,000 more encouragements than discouragements. But an average child in a welfare family would have accumulated 125,000 more instances of prohibitions than encouragements. By the age of 4, the average child in a welfare family might have had 144,000 fewer encouragements and 84,000 more discouragements of his or her behavior than the average child in a working-class family.

Extrapolating the relative differences in children's hourly experience allows us to estimate children's cumulative experience in the first four years of life and so glimpse the size of the problem facing intervention. Whatever the inaccuracy of our estimates, it is not by an order of magnitude such that 60,000 words becomes 6,000 or 600,000. Even if our estimates of children's experience are too high by half, the differences between children by age 4 in amounts of cumulative experience are so great that even the best of intervention programs could only hope to keep the children in families on welfare from falling still further behind the children in the working-class families.

The Importance of Early Years Experience

We learned from the longitudinal data that the problem of skill differences among children at the time of school entry is bigger, more intractable, and more important than we had thought. So much is happening to children during their first three years at home, at a time when they are especially malleable and uniquely dependent on the family for virtually all their experience, that

by age 3, an intervention must address not just a lack of knowledge or skill, but an entire general approach to experience.

Cognitively, experience is sequential: Experiences in infancy establish habits of seeking, noticing, and incorporating new and more complex experiences, as well as schemas for categorizing and thinking about experiences. Neurologically, infancy is a critical period because cortical development is influenced by the amount of central nervous system activity stimulated by experience. Behaviorally, infancy is a unique time of helplessness when nearly all of children's experience is mediated by adults in one-to-one interactions permeated with affect. Once children become independent and can speak for themselves, they gain access to more opportunities for experience. But the amount and diversity of children's past experience influences which new opportunities for experience they notice and choose.

Estimating, as we did, the magnitude of the differences in children's cumulative experience before the age of 3 gives an indication of how big the problem is. Estimating the hours of intervention needed to equalize children's early experience makes clear the enormity of the effort that would be required to change children's lives. And the longer the effort is put off, the less possible the change becomes. We see why our brief, intense efforts during the War on Poverty did not succeed. But we also see the risk to our nation and its children that makes intervention more urgent than ever.

Betty Hart is professor of Human Development at the University of Kansas and senior scientist at the Schiefelbusch Institute for Life Span Studies. Todd R. Risley is professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Alaska Anchorage and director of Alaska's Autism Intensive Early Intervention Project. The two have collaborated on research projects for more than 35 years. This article is excerpted with permission from *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children*, Copyright 1995, Brookes; www.brookespublishing.com, 1-800-638-3775; $29.00.

Rural Districts – Current Status

- Doing More With Less Has Become The Norm, Has Been Embraced
- Improved State Exams, Grad. Rates, Multiple Indicators-have "Right Track" Feel
- Have Made Cuts To Get To This Point
- See A Frightening Financial Future Looming On The Horizon
- Foreseen Future Cuts Will Make Providing A Well Rounded Ed. Impossible

Student Needs, Wants, Likes

Students Want Menu Of Opportunities For **Success**

- APA Internal Motivators:
  - -Involved With Complex Work With Success
  - -Work With Others
  - -Some Autonomy With Work
- Providing System With This, Reverses Fight To Get Kids To School, To Learn
- Students Volunteer To Give Up Summer, Weekends, To Attend School
- Students - Performance Based Progress Makes More Sense Than Time-Based
- Caring Teachers That Stay (Teacher Retention)

Well Rounded Education Is Not Feel-Good Fluff, It's Essential

- Bicycle Wheel Spokes – Each Is Important
  - -Nothing On It's Own Is The Silver Bullet
    - -Academic Rigor & Robust Accountability
    - -Bandwidth And iPads
- Everything We're Doing And More – Right On Target
- Increased Menu Of Choices, Regardless Of Zip Code

The Question Is.... How Do We Provide It All, With Limited Resources?

Rural Districts - Future

- **Coordinated Collaborative Services (Not Consolidated)**
  - -Multiple Silo Agency Infrastructure-fine For Urban
  - -This Infrastructure Inefficient & Ineffective Rural AK

- **Regional Coordinated Service Centers**
  - -Career & Tech Ed
  - -Early Childhood Services
  - -Health
  - -Law Enforcement & Courts
  - -Labor
  - -Social Services
  - -Transportation, etc.

- **Regional Learning Centers**
  - -Network Of Centers To Provide Broad Menu Of Learning Opportunities Which No Single Organization Can Provide Alone
  - -Chugach & NACTEC finally to Formalize A Decade Long Handshake Deal

  - -Blended Instructional Delivery *(Personalized & Relevant)*
    - -Classroom
    - -Hands On Application Of Skills
    - -Technology Tools – Online
    - -Learning 24/7/365 (Learning Anywhere From Anyone)

Things That Would Help Us Provide A Well-Rounded Education

- **Preschool Funding**
  - -Common Sense To Invest Where You Get Greatest Returns

- **Stable, Predictable Funding**
  - -More Efficient & Effective When We Plan With This Info

- **Fund All Initiative Implementations**
  - -We're Setting Each Initiative Up For Failure If We Don't

- **Putting and Keeping The Best Teachers With Our Students**
  - -Teacher Retention; TRS, Health Care, Housing, Salary, Feeling Valued
  - -Increased Ability To Train/Retrain Poor Teachers, Or Counsel Elsewhere

- **Regional Coordinated Service Centers**
  - -The Cost Of Not Doing This Is Far Higher Than The Cost Of Doing It

PTA®

*every*child. *one* voice.®

Parent Engagement Program

Alaska PTA

Who is Alaska PTA?

147 Individual PTA Units: Nome to Craig

7000 Alaska PTA Members ($4 per person)

48% of Alaskan Students

143,336 volunteer hours

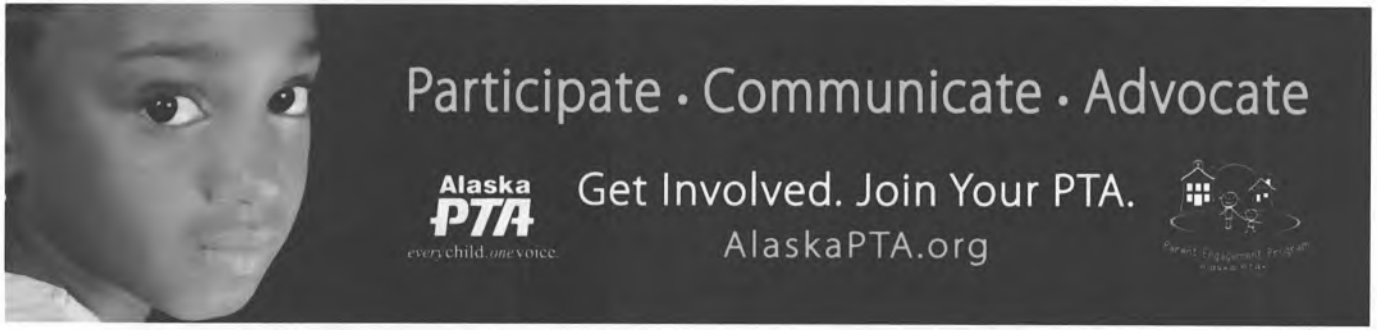
$3,583,400.00 Value

Alaska PTA PO Box 201496 Anchorage Alaska 995230 907-245-1301

Alaska PTA®
everychild. onevoice.

Overall Finding from the Research:

When families are involved at home and at school – children do better in school.



Parent Engagement Program
Alaska PTA

Alaska PTA
everychild.onevoice.

Finding #2 – Programs Work

Events and activities designed to engage families in supporting children's learning lead to improved student achievement.

Finding #3 – Advocacy is Protective

The more families can be advocates for children and support their progress, the better their children do and the longer they stay in school.

Finding #4 – All Families Contribute

Schools that have succeeded in engaging families from very diverse backgrounds shared three common practices.

National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

Parent Engagement Program
Alaska PTA

Alaska PTA PO Box 201496 Anchorage Alaska 995230 907-279-9345

Alaska PTA®
everychild. onevoice.

Keys to Success

- Remember, one size **does not** fit all
- Set clear and measurable goals based on family and community input
- Develop a variety of outreach mechanisms

Top Five

- Fund the 'real cost' of Education
- Invest in Teachers
- Teach a full curriculum at all ages
- Invest in early childhood programs
- Be present and thoughtful

Believe that family involvement improves the achievement of every student.

Alaska PTA PO Box 201495 Anchorage Alaska 995230 907-279-9345

Alaska PTA®
everychild. onevoice.

Making every child's potential a reality is the best investment of time and energy you can make.

Our Children ~ Alaska's Future

Get Involved. Join Your PTA

Parent Engagement Program Alaska PTA

Alaska PTA

everychild.onevoice

AlaskaPTA.org

- 1 parent = A Fruitcake
- 2 parents = A fruitcake and a friend
- 3 parents = Troublemakers
- 5 parents = Lets have a meeting
- 10 parents = We'd better listen
- 25 parents = Our Dear Friends
- 50 parents = A powerful organization = Parent Involvement

Alaska PTA
everychild. onevoice.

Alaska PTA PO Box 201496 Anchorage Alaska 995230 907-245-1301

Parent Engagement Program
Alaska PTA

Family Engagement Action Plan

Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED) is committed to preparing every student to graduate high school ready for college and career. Research is clear that quality family and community engagement in student learning is critically important to achieving that goal. Family engagement also emerged as an idea of extreme importance to Alaskans in the development of the Alaska Education Plan.

Developed out of the thoughtful visioning of Alaskans from all walks of life at the 2008 Alaska Education Summit, the Alaska Education Plan supports the role of families, communities, and local cultures in the schools. As stated in the Alaska Education Plan: "Family engagement has emerged as a central focus in Alaska education. Viewing parents as the first and best teachers of their children goes beyond their role in early education. Engagement means involving families in every aspect of educational planning, implementation, and evaluation throughout their children's education."

Many in our Alaskan communities have been working diligently on improving family engagement for years by making concerted efforts to grow a culture of trust and partnership between families, community members, and formal educators toward the goal of growing successful and happy graduates. This collection of Family Engagement Actions seeks to be a starting point in consolidating efforts and ideas statewide as well in increasing the level of accountability around family engagement efforts for the betterment of student success.

As with the Alaska Education Plan, please consider these Family Engagement Actions an invitation to work together to achieve Alaska's vision for our children's education.

The Department of Education and Early Development (EED) relies on community members from around the state who are knowledgeable and passionate about improving learning opportunities for Alaska's young people. EED is grateful to the members of the Family Engagement Working Group, who include:

Sue Hull*
Association of Alaska School Boards

Karin Halpin*
Alaska Parent Information and Resource Center

Shirley Pittz*
Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Bridget Smith*
Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement

Abbe Hensley*
Best Beginnings

Paula Pawlowski*
Alaska Parent Teacher Association

Janice Banta*
Anchorage School District

Bunny Schaeffer
Northwest Arctic School District, Alaska State Board of Education

Pam Christianson
Anchorage School District

Jennifer Rinaldi
Anchorage School District

Jennifer Schmitz
Anchorage School District

Betsy Paskvan
Anchorage School District

Leslie Campbell
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

Liz Po
Fairbanks North Star Borough District

Melinda Myers
Thread

Gerry Brisco
Alaska Comprehensive Center

Karen Zeman
Spirit of Youth

Nina Harun
Fairbanks School Board

Debbie Bogart
Anchorage's Promise

Amy Loyd
Cook Inlet Tribal Council

Becky Judd
Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, AK ICE

Laura Galliher
Koniag

Sharon Lockwood
Fairbanks Council of PTA

Dr. Ellsworth James
Bridge Builders

Julie Fate-Sullivan
PTA -Anchorage

Tara Olkjer
Parent-homeschool

Marcella Libbrecht
Parent

Tina Lane
Parent

Kitte Miller, M.D.
Parent

Ann McCoy
Alaska Pacific University

Kathy Zamudio
Cordova School District

Carol Wren
Cook Inlet Tribal Council

Stephanie Garrard
Wells Fargo Bank

Bonnie Paskvan
GCI

Amey Tamagni
Alaska Parent Teacher Association

Lynn Hohl
Alaska Parent Teacher Association

Leesa Arnes
Alaska Parent Teacher Association

Cathy Crew
Alaska Parent Teacher Association

Suellen Appellof
Alaska Parent Teacher Association

Sarah Tuggle
Alaska Parent Teacher Association

Jordan Marshall
Alaska Parent Teacher Association

Samantha Moore
PTA-Kenai Peninsula

Amy Maitland
Cook Inlet Tribal Council

Nick Jordan
Cook Inlet Tribal Council

Hillary Seitz
University of Alaska, Anchorage

Brenda Hartley
Parent

James Merriner
Alaska State Board of Education, Interior Distance Education of Alaska

Sally Rue
Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement

Phyllis Carlson
Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

Cyndy Curran
Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

Alyse Galvin
Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

*Team Leaders

Families play a critical role in student success. As noted by the Harvard Family Research Project:

> From the time children are born, parents influence their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Parents' interactions and activities help shape children's readiness for school, and consistent engagement during children's elementary years is also related to positive academic and behavioral outcomes. Family engagement remains important in adolescence and predicts healthy youth behaviors and higher rates of college enrollment.

It is widely acknowledged that family engagement is a critical component of children's school success "from cradle to career." Research suggests that family engagement promotes multiple benefits for students, including improved readiness for school, increased achievement, superior social skills and behavior, and increased likelihood of high school graduation.

In the 2002 research review *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp conclude that there is a strong relationship between family involvement and student success, regardless of race/ethnicity, economic status, or parents' level of education. It is clear that when families are involved in their children's learning, both at home and at school, their children do better in school.

Parents, educators, administrators, and the community share responsibility for family engagement. Three consistent elements of successful family engagement efforts that emerge from the research are that:

1. All parties work together to build a foundation of trust and respect;
2. Family engagement efforts and strategies are firmly connected to learning objectives; and
3. Efforts to reach out and engage parents go beyond the school house doors and do so consistently throughout the year.

(Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

It is clear that Alaska's efforts to support and improve family and community engagement efforts in our schools will pay dividends in meeting our state's goal to graduate all students ready for college and career.

The Alaska Family Engagement Plan is built around the following nationally recognized components critical to the goal of maximizing student success and achievement through family engagement:

Welcoming Every Family — Every family coming into the school or interacting with school personnel feels welcome.

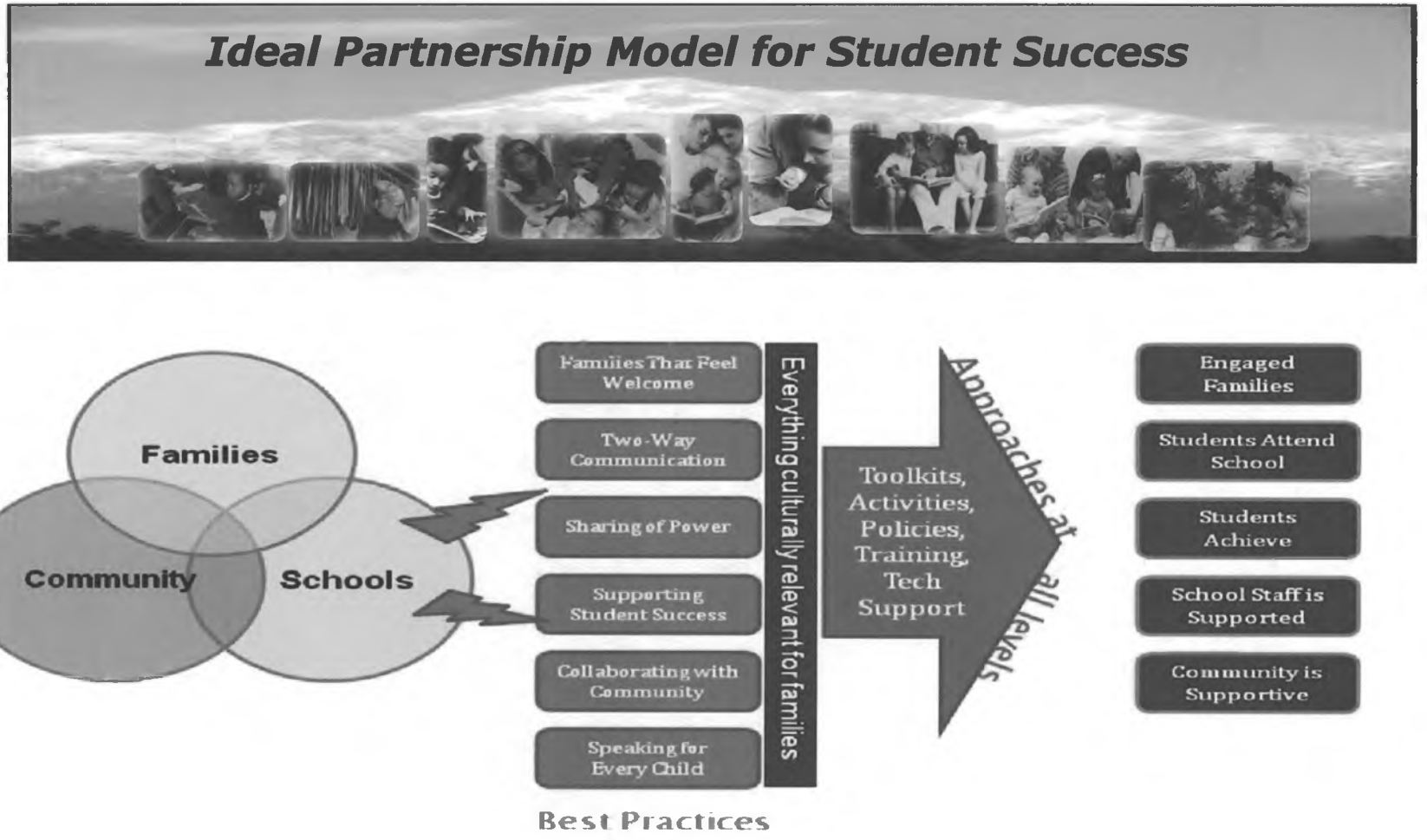
Two-Way Communication — Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Sharing Power — Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and work together to create policies, practices, and programs.

Supporting Student Success — Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development, both at home and at school.

Collaborating with Community — Families and school staff are connected to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Speaking for Every Child — Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.


Ideal Partnership Model for Student Success
Families
Community
Schools
Families That Feel Welcome
Two-Way Communication
Sharing of Power
Supporting Student Success
Collaborating with Community
Speaking for Every Child
Everything culturally relevant for families
Best Practices
Toolkits, Activities, Policies, Training, Tech Support
Approaches at all levels
Engaged Families
Students Attend School
Students Achieve
School Staff is Supported
Community is Supportive

State Level

Overarching Actions

- Schools and districts are supported in developing annual Family Engagement Plans with the direct involvement of staff, students, families, and members of the community.
- Develop a statewide, public information campaign on the importance of family engagement.
- Develop a statewide system of support for districts and schools looking for additional assistance in their family engagement efforts.
- Provide resources to schools about partner organizations that can help schools with family engagement.
- Inspire action by recognizing excellence in culturally appropriate family engagement practices.
- Develop and distribute a toolkit of shared resources based on research and best practices on family engagement.
- Encourage each district to devote a portion of its in-service time every fall to offer training in family engagement in its schools.

Overarching Actions

- Encourage educators' professional development in family engagement.

State Actions

- State EED to provide a list of organizations utilizing "best practices" in family engagement.

Welcoming Every Family

- Send a letter to every newborn's parent, emphasizing the important role the parent has as the child's first teacher in learning.
- Send a letter to every five-year-old's parent emphasizing the important role the parent has in student success at school, as a partner with the child's teacher.

Two-Way Communication

- A section of EED's Web site is devoted to providing pertinent family information on available resources and allows families and students to provide feedback and ask questions.
- Actively encourage public input during State Board of Education and Early Development meetings and public interaction during EED leadership visits to districts and schools.

Sharing Power

- Create opportunities for family engagement in all levels of decision-making, including decisions affecting all ages of children from cradle to career.
- Design and make available model policies supporting parent collaboration at district and school levels that support collaboration and parents as advocates.

State Actions

Supporting Student Success

- Develop accessible ways to help every Alaskan family be aware of what their child should know and be able to do academically and where they can go for help. Make readily available grade level expectations as well as learning stages for 0-5 year-olds (Early Learning Guidelines).
- Make available to families, schools, and districts materials that help families understand what they can do to support student learning. To the extent practicable, these materials should be translated into families' native languages.

Collaborating With Community

- Formally recognize the role that partnerships play in engaging parents.
- Encourage local school districts to identify a Community Partner Liaison and work with a community advisory committee to develop an action plan for family and community engagement that builds local partnerships.
- Encourage schools to provide ongoing professional development training to school leadership and staff on culturally appropriate practices and policies, including creating a culturally welcoming environment for the community.

Speaking For Every Child

- Make parental and student rights under local, state, and federal law easily accessible on the state education web site.

District Level

Overarching Actions

- Develop an action plan for family and community engagement to be updated annually.
- Provide ongoing training for teachers, administrators, and parents on family engagement.
- Provide resources to schools about partner organizations that can help schools with family engagement.
- Local school boards adopt a policy, resolution, or proclamation acknowledging the critical importance of family engagement in increasing student achievement.
- Establish policies that support and respect family responsibilities, recognizing the variety of parenting traditions and practices within the community's cultural and religious diversity as well as the unique demands of parenting children with special needs.
- Make available a list of family resources (community, school, faith-based) that is, to the extent practicable, offered in a family's native language.
- Develop incentives/awards for schools recognizing excellence in culturally appropriate family engagement practices.
- Devote a portion of in-service time in the fall to build knowledge about partnerships, including how to welcome and engage students and families, and to enhance staff skills in reaching out to families in a way that is strengths-based, collaborative, and supports families.
- A team of district employees and families develops a district-wide professional development program addressing strategies for culturally relevant family engagement in every school.
- Provide a district-level community liaison. The specialist/liaison would work with schools, families, students, and communities to support communication between schools and their communities.
- Create a pilot project modeling all areas of family engagement and incentivize schools to participate.

District Actions

District Actions

Welcoming Every Family

- Develop and distribute a district "map" (in multiple languages) so parents, students, and community members can easily find information and navigate the school system.

Two-Way Communication

- Devote a section on the district's web site to allow for input on what's working in the community in terms of student and family support.
- Schedule parent/teacher conferences at times when parents can attend and consider holding them at locations other than the school building.

Sharing Power

- Align principals' performance as it relates to the promotion and support of effective family engagement practices.
- Support the creation of parent organizations at the district and school levels.
- Create teams of parents and professionals to guide decision-making at all levels.

District Actions

Supporting Student Success

- Provide cultural proficiency training for school staff and administration.
- Build or enhance student information systems that allow parents to have easy access to student academic, attendance, and other pertinent information.

Collaborating With Community

- Coordinate and participate in events that support community groups.
- Make available cultural liaisons to assist in outreach to communities.
- Partner with community groups to increase public awareness of truancy laws, stressing the importance of school attendance.
- Collaborate with community resources (mental health, community-based organizations, etc.) to provide low-cost or no-cost parenting classes throughout the school district during the school year.

Speaking For Every Child

- Make parental and student rights under local, state, and federal law easily accessible on the district web site.

School Level

School Actions

Overarching Actions

- Employ a community café model of gatherings to maximize family involvement.
- Develop a family and community engagement plan with the active participation of students, families, and community members.
- Identify a family engagement specialist or liaison.

Welcoming Every Family

- Create a network of mentor parents to assist new families in learning about the school.
- Establish a parent resource room/office to be the hub for support for students and family needs.
- Host special traditional celebrations afterschool/weekends. Provide a "community center" (e.g. weekend bingo, tutoring, beading, open gym opportunities, arts/crafts, and educational workshops).
- Consider offering incentives for teachers and community members to come in and credit for students to tutor peers.
- Distribute a family-friendly school walk-through checklist and provide incentives to families to participate.
- At preschool/kindergarten orientations, share information with parents on how to be engaged.

Two-Way Communication

- Complete a beginning of school year family engagement survey, make adjustments based on results, and survey again at end of the year to determine the effectiveness of school efforts. Share results with all families.
- Provide parents with student grade-level expectations, report cards, conferences, and follow up as needed.

School Actions

Two-Way Communication

- Provide parents and staff with current contact information and include preferred ways and times for parents, teachers, and staff to reach each other.
- Utilize all existing communication systems (PowerSchool, newsletters, Back-to-School information, Robocalls, etc.) to keep parents informed and engaged.
- Encourage parents and teachers to communicate regarding students' positive behavior and achievements.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for informal interactions between staff, administration, and families.
- Provide clear information regarding course expectations and offerings, student placement, school activities, student services, and optional programs.
- Regularly distribute student work for parental/family members' comments and review.

Sharing Power

- Provide opportunities for parents to join committees that set school policies, goals, or evaluation of programs.

Supporting Student Success

- Encourage teachers to keep families and students informed and reminded about homework through multiple means of communication, such as emails and a Homework Hotline.
- Provide training to help families understand and prepare for transitions into elementary, middle, and high school.
- Provide information or training for parents about testing so that they understand what type of testing is being given and how results will be used to increase academic success.
- Sponsor academic workshops and distribute information to assist families in understanding how students can improve skills, get help when needed, meet class expectations, and perform well on assessments.

School Actions

Supporting Student Success

- Help parents and students understand future career/college pathways. Have materials and counseling available to explain living wage, career options, and pathways for gaining necessary skills for applying to college/voc-tech.
- Provide workshops that help parents and students make connections between coursework choices and future careers.
- Provide parents with an annual school calendar of important dates and events and develop a web site that is user-friendly and contains current contact information.
- Create a database to capture what families can do in terms of volunteerism or services to the school.
- Provide training for parents so they can know and understand school and district discipline processes.
- Provide training for in-school parent volunteers. Provide opportunities for parents who are unable to come to the school during the day to volunteer in other ways.

Collaborating With Community

- Use community facilities (library, museum, community hall) for learning opportunities.
- Make local agencies and businesses aware of local school happenings.
- Recruit community members to volunteer in school (e.g. seniors' bus).
- Participate in community clean-up or beautification projects.
- Sponsor a community health fair at the school.
- Invite community organizations to promote and provide leadership training for parents.

Speaking For Every Child

- Provide training for parents so they can know and understand school, district, state, and federal student and family rights as well as resources available.

Community Level

Overarching Actions

- Encourage cultural organizations to collaborate with schools. Work with elders and longstanding respected people in the community who can share clear messages with families about the value of education.

Welcoming Every Family

- Make a unified effort with all entities (medical, social, educational organizations, etc.) to engage each set of parents as a child is born to help the family know how special they are, what their role is, and how to connect with resources. Provide ongoing support for families to know what to do and who to turn to when they are not sure.

Two-Way Communication

- Continually assess needs and share information about family resources and opportunities with families and schools.

Sharing Power

- Community agencies collaborate with schools to educate and support parents in sharing power in decision-making that impacts policies and programs affecting children.

Community Actions

Community Actions

Supporting Student Success

- Partner with schools to provide social work and case management to support families of children with extended absences.
- Attend celebrations of student talent and achievement, supporting every youth.

Collaborating With Community

- Community advocacy groups, partnering with school districts, work with groups such as School Business Partnerships, Chambers of Commerce, and Rotaries to educate business owners on the importance of family engagement and what they can do to help. For example, a business owner can allow employees time off to attend parent-teacher conferences or volunteer at a school.

Speaking For Every Child

- Community businesses enhance efforts to be family and young person friendly, making all feel welcome to conduct business.

Family Level

Overarching Actions

- Begin work to develop a collaborative relationship with your child's teacher and principal early in the school year.
- Maintain high expectations for your children and share them with the teacher.

Welcoming Every Family

- Build relationships with other families and talk about how to help each other in supporting children.

Two-Way Communication

- Provide teachers with important information you feel may impact your child's learning. (Changing family circumstances.)
- Inform the teacher when you notice your child having difficulty with homework.
- Read all materials sent home from school and ask questions when an item is unclear to you.

Sharing Power

- Help set goals and develop a personalized education plan for each child.

Family Actions

Family Actions

Supporting Student Success

- Attend school meetings on learning expectations, assessments, and grading procedures.
- Create regular routines at home (meals, homework, sleep).
- Work with your child to find a place for homework that is comfortable, quiet, and well lit.
- Discuss your child's school day and homework daily.
- Set the expectation for your child that attending school is a "non-negotiable" unless he/she is sick.
- Identify non-academic activities that can motivate the child's interest in learning.
- Talk to your children often about the value of education and its importance to their future.
- Attend school activities and training opportunities that will help you support your child's learning.
- Read every day, by yourself and with your child.
- On homework, let your child find the solution if at all possible. Give guidance, not answers.

Collaborating With Community

- Encourage student engagement outside the school day, such as attending local sporting events, engaging in youth activities, or participating in service-learning projects.
- Encourage student community service.
- Thank local merchants and other business owners who support activities at school.

Speaking For Every Child

- Honor your school's processes as you advocate for your child and other students.

These identified actions are the result of many Alaskans coming together in the Family Engagement Working Group, looking at research, and considering what we already have in place here in Alaska. We respected that every Alaskan family and community looks a little different, that many families have different feelings about formal education, and that families speak many different languages. We also respected that all families want the best for their children. Students thrive when they know that everyone around them - in the home, in the community, and in the schools - has the highest expectations of their behavior, schoolwork, and citizenship and wholly support them.

Overwhelming evidence shows that effective family engagement has a large positive impact on student success and readiness for career and college. Just a few nods to the concept is not enough, family engagement must become an integrated core value of the Alaska education system. As we move forward to grow Alaska Family Engagement, we must be diligent to monitor how these actions are affecting student success.

The actions identified in this plan encourage people at all levels in the education system to foster more opportunities for intentional engagement between families, communities, teachers, staff, district, and state level administrators. Our State Education Plan clearly states that when we partner with families, and respect the culture of every family, students will succeed.

PTA
everychild. onevoice.

National Standards, Goals, and Indicators for Family-School Partnerships

Standard 1–Welcoming All Families into the School Community

Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Goal 1: Creating a Welcoming Climate: When families walk into the building, do they feel the school is inviting and is a place where they "belong"?

- ❖ Developing personal relationships
- ❖ Creating a family-friendly atmosphere
- ❖ Providing opportunities for volunteering

Goal 2: Building a Respectful, Inclusive School Community: Do the school's policies and programs reflect, respect, and value the diversity of the families in the community?

- ❖ Respecting all families
- ❖ Removing economic obstacles to participation
- ❖ Ensuring accessible programming

Standard 2–Communicating Effectively

Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Goal 1: Sharing Information Between School and Families: Does the school keep all families informed about important issues and events and make it easy for families to communicate with teachers?

- ❖ Using multiple communication paths
- ❖ Surveying families to identify issues and concerns
- ❖ Having access to the principal
- ❖ Providing information on current issues
- ❖ Facilitating connections among families

Continued on next page

Standard 3–Supporting Student Success

Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Goal 1: Sharing Information About Student Progress: Do families know and understand how well their children are succeeding in school and how well the entire school is progressing?

- ❖ Ensuring parent-teacher communication about student progress
- ❖ Linking student work to academic standards
- ❖ Using standardized test results to increase achievement
- ❖ Sharing school progress

Goal 2: Supporting Learning by Engaging Families: Are families active participants in their children's learning at home and at school?

- ❖ Engaging families in classroom learning
- ❖ Developing family ability to strengthen learning at home
- ❖ Promoting after-school learning

Standard 4–Speaking Up for Every Child

Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Goal 1: Understanding How the School System Works: Do parents know how the local school and district operate and how to raise questions or concerns about school and district programs, policies, and activities? Do they understand their rights and responsibilities under federal and state law as well as local ordinances and policies?

- ❖ Understanding how the school and district operate
- ❖ Understanding rights and responsibilities under federal and state laws
- ❖ Learning about resources
- ❖ Resolving problems and conflicts

Goal 2: Empowering Families to Support Their Own and Other Children's Success in School: Are parents prepared to monitor students' progress and guide them toward their goals through high school graduation, postsecondary education, and a career?

- ❖ Developing families' capacity to be effective advocates
- ❖ Planning for the future
- ❖ Smoothing transitions
- ❖ Engaging in civic advocacy for student achievement

Continued on next page

Standard 5—Sharing Power

Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Goal 1: Strengthening the Family's Voice in Shared Decision Making: Are all families full partners in making decisions that affect their children at school and in the community?

- ❖ Having a voice in all decisions that affect children
- ❖ Addressing equity issues
- ❖ Developing parent leadership

Goal 2: Building Families' Social and Political Connections: Do families have a strong, broad-based organization that offers regular opportunities to develop relationships and raise concerns with school leaders, public officials, and business and community leaders?

- ❖ Connecting families to local officials
- ❖ Developing an effective parent involvement organization that represents all families

Standard 6—Collaborating with Community

Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Goal 1: Connecting the School with Community Resources: Do parent and school leaders work closely with community organizations, businesses, and institutions of higher education to strengthen the school, make resources available to students, school staff, and families, and build a family-friendly community?

- ❖ Linking to community resources
- ❖ Organizing support from community partners
- ❖ Turning the school into a hub of community life
- ❖ Partnering with community groups to strengthen families and support student success

PTA®
Harvard Family Research Project
Issue Brief
July 2009

Seeing is Believing: Promising Practices for How School Districts Promote Family Engagement

Helen Westmoreland, Heidi M. Rosenberg, M. Elena Lopez, & Heather Weiss

There is widespread consensus that family engagement is a critical ingredient for children's school success "from cradle to career." Research suggests that family engagement promotes a range of benefits for students, including improved school readiness, higher student achievement, better social skills and behavior, and increased likelihood of high school graduation.[1] Policymakers, practitioners, and researchers also recognize family engagement as a critical intervention strategy that maximizes return on other investments in education. Early childhood education programs that have demonstrated significant short- and long-term benefits for children all have intensive family involvement components. Furthermore, investing in family engagement can be cost effective. For example, schools would have to spend $1,000 more per pupil to reap the same gains in student achievement that an involved parent brings.[2]

Even though it is clear that family engagement matters, less well understood is the role of school districts in promoting this engagement. This brief examines how school districts build systemic family engagement from cradle to career as a core education reform strategy to ensure that parents, educators, and administrators *share responsibility* for family engagement resulting in student success.[3] Shared responsibility requires parents to do their part to support their children's learning, from turning off the TV, to communicating with teachers about their children's progress, to checking (and sometimes helping with) homework, and more. But even though parents want the best for their children, many do not receive the information and support from school and district staff that they need to understand the importance of the parental role in children's education and how best to fulfill that role. Lack of school communication to parents is linked to lower levels of involvement, particularly in lower-performing schools,[4] and parents are more likely to engage when school personnel value, expect, and invite them to be involved.[5] Thus, a shared responsibility for family engagement also requires the commitment of school and district staff to reach out to parents in meaningful ways that help them support their children's academic achievement.

Given that district leadership and capacity building play a key role in supporting strategic and systemic family engagement, it is important to better understand what that leadership and capacity building looks like, how it can be developed and sustained, and how federal, state, and local policies can

support it. The purpose of this brief, then, is to distill promising practices from six districts that are actively working to develop the critical components of systemic family engagement and to examine the implications of their work for federal, state, and local policy.[6]

The core district-level components necessary for systemic family engagement are

- **Fostering district-wide strategies.** A key role of school districts in promoting family engagement is ensuring that is it part and parcel of supporting student learning. This includes superintendents and senior leadership linking family engagement to their district's instructional goals, the creation of an infrastructure that elevates and communicates about the importance of family engagement, and mechanisms to assess progress and performance along the way.

- **Building school capacity.** Districts can't do it alone; that's why districts help schools to understand the importance of, and strategies for, meaningfully engaging families. District-level resources and support enable schools to acquire the capacity to carry out family engagement in strategic ways that align with instructional goals. This happens through ongoing professional development and technical assistance for principals, teachers, and other "family-facing" staff in school buildings. It also includes programs and initiatives implemented by districts to help schools welcome and involve families in their child's learning.

- **Reaching out to and engaging families.** School districts reach out to families both directly and through partnerships to encourage them to have high expectations for their children's learning at school and at home, and to develop and share concrete strategies for engagement that supports student success. This happens through leadership development trainings, listening tours to gather input, and workshops that impart information and skills focused on student learning.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Data were obtained from six districts that all have core components of a systemic family engagement strategy in place; these data reveal that implementing these core components requires a commitment to a set of five best practices that ensure that family engagement efforts are interconnected and strategic across the various levels of a family engagement system at work. These promising practices are

1. **A shared vision of family engagement.** Districts, schools, and families share a broad understanding of family involvement that honors and supports each partner's role in supporting student learning—from the district's most senior administrators to classroom teachers and bus drivers. These school districts move beyond the traditional notion of family engagement, which focuses on parents attending events at the school, to recognizing that sometimes schools cannot "see," but can still support, one of the most important parts of family engagement: what happens at home.

2. **Purposeful connections to learning.** From the district's strategic plan and school improvement plans to parent–teacher conferences, these districts demonstrate an unyielding commitment to family engagement as a core instructional strategy, as opposed to an "add-on." Family engagement has the most impact when it is directly linked to learning.[7]

3. **Investments in high quality programming and staff.** These districts have made strategic use of limited resources, often adroitly piecing together multiple public and private funding streams to build and sustain their family engagement system at work. They hire charismatic leaders with expertise in

family involvement to staff family engagement offices and use volunteers. As opposed to "drive-by trainings" and cookie-cutter approaches, they adapt and build on events and models to implement an organizational, rather than individual, approach to professional development.[8]

4. **Robust communication systems.** Communication for family engagement is designed to cut across administrators in district offices and departments, school staff, and families and community members. These stakeholders reach out to one another to share information in reciprocal and meaningful ways to ensure they can make decisions and implement strategies effectively.

5. **Evaluation for accountability and continuous learning.** District family engagement staff recognize that data about family engagement are a lever for change but realize that they still have farther to go to develop meaningful indicators of their work and data systems. Evaluation efforts often hinge on persuading teachers, principals, and other district offices to take data collection related to family involvement seriously. Having the district-wide internal capacity not just to collect data but also to use it as information feeds into planning and improvement.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

If districts are to play a crucial role in supporting family engagement in the ways described above, they need the support of federal, state, and local policymakers. The districts informing this study, as well as research on family involvement systems, programs, and policies,[9] indicate that public policies to build stronger family engagement should

Create infrastructure for district-wide leadership for family engagement. School districts need the appropriate systems in place to develop, implement, and coordinate the five best practices described above. The districts profiled in this brief have a senior-level officer responsible for family engagement who often participates in the superintendent's leadership team. Incentives for creating these positions in other districts could be provided by federal and state funds. These district-level family engagement officers also need the staffing—from district-level specialists and trainers to school-level parent and community coordinators—to support family engagement systems at work.

To help build this district infrastructure, the federal government must maintain current investments in family engagement and offer additional resources through new stimulus funds or by increasing the percentage allocations for family engagement within Title I provisions. Furthermore, policymakers need to strategically allocate funds to schools and districts to ensure that there is sufficient oversight, capacity building, and quality control to support effective family engagement policies and practices at the school level.

Build capacity for family engagement through training and technical assistance. Districts devote significant time to creating training curricula, tool kits, materials, and other resources that can be replicated across schools and with families. But, across districts, there are limited opportunities to share lessons learned. District staff need the support of intermediaries, such as the state Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs), to facilitate the sharing of research and best practices, to coordinate family engagement with other reform initiatives, and to reduce duplication and maximize efficiency among investments.

More attention and resources are also needed to support preservice and in-service training for administrators, teachers, family–school coordinators, and other educators in family involvement and for collaborations with community organizations. Districts in this brief report that principals and teachers enter school buildings unprepared to understand the importance of, and develop effective strategies for, family engagement. Incentives to spur collaborations among districts and higher education institutions, as well as increased assistance from PIRCs, could help to build this capacity.

Ensure reporting, learning and accountability for family engagement. Across all the districts highlighted in this brief, there is widespread consensus that, although there are provisions for family engagement in federal legislation, particularly in Title I, expectations for accountability have been weak. District-level staff who coordinate family and community engagement call for more proactive monitoring to ensure compliance with family engagement provisions across the educational system.

Many of the districts described in this brief have integrated family engagement into performance evaluations of principal or teacher effectiveness but note that it is challenging to give these measures "teeth" without clear expectations across other levels of the education system. To help hold schools accountable, districts need clear buy-in and guidance from states on required measures for family involvement and more monitoring of those that do exist. In turn, states need a clear definition and strategy for family involvement, including key standards for quality, from federal policy for family engagement.

Help districts understand, design, and implement strong evaluation strategies. One of the most effective messages district leaders of family engagement efforts can share with their superintendents, central administrators, and local boards of education is that family involvement *matters* for student achievement. However, many districts are struggling to develop an evaluation strategy that assesses the impact of their family involvement efforts and need support in capturing the important intermediary outcomes that then lead to positive student achievement. Policies can provide technical assistance to districts to help them build robust, yet realistic, evaluation plans for their family involvement systems at work.

A first step is capitalizing on some emerging promising practices and sharing those lessons with the field. For example, some districts have developed particularly innovative theories of change that capture the complexity of how family engagement can impact an entire educational system. These districts have moved beyond counting heads to assessing differences in behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes among parents and school staff, from changes in school culture to changes in parenting skills at home.

Federal Way Public Schools, Washington

Community and district concerns about educational inequity have led to the creation of a Family Partnership Office, through which parents have greater access to the educational system and opportunities to advocate for their children. Promoting parent leaders to shape family engagement activities is a key district strategy.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SYSTEMS AT WORK

Fostering district-wide strategies

District office. A district office promotes a consistent and integrated approach to family engagement. A Family Partnership Advocate (FPA), who coordinates district wide family engagement activities, heads

the Family Partnership Office. The FPA participates in weekly meetings with the assistant superintendents and the curriculum director to discuss the district's overall goals and strategies to enhance student learning. These meetings embed family engagement in district activities so that it is not treated or seen an "add-on."

District Parent Committee. The FPA relies on a district-level committee, made up of mostly parents and some teachers, to perform key functions. Parents from the district-level committee help shape the annual performance goals of the Family Partnership Office, create the agenda for parent meetings and training and assist the schools in their efforts to communicate with families. This district-level committee models what parent partnership should look like at the school level.

Accountability meetings. District accountability for family engagement begins with the FPA and district parent committee setting annual performance goals for parent participation in district and school family engagement activities. The FPA and the superintendent hold quarterly meetings for accountability and improvement, during which school staff members and parents discuss the status of the district's efforts to engage families and how such activities connect to student learning. Parents, community members and school personnel ask questions and provide feedback on how well the district's current strategies are working. These meetings reach a high number of minority parents, many of whom become connected to their children's school because of their experiences with the FPA's office. After each meeting, the FPA creates a summary report that is shared with school personnel, families, and community members.

Building school capacity

Professional development. The FPA's office emphasizes professional development across the district and provides training for *all* employees, from bus drivers to principals, to ensure that parents feel welcomed and *needed* as partners in enhancing their children's learning. The FPA is a member of a succession committee that trains teachers who aspire to be principals, and this ensures that prospective school leaders have a core level of knowledge about family engagement.

Reaching out to and engaging families

Parent leadership institute. Through a series of workshops developed by the FPA and district-level parent committee, parents exchange ideas and strategies to effectively advocate for their children's school success. The parent advocate workshop helps parents understand their children's strengths and interests, and gain skills on becoming effective communicators. Parents learn how to guide their children to educational success from kindergarten to college. They develop one-page support plans to use as a resource for communicating with teachers and counselors. This workshop serves as the first step toward parents taking leadership roles in the district.

Family–school communication. Schools conduct "What Every Parent Wants to Know" workshops, at which parents are invited to ask questions of teachers and administrators. The workshops impress upon parents the importance of their roles in children's education and provide concrete examples of how parents can support their children's academic progress. Parents and school staff members can request these workshops, which are jointly led by a parent and the school principal, at any time during the school year, either at the school or in a community location of the parent's choosing.

Evaluation planning. The FPA is in the process of creating an enhanced metric to measure parents' growth as they participate in workshops and other activities. It is expected that by the 2009–2010 academic year pre- and post-tests will be administered to measure the growth in parents' ability to become more effective partners in their children's learning.

LESSONS LEARNED

Engaging parents as partners requires providing a range of meaningful opportunities for involvement. Federal Way has brought together families and communities to actively participate in developing family engagement at the district and school levels. Parents have meaningful input into the functions of the district office, the roles of school committees, and the district's yearly family engagement goals, activities and performance measures. Through workshops that focus on academic success, parents learn to advocate for their children and to create action steps that support learning.

Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland

Prince George's County School District's current family engagement efforts grew out the Comer School Development Program, which started as independent school-based efforts and eventually expanded to a district-wide focus. The district is particularly strong, especially among fathers, at creating "demand parents,"[10] who can navigate the educational system and demand the best from the schools that serve their children.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SYSTEMS AT WORK

Fostering district-wide strategies

Superintendent leadership. In 2000, the superintendent established the Department of Family and Community Outreach (DFCO) and charged its director with monitoring all of the family outreach activities in the district. The current superintendent has also participated in regular meetings and discussions with DFCO staff.

Data tracking. The DFCO tracks the number of families that participate in district-wide events, as well as whether it is their first time participating, and has used these data to assess the effectiveness of its outreach. For example, the first time the district held a welcoming event, 500 parents attended. This number increased to 8,000 the following year and 20,000 this past year. The DFCO also looks at Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) reports and has found that schools with higher family participation rates have shown greater gains in AYP. Lastly, the DFCO surveys school staff members to find out what family engagement means to them, and will use these data to inform planning and improvement.

Performance management. Family engagement is a required element of each school's improvement plan, and there are currently discussions about the possibility of including principals' efforts in this area as part of their annual performance evaluations. The DFCO believes that this accountability, coupled with ongoing training, is critical to changing school culture.

Building school capacity

School-based parent liaisons. The DFCO indirectly supervises and provides training and technical assistance to parent liaisons through monthly meetings and professional development. These liaisons have a deep knowledge of the teachers, students, and community the school serves and help tailor the school's efforts to meet the needs of those constituents. Their presence also keeps family engagement "on the radar" of principals and teachers and give manpower to data collection efforts for family engagement. Due to budget cuts this past academic year, over half of the parent liaison positions were eliminated, but the DFCO plans to work with the remaining 80 or so liaisons to restructure their work.

Professional development. Internal professional development plays a major role in the district's family engagement plans. The DFCO created a professional development curriculum for new teachers that focuses on creating meaningful school–home communication. In addition, the DFCO conducts training with principals and teachers to drive home the importance of family engagement and demonstrate how schools can extend meaningful invitations to parents to participate in school-related activities.

Reaching out to and engaging families

Parent Academies. As part of its efforts to create demand parents, the district is currently partnering with various community organizations to develop a series of Parent Academies across the county. These academies will provide parent education on topics such as financial literacy and ESL classes, helping to strengthen parents' overall functioning and give them the skills to advocate for their children's needs. Course offerings will be developed based on the specific needs of, and input from, the communities in which the academies are located.

Father involvement. In 2007, the district launched a highly successful male role model initiative aimed at increasing the number of fathers and other male parent figures involved with the school. Starting at first as the "Men Make a Difference Day," this initiative seeks to make fathers feel invited and needed in supporting their child's learning. The initiative couples fathers' classroom observations with additional tips and tools, such as checking their children's backpacks for homework at home and providing suggested questions to ask their children about their peer group. In the 2008–2009 school year alone, the district logged over 70,000 instances of fathers' involvement in nonsports-related events.

Communication and outreach. The DFCO does not assume that any one method of information dissemination will reach all, or even most, of its families. It therefore engages in a number of outreach efforts to share information. This includes grassroots efforts, such as making phone calls and visiting community gathering places, as well as using technology and mass media, such as creating radio messages and hosting a family engagement blog.

LESSONS LEARNED

Prince George's County has been effective at getting buy-in from, in their words, "everyone in the system." Family engagement is not just the DFCO's responsibility but is spread across all the work of the district. The superintendent has set priorities that include family engagement and has modeled an approach that considers parents as partners, not problems.

Another important part of a family engagement strategy is connecting family members with one another.Through all of its events and communications to families, the district actively tries to connect family members, particularly fathers, with one another. This has helped create "repeat customers" and a sense of unity among parents who would otherwise be isolated or disconnected.

Wichita Public Schools, Kansas

Recognizing that family engagement efforts were tied to the commitment of specific individuals rather than integrated into school culture, the Wichita district decided to systematize its efforts to better engage with families. Professional development is a key strategy.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SYSTEMS AT WORK

Fostering district-wide strategies

District oversight. A Parent Teacher Resources Supervisor works with the Title I director, assistant superintendents, and the division director of professional development to ensure that family engagement is embedded into the district work. For example, the Parent Teacher Resources Supervisor helped show central office administrators the value of family involvement by piloting the inclusion of family engagement measures in a subset of elementary school principal performance evaluations. Family engagement continues to be part of the elementary school principals' goals that they work toward each year.

Building school capacity

Professional development. The district sponsors a wide variety of professional development activities for all levels of district and school personnel. Beginning in July 2007, Title I parent liaisons have offered professional development across the district, moving away from one-time training events to ongoing discussion about family involvement with teachers, principals, and instructional coaches. In addition, every school receives a family engagement grant for training sessions that facilitate home–school connections. The district also reaches out to national experts in family engagement to provide workshops for school staff. The information from these workshops is converted into a user-friendly binder to help facilitate additional in-service training opportunities throughout the year.

School-based family engagement teams. Schools identify a staff member to serve as a family engagement resource person. This staff member receives family involvement training and meets monthly with the Parent Teacher Resources Supervisor and Title I liaisons. The school-based resource people are responsible for developing family engagement teams at their home schools and imparting the information they receive at district-wide professional development trainings to the teams. Through these teams, not only do the school-based resource people help build capacity for family engagement, but they also help teachers, principals, and other staff see the value of family involvement and take ownership for improving their own school culture.

Data coaches. The district distributes an annual parent satisfaction and school climate survey and is working with district-wide data coaches to help schools use this information in their planning and improvement. This entails sorting through survey data to generate short- and long-term goals that each school will address, as well as additional information schools need from families and community members.

Reaching out to and engaging families

Building relationships with families. School-level family engagement teams help organize "porch visits," during which school staff visit students' homes prior to the beginning of the school year. The visits serve to let staff members, who are trained with a family involvement curriculum, to introduce themselves to families and make them feel welcome as members of the school community. In the 2008–2009 academic year, all 80 elementary schools and most of the middle schools participated in this visitation program. One middle school team visited 900 families. The district will be expanding this model to the high school level.

Communicating with families. Using multiple communication channels, the district provides parents with information about opportunities for involvement, tips for communicating with teachers, and school policies. To provide timely and accessible information, the district launched an automated service called *Parent Link* that connects schools with parents and keeps them informed through phone and email. The information includes emergency information, school announcements, and attendance. The district calendar and basic school information is offered in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Through its TV channel, the district produces a program called *Parent Talk*, which offers streaming video clips on topics such as parenting, the new math curriculum, and understanding school performance data.

LESSONS LEARNED

The creation of a district-level department, funded to carry out family engagement development activities, ensures a consistent level of quality and commitment across all the schools in the district. This structure facilitates school-based staff members' access to training and resources, as well as the dissemination of promising practices such as "porch visits" to develop relationships with families.

Boston Public Schools, Massachusetts

The Assistant Superintendent for Family and Student Engagement in the Boston Public Schools recently engaged in a redesign of the Office of Family and Student Engagement (OFSE), focusing on creating a vision of family engagement for the district and defining the OFSE's role in leading the district's family engagement work. Deciding that its role was not to *direct* engagement efforts, but rather to build the district's capacity to support schools' engagement efforts, the OFSE began to focus on capacity building rather than direct services to parents.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SYSTEMS AT WORK

Fostering district-wide strategies

District leadership. As part of the superintendent's cabinet, the Assistant Superintendent of the OFSE sits at the table with the academic superintendents, who oversee the principals in the district. The district has adopted a multipronged approach to embed family engagement in the educational system. It markets family engagement as a district-wide strategy for improving student outcomes through increased attendance, decreased suspension rates, and other indicators linked to student achievement. It requires all content-area staff members to address how they involve families in their instructional practices. Curriculum development work includes tools to help parents understand the content issues their children need to master on a grade-by-grade basis. The district also invites participation by family engagement staff members in its conversations about how to increase students' literacy development. As a result, the academic superintendents and principals have increased their use of the OFSE's resources, indicating widespread buy-in at the top levels of district leadership.

Building school capacity

Professional development. The OFSE is working with the district's professional development institute to better the district's training for principals and other school staff with the district's modification of the National PTA® standards, which will be included in the district's blueprint. As of August 2009, the OFSE will provide principals with professional development linking instruction to family engagement, since family engagement strategies will be among the goals principals are working towards during the 2009–2010 school year. The district is also developing a new protocol for teachers to use when conducting home visits, which will be piloted during the upcoming year.

Family and Community Outreach Coordinators. School-based Family and Community Outreach Coordinators (FCOCs) focus on building relationships between schools and families and help develop schools' capacities to authentically engage families. FCOCs are responsible for developing family engagement action teams at their schools and creating family engagement activities that link engagement to student learning. FCOCs also participate in professional development put on by the OFSE, aligned around a set of core competencies aimed at infrastructure development to help schools carry out family engagement.

Reaching out to and engaging families

Development of Parent University. Building on the experience of one of its community's efforts to provide parent education, the district is developing a comprehensive Parent University program, which will be phased in next year over the course of three sessions. The Parent University will house all of the district's parent education efforts, such as its 10-week literacy program, ELL curriculum, and math handbook for parents. Parents will earn credits for participating in Parent University-sponsored classes, and can graduate after earning 9 credits (after 12 credits, they'll be able to graduate with honors). The district is holding focus groups with parents to find out what parents would like to learn from such classes; this feedback, as well as input and resources from community coalitions, will influence the development of course offerings. The district plans to track participation in Parent University classes and other workshops by using the student identification numbers of the children whose parents attend. These data will provide the district with detailed information on how well they're reaching parents from different racial/ethnic groups, ELL categories, and income levels. The district has set a target for all schools to achieve at least 10% participation in Parent University-sponsored classes by the end of the 2009–2010 school year.

LESSONS LEARNED

Districts need to put forth a clear definition of family engagement and what it means for the district's school improvement efforts. If the district creates a family engagement office, it needs to be clear about that office's role in relation to the district's overall vision. Family engagement must be part of who the district *is*, not just what it *does*. In addition, district-level staff members should be facilitators of family engagement efforts, rather than purveyors of it. One of the district office's most important roles is helping schools build their own capacities to develop and carry out meaningful family engagement activities, so that schools do not rely solely on district-level mechanisms to carry out this work on their behalf.

Oakland Unified School District, California

Just over two years ago, Oakland Unified School District created the Family and Community Office (FCO) to oversee a variety of processes related to families across the district, including family engagement. Despite some challenging budgetary conditions, the district has developed a number of innovative approaches to family involvement.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SYSTEMS AT WORK

Fostering District-wide Strategies

District leadership. Initially, a Chief of Community Accountability worked alongside the Chief Academic Officer to integrate family engagement into the academic work of the district, including building the capacity of middle management to understand the importance of family involvement and help embed it into principal evaluations. In early 2009, however, a severe budget shortfall forced the district to cut this

position. Family engagement efforts are currently developed, implemented, and managed by an Engagement Unit within the Family and Community Engagement Office.

Connection to district priorities. The Engagement Unit has connected its family involvement work to the district's goal of reducing truancy and chronic absenteeism. With the help of a consultant, the district has produced a report on how schools and families can work together to improve student attendance. It has also provided professional development to parent–community liaisons and principals about how to involve families in monitoring and improving student attendance.

Complementary learning. Oakland Unified School District has a Complementary Learning Department (CLD) that works to align mental health services, after school programming, early childhood education, and health services across the district. The Engagement Unit is beginning to support CLD's cross-cutting work with families. For example, after school supervisors across the district will receive training on how to engage families in out-of-school time.

Building School Capacity

High school innovations. One of the Engagement Unit's parent centers recently provided leadership and technical assistance in helping a local high school host a parent observation day. Through ongoing coaching, the family liaison was able to assist the principal and teachers in understanding that the event would help foster trust and engagement, rather than the creation of more work for them. Working with the family liaison, the African American parent group used a variety of strategies to spread the word about the event. Once other schools saw the success of this event, they began hosting similar events in their own buildings.

Rubrics for learning. Together with the former Chief of Community Accountability and a researcher with the Department of Research and Assessment, the Engagement Unit has developed a rubric for family engagement that schools can use to self-assess the quality of their family involvement strategies. This self-assessment includes descriptions of a continuum of increased sustainability in the areas of learning, leadership, advocacy, and systems. Schools that receive training were provided with examples, tips, and tools to promote and improve their family engagement strategies.

Reaching out to and engaging families

Soliciting input. Each year, the district administers a "Use your Voice" survey and school score card to families to foster accountability and assess community perceptions around school quality. Each year, over 30,000 community members and parents complete the survey. In turn, the district analyzes the information to feed into ongoing planning and improvement strategies at the district and school levels.

Parent leadership. The Engagement Unit offers a variety of classes to help parents become advocates for their children. For example, the district has a nine-week class called "I Am Here and Ready to Learn" to build parents' capacity to understand how to support their children's learning at home and to partner with the school to advocate for their children's academic achievement.

LESSONS LEARNED

Having a senior-level position responsible for family engagement that is part of the superintendent's cabinet gives family involvement credibility as a fundamental instructional strategy and allows the district to build capacity for family involvement across all of its work, rather than "outsourcing" it to one office. Districts without such a position have to use a bottom-up approach to family involvement. Lacking such a position, family engagement strategies tend to be located only in schools that already see its value but tend not to spread across the district as a whole. Another successful strategy employed in Oakland is using compliance with federal legislation and lawsuit resolutions to unhook access to other district departments and initiatives.

St. Paul Public Schools, Minnesota

Recognizing that many of its students' families are unfamiliar with the public school system, the district involves families in understanding how they can support their children's learning and prepare them for college. Parent outreach, surveys, and dialogue keep the district responsive to parent perspectives.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SYSTEMS AT WORK

Fostering district-wide strategies

District coordination. The Family and Community Involvement Coordinator (FCIC) heads a district-level steering committee to ensure that the district's family engagement plan is implemented. The FCIC coordinates communication with parent advisory committees, such as the special education, early childhood, and other interest group-specific advisory committees. Currently, the district is in the process of developing a centralized Office of Family and Community Engagement to standardize training, communication, and other family engagement activities across the district. The development of the office is being funded with stimulus dollars and resources from other district offices.

Building school capacity

Shared learning. The FCIC leads a group of school-based family engagement staff members in monthly meetings that allow them to share their practices and learn from one another. The staff members take what they have learned to their own schools and implement the strategies with teachers and other staff. In addition, the FCIC works with individual schools to enhance their parent outreach efforts, such as training teachers on how to use educational materials specifically created for parents.

Parent-to-parent innovation. The FCIC helps schools identify and apply for grants that can build school innovation and, based on lessons learned, eventually become district-wide practice. The principal of one elementary school, for example, worked with the FCIC to secure a grant to develop a parent cohort model that focused on engaging families by grade, rather than at the school-level, so that parents could connect with each other, share resources, and engage with the school via their shared experiences (their children being friends, having the same teacher, etc.). The principal created activities, specific to each grade level to help families become more acquainted with the school's curriculum and its expectations for students.

Today, the school holds events several times during the school year at which parents have the opportunity to get to know one another, talk to teachers about the curriculum, review classroom lessons, and then go into a classroom and actually practice teaching a lesson to a small group of students. The school has created a user-friendly collection of forms, lessons, and other resources in order to facilitate the spread of this cohort model across the district.

Reaching out to and engaging families

Parent outreach. Due to the plurality of languages spoken by students' families and varying levels of family literacy, the district realized that written communication was not the best way to reach its families. The district uses alternate ways of communicating with families by hosting community-based forums, reaching out to housing programs and making videos to distribute to families. The district also partners with neighborhood parent groups to ensure parents are aware of state standards and other critical information.

Responsiveness to parents. The district conducts parent surveys and focus groups to assess its progress in helping families support their children's learning. Working with a nonprofit organization, the district created a parent survey with question items that were directly linked to the district's strategic plan. The district surveyed a random sample of parents, allowing it to generalize the survey findings to the community as a whole. The survey results help guide the district in its overall school improvement activities. Results from the 2008 survey helped build the case for a centralized office of Family and Community Engagement.

Parent dialogues. The district is implementing a Latino Consent Decree that requires the district to meet regularly with a parent and community group. The parents meet with superintendent's office to discuss educational issues, such as attendance and testing, and to make recommendations to the school board. The district is required to respond formally to these recommendations. Parents also take the responsibility to share district information with those who are unable to attend the meetings. The success of this model of family–school communication has led to its expansion to other parent groups.

LESSONS LEARNED

The district's role is to establish a vision and goals for family engagement and then monitor what schools are doing to achieve those goals. Because schools have different needs depending on the communities they serve, districts need to allow schools to tailor their activities and to innovate creative programs. This is where the role of a district coordinator becomes critical. The coordinator can help schools translate the district's overall family engagement goals into a set of strategies that address their specific community needs and resources.

Appendix: Overview of Six School Districts Profiled

District Data (2008)				
	Number of Schools	**Enrollment**	**Students by Race/Ethnicity**	**Free/Reduced Price Meals**
Boston, MA	143	56,530	39% Black 37% Hispanic 13% White 9% Asian 2% Other	72%
Federal Way, WA	37	22,178	45.9% White 17.6%Hispanic 15.3 % Asian 13.3% Black 2.4% Pac. Island 1.3% Am. Indian	44%
Oakland, CA	141	38,852	37% Black 34% Hispanic 16% Asian 7% White 4% Other 1% Pac. Island 1% Am. Indian	64%*
Prince George's County, MD	206	128,017	74.2% Black 17.4% Hispanic 5.1% White 2.9% Asian .4% Am. Indian	48%
St. Paul, MN	65	38,469	30% Black 30% Asian 25% White 14% Hispanic 2% Am. Indian	69%
Wichita, KS	85 (+ 16 special programs)	49,146	38% White 24% Hispanic 20% Black 10% Multi-Racial 5% Asian 3% Am. Indian	48%*

* FRPM data from Wichita, KS, and Oakland, CA, are from 2007.

(Endnotes)

1 For a discussion of the benefits of family engagement at different developmental stages, please see Harvard Family Research Project's *Family Involvement Makes a Difference* series at www.hfrp.org/FamilyInvolvementMakesADifference; Dearing, E., McCartney, K., Weiss, H. B., Kreider, H., & Simpkins, S. (2004). The promotive effects of family educational involvement for low-income children's literacy. *Journal of School Psychology*, 42, 445–460.

2 Houtenville, A. J. & Conway, K. S. (2008). Parental effort, school resources, and student achievement. *Journal of Human Resources*, 43(2), 437–453.

3 Bouffard, S. (Ed.). (2008). Building the future of family involvement. *The Evaluation Exchange*, 14(1 & 2).

4 Bridgeland, J. M., Dilulio, J. J., Streeter, R. T., & Mason, J. R. (2008). *One dream, two realities: Perspectives of parents on America's high schools.* Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises, LLC.

5 Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., Sandler, H., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. L., et al. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(2), 105–130.

6 Information for this brief was generated through 13 interviews with district-level family engagement coordinators, superintendents, principals, parents, and school board members in six districts. This information was triangulated with secondary information from Web scans and supporting documents sent by interviewees.

7 Henderson, A. T., Johnson, V. R., Mapp, K. L., & Davies, D. (2007). Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family–school partnerships. New York: The New Press; Childress, S., Elmore, R., Grossman, A. S., & King, C. (2007). *Note on the PELP Coherence Framework.* Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.

8 Weiss, H., Klein, L., Little, P., Lopez, M. E., Rothert, C., Kreider, H., et al. (2005). Pathways from workforce development to child outcomes. *The Evaluation Exchange*, 11(4), 2–4.

9 The National Family, School, and Community Engagement Working Group. (2009). *Recommendations for federal policy.* Available at www.hfrp.org; Weiss, H., & Stephen, N. (in press). From periphery to center: A new vision for family, school, and community partnerships. In Christiansen S. & Reschley, A. (Eds.), *Handbook on School–Family Partnerships.* New York: Routledge.

10 Crew, R. with Thomas, D. (2007). *Only connect: The way to save our schools.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

About Harvard Family Research Project:

Since 1983, Harvard Family Research Project has helped stakeholders develop and evaluate strategies to promote the well-being of children, youth, families, and their communities. We work primarily within three areas that support children's learning and development—early childhood education, out-of-school time programming, and family and community support in education. Underpinning all of our work is a commitment to evaluation for strategic decision making, learning, and accountability.

Building on our knowledge that schools cannot do it alone, we also focus national attention on complementary learning. Complementary learning is the idea that a systemic approach, which integrates school and nonschool supports, can better ensure that all children have the skills they need to succeed.

Harvard Family Research Project
Harvard Graduate School of Education
3 Garden St.
Cambridge, MA 02138
495-9108
www.hfrp.org

About National PTA®:

Founded in 1897, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is comprised of more than five million members, including parents, students, educators, school administrators, and community leaders. With more than 25,000 local units, PTA flourishes in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Department of Defense schools in Europe and the Pacific.

As the oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy association in the United States, PTA's legacy of influencing federal policy to protect the education, health, and overall well-being of children has made an indelible impact in the lives of millions of children and families. Visit PTA.org for more information.

PTA National Headquarters
541 N Fairbanks Court, Suite 1300
Chicago, IL 60611-3396
Toll-Free: (800) 307-4PTA (4782)
Fax: (312) 670-6783
www.pta.org

PTA Office of Public Policy
1400 L Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005-9998
Phone: (202) 289-6790
Fax: (202) 289-6791

Harvard Family
Research Project

PTA Takes Action

Harvard Family Research Project

Data Collection Instruments for Evaluating Family Involvement

Helen Westmoreland, Research Analyst
Suzanne Bouffard, Project Manager
Kelley O'Carroll, Graduate Research Assistant
Heidi Rosenberg, Senior Research Analyst

May 2009

For questions or comments about this paper,
email hfrp_pubs@gse.harvard.edu

Harvard Family Research Project · Harvard Graduate School of Education · 3 Garden Street · Cambridge, MA · 02138
www.hfrp.org · Email: hfrp_pubs@gse.harvard.edu · Tel: 617-495-9108 · Fax: 617-495-8594

Overview of This Resource

As evidence supporting the benefits of family involvement in learning mounts, there is an increasing demand for evaluation of family involvement initiatives and for additional research to inform practice and policy. Those designing and implementing family involvement programs must be responsive to calls to bolster the quality of the evidence base in the family involvement field by injecting rigorous methods into their evaluation. Many stakeholders, however, find it difficult to identify and locate tools and resources that support rigorous family involvement evaluations. In order to assess family involvement interventions in a high-quality way, family involvement leaders, school administrators, policymakers, and researchers need information about and access to evaluation tools—particularly standardized instruments for collecting data on family involvement practices.

We at Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) developed this resource as part of our ongoing effort to help practitioners and researchers collect and use data for continuous improvement. Produced in response to calls from within the family involvement field, *Data Collection Instrucments for Evaluating Family Involvement* provides stakeholders with some commonly used and standardized data collection instruments on family involvement. This resource can help stakeholders learn about and choose rigorous family involvement instruments to assess impact and ensure quality. By reviewing these and other instruments, program and policy leaders can also think about which measures are most appropriate for their work and how to adapt or develop tools to assess it.

What Is Family Involvement?

In order to use these or other tools to evaluate family involvement efforts, stakeholders first must define for themselves what they mean by "family involvement." We at HFRP believe that family involvement is a core component of a complementary learning system, in which an array of school and nonschool supports complement one another to create an integrated set of community-wide resources that support learning and development from birth to young adulthood. In such a system, family involvement is one of several pathways for supporting young people in the many places and contexts in which they grow and learn. Three elements in particular combine to form a pathway of interactive and ongoing family involvement:

- First, family involvement is a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and in which families are committed to actively supporting their children's learning and development.

- Second, family involvement is continuous across a child's life and entails an enduring commitment but changing parent roles as children mature from birth to young adulthood.

- Third, effective family involvement cuts across and reinforces learning in the multiple settings where children learn—at home, in prekindergarten programs, in school, in after school programs, in faith-based institutions, and in the community.

Indeed, this resource recognizes that family involvement is the shared responsibility of parents, educators, program staff, community members, and many others and highlights family involvement as a continuous part of child development. As such, it includes data collection instruments designed to assess family involvement from multiple perspectives, including those of families, educators, and children. In addition, the tables below provide information, when available, on the applicability of different instruments across age ranges to aid in evaluating family involvement across the developmental spectrum. Designed to help assess a variety of family involvement practices, programs, and initiatives, the instruments included here focus on family involvement in learning, including family–school communication and relationships, families' encouragement of learning in the home, and families' feelings of self-efficacy.[1]

Instruments Included in This Resource

A wide range of sources provided the information summarized in these tables. We identified the data collection instruments included here through seminal research studies, Web-based searches, evaluations conducted by the federally funded Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs), and recommendations from the field. In selecting instruments for this resource, we focused on those which collect quantitative data and have been piloted and tested for reliability and/or validity, and that can be readily obtained and used for program and policy evaluations and research studies.

This resource is not designed to be a comprehensive listing of family involvement assessment tools but rather a sampling of validated instruments.[2] Although many other data collection tools—for example, checklists, assessment rubrics, and qualitative interview protocols—are available and often used by schools and communities, they are beyond the scope of this resource.

Share Your Thoughts and Resources!

Harvard Family Research Project plans to update this resource periodically to include additional validated instruments. We invite you to share information about other validated quantitative data collection instruments with us by emailing Hfine@gse.harvard.eduH.

How to Use This Resource

Because family involvement is a responsibility shared by many individuals in a child's life, we have organized this resource according to the role of the individual expected to respond to the instrument profiled—that is, parents and other family members, children, and school staff. Instruments that can be used with multiple stakeholders are included in all appropriate tables.

The table includes the following information about each data collection instrument:

- **Instrument** includes the title of the data collection instrument and who developed it.
- **Brief description** describes what the instrument measures, including specific constructs for family involvement.
- **Administered to** lists the types of people whose behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes are assessed by the instrument.
- **Original test population** describes the populations in which the instrument was tested for validity and/or reliability.
- **Measure structure** outlines how the instrument is formatted, including length and type of questions.
- **Availability** tells you where to look for more information about or to obtain the instrument.

Selecting an Evaluation Instrument

Not every family involvement program or initiative uses evaluation for the same reasons. The instruments listed in the tables below serve a range of evaluation purposes, from measuring parental motivation for involvement and teacher outreach to school-sponsored involvement activities. As you consider your evaluation needs and select instruments to assess your program's activities, we encourage you to consider the following issues:

- ***Alignment of program objectives with evaluation instrument.*** Given its different measures, will the evaluation instrument you selected yield useful information about how well your program is meeting its own particular objectives?

- ***Applicability to respondents.*** If your respondents differ from the population in which the instrument was tested for validity and/or reliability, how will this influence your interpretation of evaluation results? Is the format and language of the instrument conducive to the way you are currently engaging with parents, teachers, and others to whom you might administer the instrument?

- ***Human and financial costs.*** Will you need to invest resources in building capacity—in expertise or in time—to collect, analyze, or use data that will be harvested from the instrument?

These are just a few of the important considerations you will need to consider to select the most appropriate evaluation instrument for your target population and help enhance the validity and usefulness of the information you obtain about your program's efforts. With these considerations

in mind, you can use the information in this resource to find data collection instruments that align with the goals of your programs, policies, and studies.

This resource is intended to provide options for data collection and is not an endorsement of any of the specific instruments. Technical assistance or consultation with professional evaluators may be necessary before selecting or utilizing the instruments.

Family Involvement Instruments With Parents and Other Family Members as Respondents					
Instrument	**Brief Description**	**Administered To**	**Original Test Population**	**Measure Structure**	**Availability**
Family–School Partnership Lab Scales: Parent and Student Questionnaires[3] (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler)	The Family–School Partnership Lab Scales measure three levels of parent involvement: • Level 1 – parent-reported personal motivators for involvement, perceptions of invitations to be involved, and perceived life context • Level 2 – parent-reported types of involvement (home based and school based) as well as report of mechanisms to be involved (also includes student outcomes) • Level 3 – student perceptions of parent involvement	Parents	Parents of children in kindergarten through sixth grade Students in fourth through sixth grade	Parent questionnaire has 116 items. Student questionnaire has 49 items. Available in English and Spanish	Available in[4]: Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2005). *Final performance report for OERI Grant # R305T010673: The social context of parental involvement: A path to enhanced achievement.* Presented to Project Monitor, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, March 22, 2005. http://www.vanderbilt.edu/Peabody/family-school/scaledescriptions.html (Please review authors' Statement of Use for citation instructions when using these scales.)
Parent and School Survey (PASS) (Ringenberger, Funk, Mullen, Wilford, and Kramer)	Measures six dimensions of family involvement (adapted from typology from the National Network of Partnership Schools): • Parenting – home environment conducive to learning • Communicating – home–school communication about child's academic issues • Volunteering – activities in the school and classroom • Learning at home – help and encouragement with school work • Decision making – involvement with governance and shaping policies/practices at school • Collaborating with the community – parent knowledge and use of community resources for learning	Parents	Parents of children in kindergarten through sixth grade Largely middle-class and White settings 82.5% females	Two sections: 24 items about parent involvement behaviors and beliefs on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) 6 items about level of difficulty certain barriers present to involvement on a 3-point Likert scale (a lot to not an issue)	Available in: Ringenberg, M., Funk, V., Mullen, K., Wilford, A., & Kramer, J. (2005). Test-Retest Reliability of the Parent And School Survey (PASS). *The School Community Journal, 15*(2), 121–134. http://www.adi.org/journal/fw05/RingenbergFunkMullenWilfordKramerFall2005.pdf

Family Involvement Instruments With Parents and Other Family Members as Respondents					
Instrument	**Brief Description**	**Administered To**	**Original Test Population**	**Measure Structure**	**Availability**
Parent as a Teacher Inventory (PAAT) (Strom and Strom)	PAAT uses a composite attitude scale to help mothers and fathers of preschool and primary grade children recognize their favorable qualities and identify realms in which they need further personal growth. PAAT measures parents' feelings about: • Creativity • Frustration • Control • Play • Teaching/learning	Parents	Parents of children ages 3 to 9 Information about the validation sample is available in the manual	50 items that survey parents about their understanding of five aspects of the parent–child interactive system	Starter set: $58.95 (1 inventory manual, 20 inventory/identification booklets, and 20 comparison profiles); sample set: $20.90 (1 of each item). Available for purchase at: http://ststesting.com/FI.html Available in English and Spanish from the publisher. Also available from the author in Arabic, Bengali, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Hopi, Japanese, Kannada, Mandarin, Malay, Navajo, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Sinhalese, and Turkish.
Parent Education Profile (PEP) (Dwyer)	The PEP framework has four scales related to children's literacy development: • Parent's Support for Children's Learning in the Home • Parent's Role in Interactive Literacy Activities • Parent's Role in Supporting Child's Learning in Formal Educational Settings • Taking on the Parent Role Within each scale are subscales and levels that describe a progression of the parent's development in understanding and using skills connected to that scale.	Parents	Parents of infants and children through age 8	Ratings are based on a rubric or developmental levels from least supportive (level 1) to most supportive (level 5) of literacy outcomes Ratings based on observations, interviews, and written journals	Administrator's Guide to Parent Education Profiles (PEP) and PEP Scales: $30. Available from: RMC Research Corporation 1000 Market Street Portsmouth, NH 03801 kkressley@rmcres.com 1-800-258-0802 Available in English and Spanish

Family Involvement Instruments With Parents and Other Family Members as Respondents					
Instrument	**Brief Description**	**Administered To**	**Original Test Population**	**Measure Structure**	**Availability**
Parent Efficacy scales[5] (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie)	The Parent Efficacy scales assess parent efficacy through measures for parent perseverance, general ability to influence children's school outcomes and specific effectiveness in influencing children's school learning. There are two forms available: • Parent Perceptions of Parent Efficacy (PPPE) • Teacher Perceptions of Parent Efficacy (TPPE)	Parents	Parents in a large middle-class public school district Predominantly White parents with elementary school children	Items scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree) Possible total scores for PPPE range from 12 to 60 Possible total scores for TPPE range from 7 to 35	Available in: Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2005). *Final performance report for OERI Grant # R305T010673: The social context of parental involvement: A path to enhanced achievement.* Presented to Project Monitor, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, March 22, 2005. http://www.vanderbilt.edu/Peabody/family-school/Reports.html See Final Report Part B (Please review authors' Statement of Use for citation instructions when using these scales.)

Family Involvement Instruments With Parents and Other Family Members as Respondents					
Instrument	**Brief Description**	**Administered To**	**Original Test Population**	**Measure Structure**	**Availability**
Parent Involvement At Home (PIH) **Parent Involvement at School (PISC)** **Parent Perceived Teacher Outreach (PPTO)** (Patrikakou and Weissberg)	There are three parts to this series: • PIH – Investigates various kinds of parent practices that contribute to the enhancement of academic and social development, such as making sure child has a quiet place to do homework and checking child's homework. • PISC – Measures various ways in which parents are involved in their children's education at school. Items on this scale measured parent participation in both policy-dictated activities (e.g., picking up child's report card) and in voluntary activities (e.g., volunteering in child's classroom). • PPTO – Measures the parent's perceptions of various teacher outreach behaviors and practices that encourage and reinforce parent involvement. Contains items on the perception of both the climate that the teacher creates for parents (e.g., does your child's teacher share information with you in a positive way?) and the level of information the teacher relays to parents (e.g., does the teacher tell you specific ways that you could help your child do better?).	Parents	Inner-city schools in the Midwest	PIH: 8 items based on weekly frequency for activities PISC: 6 items based on yearly frequencies PPTO: 10 items based on yearly frequencies	Available from[6]: Eva Patrikakou, Ph.D. Associate Professor Director The Learning and Behavior Specialist Program DePaul University epatrika@depaul.edu Available in English and Spanish

Family Involvement Instruments With Parents and Other Family Members as Respondents					
Instrument	**Brief Description**	**Administered To**	**Original Test Population**	**Measure Structure**	**Availability**
Parent Success Indicator (PSI)[7] (Strom and Strom)	The PSI focuses on six major facets of parenting: • Communication – how often the parent is good at communicating and listening to the child • Use of time – how often the parent has difficulty finding time to be involved in the child's daily life • Teaching – how often the parent teaches about important issues such as health, consideration of others feelings, and issues of right and wrong • Frustration – how often the parent is frustrated by the way a child typically behaves • Satisfaction – how often the parent likes the way a child typically behaves • Information needs – how often the parent needs more information about what to expect of a child at a particular age, helping the child succeed in school, helping the child deal with gangs and bullies, preventing the use of drugs and alcohol, and other adolescent concerns.	Parents Children	Parents of children ages 10 to 14 Children ages 10 to 14	Parent survey, child survey Self-reports, parent's perceptions of children	Starter set: $73.90 (1 manual, 20 parent inventory booklets, 20 child inventory booklets, and 20 comparison profiles); sample set: $20 (1 of each item) Available for purchase at: http://ststesting.com/FI.html Available in English and Spanish
Parent–Teacher Involvement Questionnaire: Parent (PTIQ-P)[8] (The Fast Track Project)	The PTIQ-P has four subscales measuring: • Quality of parent–teacher relationship • Parent involvement and volunteering at school • Parent endorsement of school • Frequency of parent-teacher contact	Parents	Parents of children in grades 4 and above available	26 items on a 5-point Likert scale for specific frequency, general frequency, and level of agreement	Available online from the Fast Track Project website[9]: http://www.fasttrackproject.org/techrept/p/ptp/ Please contact the instrument's developer for specific terms of use at: fasttrack@duke.edu

Family Involvement Instruments With Parents and Other Family Members as Respondents					
Instrument	**Brief Description**	**Administered To**	**Original Test Population**	**Measure Structure**	**Availability**
School and Family Partnership: Surveys and Summaries[10] (Epstein, Salinas, and Connors)	The School and Family Partnership Surveys and Summaries are sets of surveys used to assess attitudes about the parent–teacher relationship. Two versions are available: one for use with elementary/middle school populations and the other with high school populations. There is also a youth questionnaire for students in high school. The School and Family Partnership Surveys include measures for: • Basic obligations of parents • Basic obligations of schools • Volunteers at the school building • Involvement in learning activities and homework • Governance/advisory roles for parents	Parents Teachers Students	Parents and teachers of children ages 5 and up	Varies depending on questionnaire	Survey prices range from $10–20. Available for purchase through the National Neighborhood of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University[11]: http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/survey.htm
University of Idaho Survey of Parenting Practices, 2nd Edition (Shaklee and Demarest)	The University of Idaho Survey of Parenting Practices was developed for the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. Through a series of retrospective questions, it measures: • Changes in parenting practices – knowledge, confidence, skills/abilities, behavior, and networking • Also includes questions for demographics, participation, and satisfaction	Parents	Parents of children of various ages	34 items, 12 of which measure parenting practices	Complete tool kit: $85. Available for purchase through the Idaho Family Life Program Resources Website: http://www.agls.uidaho.edu/fcs/extension/familylife/tools.htm#University_of_Idaho_Survey_of_Parenting_Practice Available in English and Spanish

Family Involvement Instruments With Parents and Other Family Members as Respondents					
Instrument	**Brief Description**	**Administered To**	**Original Test Population**	**Measure Structure**	**Availability**
Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) (Bradley and Caldwell)	The HOME is an instrument completed by a researcher or other observer, which assesses parenting practices and the home environment in a broad range of categories through the use of trained observers. It has four different versions: • The Infant/Toddler HOME – designed for use during infancy (birth to age 3) and composed of 45 items clustered into six subscales: 1) Parental Responsivity, 2) Acceptance of Child, 3) Organization of the Environment, 4) Learning Materials, 5) Parental Involvement, and 6) Variety in Experience. • Early Childhood HOME – designed for use with children between 3 and 6 years of age and contains 55 items clustered into 8 subscales: 1) Learning Materials, 2) Language Stimulation, 3) Physical Environment, 4) Parental Responsivity, 5) Learning Stimulation, 6) Modeling of Social Maturity, 7) Variety in Experience, and 8) Acceptance of Child. • Middle Childhood HOME – designed for use between ages 6 and 10 and contains 59 items clustered into eight subscales: 1) Parental Responsivity, 2) Physical Environment, 3) Learning Materials, 4) Active Stimulation, 5) Encouraging Maturity, 6) Emotional Climate, 7) Parental Involvement, and 8) Family Participation. • Early Adolescent HOME – designed for use from 10 to 15 years old and contains 60 items clustered into 7 subscales: 1) Physical Environment, 2) Learning Materials, 3) Modeling, 4) Instructional Activities, 5) Regulatory Activities, 6) Variety of Experience, and 7) Acceptance & Responsivity.	Parents Children	Families with children from birth through age 14, depending on the scale Tested throughout North and South America (including the Caribbean), in several European and Asian countries, in Australia, and in at least two African nations	Administered by a trained observer Ranges depending on HOME version, all with binary yes/no answers	Comprehensive manual (includes standard, child care setting, and disability adapted manuals): $50; standard manual: $40 Other necessary materials: infant/toddler forms: $15/pkg of 50; early childhood forms: $25/pkg of 50; middle childhood forms: $12.50/pkg of 25; early adolescent forms: $12.50/pkg of 25 Available for purchase at[12]: http://ualr.edu/case/index.php/home/home-inventory/contact-information/

Family Involvement Instruments With Parents and Other Family Members as Respondents					
Instrument	**Brief Description**	**Administered To**	**Original Test Population**	**Measure Structure**	**Availability**
Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the 2003 National Household Education Surveys Program (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES))	The Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of 2003 assesses the following items: • School communication with families about student progress, opportunities for involvement, and other types of information-sharing • Involvement in homework, such as providing designated spaces, helping with homework, and checking homework when it is complete • Involvement in school, such as attending school meetings and events, volunteering, serving on committees, and fundraising • Involvement in nonschool activities, such home-based activities and outings with the student. Parents of students in kindergarten through third grade are also asked about reading to the child. • Experiences with school, such as the climate the school provides for the student and for family involvement • Expectations for postsecondary education, such as what the student will do after high school and the financial support the parent will give • Student activities – the type of school and nonschool activities in which the student is involved • Satisfaction, such as how well the school does at providing various avenues for involvement and communication and opinions of academic standards, teachers, and discipline • School choice – whether the student attends a school of choice or the family moved in order to be eligible for one • Services provided for students with disabilities – whether these services are provided	Parents	Nationally representative sample of parents of students in kindergarten through 12th grade	64 pages with various scales (yes/no, frequency, agree/disagree multiple choice, and satisfaction) Administered by trained interviewers at NCES	Available online as a pdf from the NCES website: http://nces.ed.gov/nhes/pdf/pfi/pfi03.pdf

Family Involvement Instruments With School Staff as Respondents					
Instrument	**Brief Description**	**Administered To**	**Original Test Population**	**Measure Structure**	**Availability**
Survey of Chicago Public Schools Teachers, Spring 2003 (Elementary School Edition) (Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago)	The Parent Involvement and Community Relations section of the Survey of Chicago Public Schools Teachers assesses participant relations through measures of: • Parent involvement in school – teachers report on how often parents engage in school-based involvement • Teacher outreach to parents – how teachers work with parents to develop common goals, good communication, and strengthen student learning • Teacher–parent trust – the degree of mutual respect between teachers and parents • Knowledge of student culture – how teachers strive to understand the lives and communities of students • Use of community resources – how teachers use community assets in their teaching and to understand their students • Ties to community – how often teachers interact with the school's surrounding community	Elementary school teachers	Chicago Public School teachers (elementary grades)	Questions related to Parent Involvement and Community Relations begin on page 4; section contains 5 question items with multiple sub-questions Varies from agree/disagree statements to quantity/degree measures	Available online as a pdf from the Consortium on Chicago School Research: http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/downloads/74022003-elem-teacher.pdf

Family Involvement Instruments With School Staff as Respondents					
Instrument	**Brief Description**	**Administered To**	**Original Test Population**	**Measure Structure**	**Availability**
Parent Efficacy scales[13] (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie)	The Parent Efficacy scales assess parent efficacy through measures for parent perseverance, general ability to influence children's school outcomes, and specific effectiveness in influencing children's school learning. There are two forms available: • Parent Perceptions of Parent Efficacy (PPPE) • Teacher Perceptions of Parent Efficacy (TPPE)	Teachers	Teachers in a large middle-class public school district Predominantly White respondents in elementary schools	Items scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree). Possible total scores for PPPE range from 12 to 60 Possible total scores for TPPE range from 7 to 35.	Available in: Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H.M. (2005). *Final performance report for OERI Grant # R305T010673: The social context of parental involvement: A path to enhanced achievement*. Presented to Project Monitor, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, March 22, 2005. http://www.vanderbilt.edu/Peabody/family-school/Reports.html See Final Report Part B (Please review authors' Statement of Use for citation instructions when using these scales.)
School and Family Partnership: Surveys and Summaries (Epstein, Salinas, and Connors)	The School and Family Partnership: Surveys and Summaries are sets of surveys used to assess attitudes about the parent–teacher relationship. Two versions are available: one for use with elementary/middle school populations and the other with high school populations. There is also a youth questionnaire for students in high school. The School and Family Partnership Surveys include measures for: • Basic obligations of parents • Basic obligations of schools • Volunteers at the school building • Involvement in learning activities and Homework • Governance/advisory roles for parents	Teachers	Teachers of children ages 5 and up	Administered by a trained interviewer Varies depending on questionnaire	Survey prices range from $10–20. Available for purchase through the National Neighborhood of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University[14]: http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/survey.htm

Family Involvement Instruments With School Staff as Respondents					
Instrument	**Brief Description**	**Administered To**	**Original Test Population**	**Measure Structure**	**Availability**
Parent–Teacher Involvement Questionnaire: Teacher (PTIQ-T)[15] (The Fast Track Project)	The PTIQ-T has three subscales that measure: • Parents' comfort in their relationship with the teacher and with the school • Parent involvement and volunteering in school • Parent–teacher contact	Teachers	Both high-risk and normative samples	21 items on a 5-point Likert scale	Available online from the Fast Track Project website[16]: http://www.fasttrackproject.org/techrept/p/ptt/ Please contact the instrument's developer for specific terms of use at: fasttrack@duke.edu
Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K–8 (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES))	The NCES Survey on Family and School Partnerships in Public Schools, K–8 addresses the following: • The kinds of communications schools establish to provide parents with information • The kinds of activities schools sponsor that are designed to inform parents about their children's performance, and the extent to which parents participate • The kinds of volunteer activities schools make available to parents, and the extent to which parents participate • The extent to which parents are included in decision-making regarding selected school issues • Other factors that influence school efforts to increase parent involvement	Principals	A nationally representative sample of kindergarten through 8th grade schools	24 items with various scales (yes/no, frequency, agree/disagree multiple choice, and satisfaction)	Available online from the NCES website: Carey, N., Lewis, L., Farris, E., Burns, E. (1998). Parent involvement in children's education: Efforts by public elementary schools. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Accessed online April 9, 2009 at: http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/frss/publications/98032/pdf/questionnaire.pdf

Other Resources

We will be updating this resource as more validated and publicly available instruments become available to us. If you have additional suggestions, please let us know the instrument's name and how to access it. If possible, please send an electronic copy of the instrument to fine@gse.harvard.edu or mail a hard copy to:

Family Involvement Network of Educators
Harvard Family Research Project
3 Garden Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Acknowledgments

HFRP thanks the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the C.S. Mott Foundation for their generous support of our complementary learning work.

Endnotes

[1] Although parent–child relationships, discipline, and other parenting practices and family processes are also core components of a spectrum of family involvement approaches, they are beyond the scope of this particular resource. The Parents as Teachers (PAT) National Center has a searchable database of measures of parenting, as well as child and parent outcomes, at http://measures.patnc.org/measures/index.php?fuseaction=search.search.

[2] In some cases, we identified instruments that were well known but not publicly available. As these and other validated instruments become available, we will add them to this resource list.

[3] Also includes student questionnaire. These instruments share some common elements with the Parent Efficacy Scales by Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Brissie.

[4] Also cited in: Walker, J.M., Wilkins, A.S., Dallaire, J., Sandler, H.M., & Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. (2005). Parental involvement: Model revision through scale development. *Elementary School Journal, 106*(2); 85-104.

[5] Also includes a teacher questionnaire.

[6] Also cited in: Patrikakou, E. N., & Weissberg, R. P. (2000). Parents' perceptions of teacher outreach and parent involvement in children's education. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 20,* 103–119.

[7] Youth survey also available.

[8] Teacher questionnaire also available.

[9] Instrument has also been adapted for use in: Kohl, G. O., Lengua, L. J., McMahon, R. J., & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (2000). Parent involvement in school: Conceptualizing multiple dimensions and their relations with family and demographic risk factors. *Journal of School Psychology, 38,* 501–523.

[10] Also includes teacher and student questionnaires. These instruments are related to the scales developed by Dauber and Epstein, which measure parent involvement at the school, parent involvement with homework, parent involvement in reading activities, parent attitudes toward the school, school practices to communicate with and involve parents at school, school practices to involve parents at home, and total school program to involve parents. For more information, see Dauber, S. L. & Epstein, J. L. (1993). Parents' attitudes and practices of involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. In N. F. Chavkin (Ed.) *Families and schools in a pluralistic society.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

[11] Epstein, J. L., Coates, L., Salinas, K. C., Sanders, M. G., & Simon, B. (1997). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

[12] Instrument also cited in Bradley, R. H. & Caldwell, B.M. (1979). Home observation for measurement of the environment: A revision of the preschool scale. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 84,* 235–244 and in Bradley, R. H., & Caldwell, B.M. (1981). The HOME Inventory: A validation of the preschool scale for black children. *Child Development, 52,* 708–710.

[13] Also includes a teacher questionnaire.

[14] Related resource: Epstein, J. L., Coates, L., Salinas, K. C., Sanders, M. G., & Simon, B. (1997). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

[15] Parent questionnaire also available.

[16] Instrument used in Kohl, G. O., Lengua, L. J., McMahon, R. J., & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (2000). Parent involvement in school: Conceptualizing multiple dimensions and their relations with family and demographic risk factors. *Journal of School Psychology, 38,* 501–523.

About Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP)

Since 1983, we have helped stakeholders develop and evaluate strategies to promote the well-being of children, youth, families, and communities. Our work focuses primarily on three areas that support children's learning and development—early childhood education, out-of-school time programming, and family and community support in education. Building on our knowledge that schools cannot do it alone, we also focus national attention on complementary learning. Complementary learning is the idea that a systemic approach, which integrates school and nonschool supports, can better ensure that all children have the skills they need to succeed. Underpinning all our work is our commitment to education for strategic decision making, learning and accountability.

PTA
everychild. onevoice.

Recommended Reading on Parent Involvement

❖ Constantino, Steven M. *Engaging All Families: Creating a Positive School Culture by Putting Research into Practice.* Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2003.

❖ Crane, Claire, Penny Bix, Patricia E. Herbert, Barbara Kelly, Kathe Landergan, Cindie Neilson, David Romanowski, Patricia Torto, and Niqe Ware. *Becoming a Community School.* Dorchester, Mass.: Project for School Innovation, 2004.

❖ Delgado-Gaitan, Concha. *Involving Latino Families in Schools: Raising Student Achievement Through Home-School Partnerships.* Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press, 2004.

❖ Epstein, Joyce L., Mavis G. Sanders, Steven B. Sheldon, Karen Clark Salinas, Natalie Rodriguez Jansorn, Frances L. Van Vorhis, Cecilia S. Martin, Brenda G. Thomas, Marsha D. Greenfeld, Darcy J. Hutchins, and Kenyatta J. Williams. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action, 3rd ed.* Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press, 2008.

❖ Ferguson, Chris. "Reaching Out to Diverse Populations: What Can Schools Do to Foster Family-School Connections?" Austin, Tex.: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, September 2005. http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/rb/rb5-diverse.pdf

❖ Goodwin, A. Lin, and Sabrina Hope King. *Culturally Responsive Parental Involvement: Concrete Understandings and Basic Strategies.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2002. http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1a/c1/44.pdf

❖ Henderson, Anne T., and Karen L. Mapp, eds. *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement.* Austin, Tex.: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002. http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf

❖ Henderson, Anne T., Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies. *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships.* New York: New Press, 2006.

❖ Hodgkinson, Harold L. *Leaving Too Many Children Behind: A Demographer's View on the Neglect of America's Youngest Children.* Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, April 2003. http://www.iel.org/pubs/manychildren.pdf

❖ Johnson, Vivian R. "Family Centers in Schools: Expanding Possibilities for Partnerships." In *Promising Practices for Family Involvement in Schools,* ed. Diana Hiatt-Michael. Greenwich, Conn.: Information Age Publishing, 2001.

Continued on next page

PTA
everychild. onevoice.

Recommended Reading on Parent Involvement, continued

❖ Kretzmann, John P., and John L. McKnight. *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets.* Evanston, Ill.: Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University, 1993. Distributed by ACTA Publications, Skokie, Ill.

❖ Kugler, Eileen Gale. *Debunking the Middle Class Myth: Why Diverse Schools Are Good for All Kids.* Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

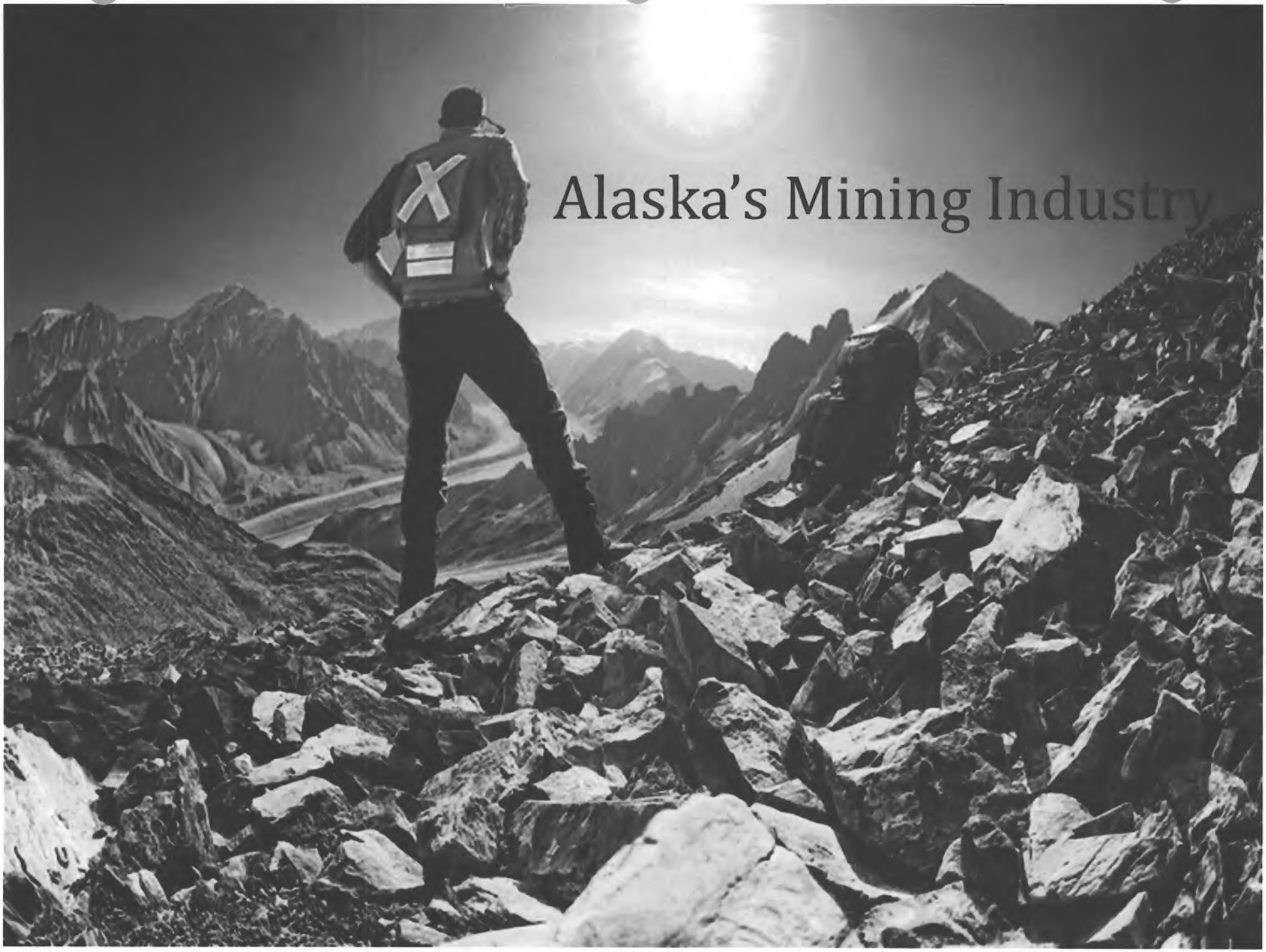
❖ Lawrence-Lightfoot, Sara. *The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn from Each Other.* New York: Ballantine, 2003.

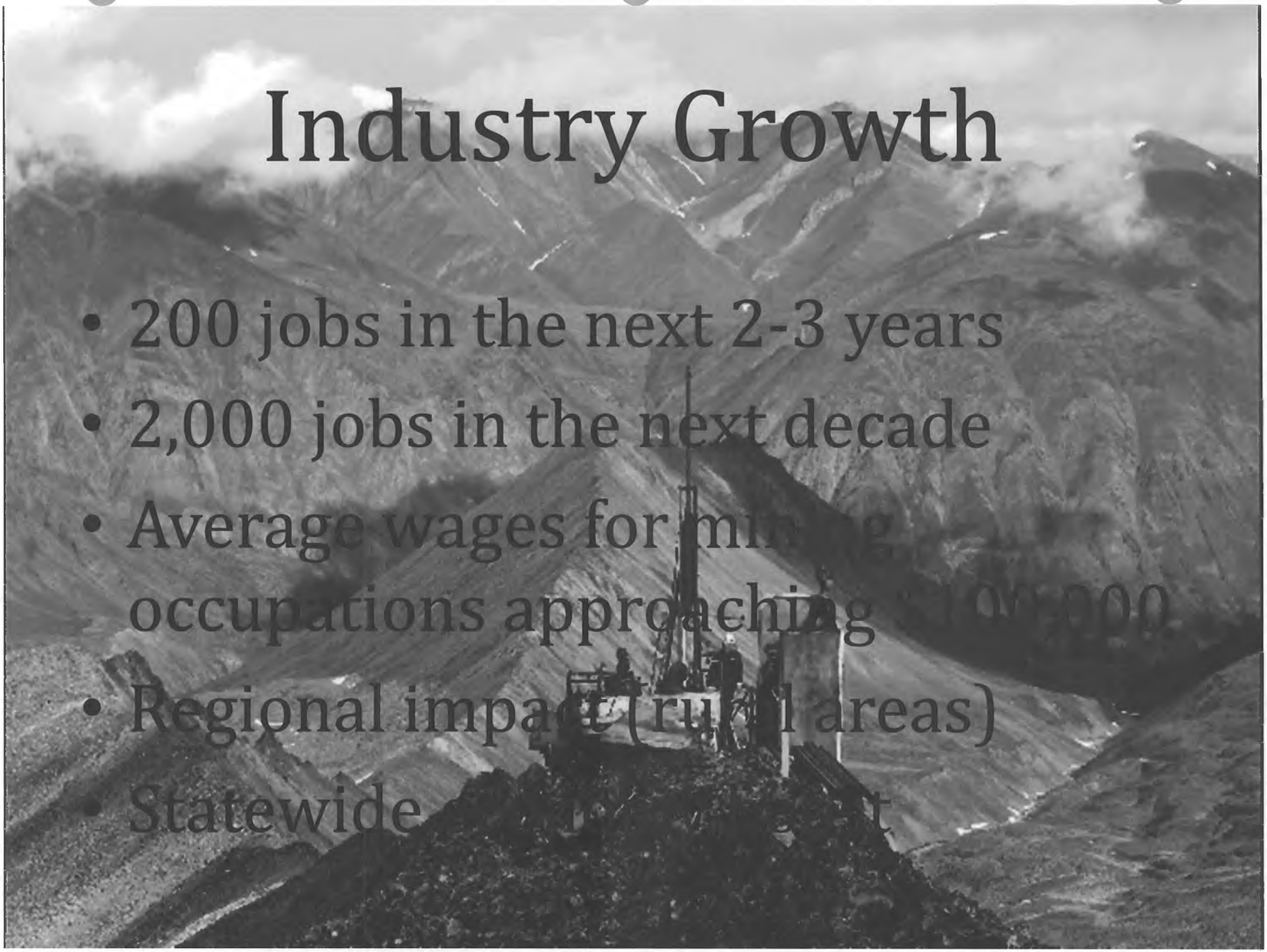
❖ National Network of Partnership Schools. *Promising Partnership Practices.* Baltimore, Md.: The Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University.
(Annual collections of Promising Partnership Practices are available on the website of the National Network of Partnership Schools, www.partnershipschools.org, in the section "Success Stories in the Spotlight.")

❖ O'Hearn parents and teachers. *Including Every Parent.* Dorchester, Mass.: Project for School Innovation, 2003.

❖ Orfield, Gary, Daniel Losen, Johanna Wald, and Christopher B. Swanson. "Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth Are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis." Cambridge, Mass.: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. Contributors: Advocates for Children of New York, The Civil Society Institute, 2004. http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/410936_LosingOurFuture.pdf

❖ Weiss, Heather B., Kelly Faughnan, Margaret Caspe, Cassandra Wolos, M. Elena Lopez, and Holly Kreider. *Taking a Closer Look: A Guide to Online Resources on Family Involvement.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Family Research Project, 2005. http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/taking-a-closer-look-a-guide-to-online-resources-on-family-involvement


Alaska's Mining Industry



Industry Growth

- 200 jobs in the next 2-3 years
- 2,000 jobs in the next decade
- Average wages for mi[illegible] occupations approaching [illegible]
- Regional impact (rural areas)
- Statewide [illegible]

Skill Requirements

- Hands on skills (CTE)
- STEM skills and knowledge
- Employability skills / Soft skills

Role of Education

- Skill development
- Behavioral development: attendance, YES, substance abuse
- Career guidance and plan students
- Busine nerships

Models

- Tech-prep initiative
- Mat-Su schools
- Bethel (Y-K centralized CTE)
- UAS distance delivered intro to mining

ALASKA POLICY FORUM

Who are we?

Non-profit

All volunteer staff

Our Education Focus: Students &Parents

Where is Alaska Headed Educationally?

Alaska Policy Forum Assumptions:

*Compared to other states:

– Our kids are just as smart

– Our teachers are just as dedicated

– Our parents are just as loving

*The brightness of a child's mind is not closely linked to their skin color

*Economic status impacts student achievement

Where is Alaska Headed Educationally?

- K-12 spending far above the national average
  - Both in overall dollars and rate of increase
    - Spend far too much on facilities
    - Staffing surge
- Relatively low poverty

ALASKA POLICY FORUM

Disappointing Results (ROI)

Alaska 2011 NAEP Test Rankings

4th Grade Reading	50th out of 50
4th Grade Math	44th out of 50
8th Grade Reading	34th out of 50
8th Grade Math	28th out of 50

UPPER and MIDDLE Income Kids

4th Grade Reading	50th out of 50
4th Grade Math	47th out of 50
8th Grade Reading	49th out of 50
8th Grade Math	32nd out of 50

LOW Income Kids

ALASKA POLICY FORUM

Making Change Happen

#1 More Competition – More Parental Choice

- Creates automatic accountability
- Public funding to private institutions is already commonplace
- Current system too dependent on no-bid single-source supplier
- More choices = more parental involvement
- Opens choice to rural students
- Drives innovation & improvement
  - Carpe Diem Charter Schools
  - Rocketship Charter Schools

ALASKA POLICY FORUM

Making Change Happen

#2 Update Overly Restrictive Charter School Laws

- 2013 Stanford University CREDO Charter School Study
- Alaska's charter laws 41st out of 43 (NAPSC Rankings)
- Competition & innovation needed
- Charter Management Organizations (CMO) in lower-48
  - KIPP
  - Uncommon Schools- 32 Campuses
    - Inner city kids – 78% low income
    - SAT average – 20 points above "College Ready"

ALASKA POLICY FORUM

Making Change Happen

#3 Third Grade Literacy Requirement

– Now law in 16 states – Florida the 1st in 2001

--Grades 1 & 2 targeted intervention

2011 NAEP Scores

Alaska, 4th Grade Reading – All	Score 208
Florida, 4th Grade Reading -- Low-Income	Score 216

ALASKA POLICY FORUM

Making Change Happen

#4 Simple and Accurate Assessment of Schools

ASPI system misleads parents, students and staff about school quality; need visibility

Alaska sets very low standards:

SBA: 80% Alaska kids proficient in reading 2011

NAEP: 25% Alaska kids proficient in reading 2011

ALASKA POLICY FORUM

Making Change Happen

#4 Simple and Accurate Assessment of Schools

ASPI "Three Star" elementary school in Anchorage:

Scored 78 out of possible 100

Only 7 points below "Four Star"

- Scores in general decline since 2006
- "Average" attendance rate compared to district
- Reading 44% BELOW or FAR BELOW proficient
- Writing 48% BELOW or FAR BELOW proficient
- Math 51% BELOW or FAR BELOW proficient
- Science 92% BELOW or FAR BELOW proficient

ALASKA POLICY FORUM

Making Change Happen

#5 Leverage Technology

All schools – An implosion of productivity

Rural schools- A vision

ALASKA POLICY FORUM

The Future: Focus on the Children

- We have no financial interest
- Alaska pays too much-gets little return
- Competition drives excellence
- Alaska needs the political will to make change happen

ALASKA POLICY FORUM

9/11/13 – Testimony regarding Education/Business Perspective

Good Afternoon Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Crystal Nygard, CEO of the MatSu Business Alliance, (MSBA), a *small business located in the Mat-Su Borough working hard everyday to connect and educate the ~~market~~*. Our mission is to promote business development, family wage jobs, and local responsible government. That is why I am here to speak to you today because we asked our client to engage in the discussion about education and have concluded the two are disconnected. (thank you to Alaska Policy Forum for sharing the current Sweden system where their school system works with entrepreneurs and local businesses to design school choice.)

Since 2009, MSBA has been hiring students, referred students, and courage students to talk with employers. MSBA has been working with our community, marketplace, and clients concerning business. Recently our clients participated in a short survey about K through 12 educations and it relationship to the work place. I will share those results with you today, share a business perspective about partners, and lastly offer solutions around policy reform pertaining to education.

Your committee, constituents and audience may be asking what BUSINESS has to do with education. Well, first EDUCATION is BIG BUSINESS. The Mat-Su Borough spends 2/3 of its entire budget on education. Yet, as the fastest growing area in the state we have in return one of the highest unemployment

rates in the State of Alaska. Those unemployment rates are even higher for youth 16-18 years.

Let's examine what our clients had to share. Approximately 200 business leaders were asked to participate in this survey. They were not given multiple choice formats, but rather asked to write their responses and return back to us. Just over 10% of the clients returned their survey for this testimony. They were asked the following questions.

1) Has your organization hired high school students in the past? Yes, but not for many years; the high schools no longer have their program helping place students into jobs.

2) What did you find was lacking in the high school student your organization employed? Most student were lacking a good work ethic, not self-motivated, don't use observation as a learning tool, don't understand how private industry works, and punctionality.

3) What did you find was the best attributes of the high school student your organization employed? Not intimidated by technology, more easily accepts change and the willingness to learn.

4) What are the three most important qualities you desire in a high school student you employ? 1) Ability to fill out a timecards; 2) a student who wants to work and is not there because his parents told him he must work. Most young people don't feel the need, nor do they want, to learn to work; 3) reliability, critical thinking, customer service/communications; 4) smile,

willingness to learn, willingness to follow our dress code, understand that the business needs their help.

5) When looking at a high school student's job application/resume, what is the most important thing you look for? Most are looking for part-time work while going to school and they have few, if any, skills; therefore they do not have references. I pay more attention to a verbal interview then a resume. Evidence of interest in the industry outside of work/education, such as an in volunteer projects, or hobbies. Reference, presentation of themselves, classes they have completed in office systems. The length of time they will be available for work. Would they be a candidate for a full time permanent job in the future? Evidence of interest in the industry outside of work history/education, such as in volunteer projects, or hobbies.

For each of these questions, "high school student" is defined as currently in high school or recently graduated high school and is pre-college.

There is apparently a SERIOUS disconnect between the business community and the education community. The skills of critical thinking skills, reliability, and communication are the three factors referenced in our survey. I think it clearly shows that:

- ✓ Academic results such as test scores don't' directly correlate or translate to real world experience; (i.e. a top calculus students doesn't mean they understand construction practices)

- ✓ Forcing information into students and then quickly taking a test doesn't matter nor does it prepare them for the workforce; Repetition matters
- ✓ Application of information taught is when learning begins; Geometry in the class is different than building a house;
- ✓ Conformity is depleting our number of thinkers and motivation zapper; what can they do? How can they do?
- ✓ Lastly, standardization of test doesn't create critical thinking, but keeps the education and business cultures separated.

I think the discussion about our Ferry is very similar to this discussion today. Initially the conversation was centered on the ability to obtain federal funds for the design/build of a large ferry. We committed to the funding and began the building process, however, the end product wasn't able to provide the services it was initially thought to provide and there were no other markets that were willing to purchase the vessel. So, we have a ferry with no means of using it and no ability to sell it. That is where we are with education. Almost every conversation starts with federal funds or federal standards and the state has to invest in the resources necessary to conform and keep the funds or meet the standards. We make that investment knowing it is not sustainable and have no exit strategy. The end results is you have a culture that was built on what looked like a strong offer to build an overprices product and a limited market that is appreciating or partnering in the success of the product, our children.

The questions are: Who is going to be the long-term partner for education: the Federal Government, State of Alaska, collective groups of voices representing Business and the Education Community.

- ✓ The Federal Government will provide standards, funding in the beginning, matching grants etc., but they don't know what our local market needs nor do they care regarding talent;
- ✓ The State of Alaska will provide the leadership, funding long-term, and policy that can move the market into running our education like an enterprise and give the success tools to the schools based on the needs of the market;
- ✓ The Business Community can partner with the school by finding ways to minimize operating costs, complying with federal and state requirements, increasing the amount of internships available to our students; incorporate all types of schools in the system; develop a culture of competition and not conformity;
- ✓ Special Interest can provide what they have always provided at a higher cost;

Our local school district states that "all students can and want to learn; success breeds success; the needs and best interests of students drive all decisions; and stakeholders' participation is crucial to student success. " That stakeholder needs to be the business community so we can partner and teach real finances, entrepreneurship, real sales, real management, real math, real science etc..

So our solution is:

- ✓ Re-evaluate your partners;
- ✓ Partner with business and re-connect the market;
- ✓ Let the business community teach how to build a culture of running an enterprise not an institution, by partnering and demonstrating how that works for that school;
- ✓ Allow businesses to be a part of the schools and interact with the students listening to their ideas and working to provide conversations that produce critical thinkers.
- ✓ In business FEATURES (i.e. choice of schools) tell and BENEFITS sell (i.e. employers access to employees); COMPETITION drives SUCCESS and if you don't raise the standards based on the what the market needs, lower costs, you won't have an enterprise that moves forward but one that stands still and lets the market pass by.

If we want to develop critical thinkers, self-motivated, and driven for success we have to build a culture of an enterprise and educate students on how to own or start a business not just have a job. Let's Inspire their thinking and begin the conversation WHY policy, partner, stakeholders, educators. does matter and why your job is so important.

Crystal Nygard and her husband Scott have been married for 19 years. They are raising three boys in all attending public schools in the Matsu Borough, area representative for

foreign exchange students, co-founder of the Matsu Business Alliance (MSBA) and small business owner.

The Future of K-12 Education in Alaska – The University of Alaska's Role and Suggestions for Change

Dana L. Thomas PhD, UA Vice President for Academic Affairs

The University of Alaska plays a significant role in K-12 education in the state. We educate teachers, school counselors, prepare administrators, and providing continuing education. Through partnerships with the Department of Education and Early Development, we help place teachers into their positions through the Alaska Teacher Placement Program, help school districts retain new teachers through the Alaska Statewide Mentoring Program, and recruit young people into the education profession through the Future Educators of Alaska program. In addition, we partner with K-12 schools through high school student dual credit enrollment, the Middle College at Eagle River, the Early College at Fairbanks, and through the new arrangement for UA Southeast to manage the Alaska Learning Network. UA's engagement with K-12 reflects our Strategic Direction Initiative theme of Productive Partnerships with Alaska's Schools.

The following observations suggest that change in K-12 is needed:

- Alaska has the lowest college-going rate in the nation. The most recent college going rate information from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems from 2008 indicates 45.7 percent of Alaska high school graduates go to college (anywhere) compared to the national rate of 63.3 percent. Alaska also has the lowest postsecondary participation rate in the nation for low-income families.

- Among Alaska high school graduates entering UA, 52% require developmental education; the vast majority needs developmental education in mathematics. Twenty two percent of Alaska Performance Scholarship eligible students attending UA require developmental education. Not all college going Alaska high school graduates attend UA, a fair portion attend institutions out of state, so this figure applies to those attending UA only.

- Alaska hires more than 350 teachers from out of state annually and high teacher turnover, particularly in rural Alaska, is expensive and negatively impacts student learning outcomes.

The following five changes should be considered for K-12 (generally what is needed is to scale successful approaches to the state level):

1. Every student in an Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) curriculum unless parent opts them out. As noted above the developmental education need for students completing an APS curriculum is significantly less than other students. Many other states, e.g., Maryland, have adopted or are considered a college preparation curriculum as standard. The new Alaska Standards will take us a step forward in this regard but the APS curriculum would take us further yet.

2. Improve math outcomes.

    a. Require 4 years of math classes in high school;
    b. Increase the required math background of new teachers
    c. Further innovate in teaching and learning math; embed mathematics in other subjects, such as science or public policy, and use technology effectively.

3. Implement a college ready assessment no later than 11th grade. There are several options here including PSAT, Smarter Balanced, or ACCUPLACER (current UA test). The choice should be mutually agreed on by Education and Early Development and UA.

4. Facilitate K-12 & UA dual enrollment. Dual enrollment has been proven to increase high school graduation rates, college going rates, and reduces time to complete postsecondary degree. UA Southeast's new role in managing the Alaska Learning Network will help but further guidance to get school districts to encourage dual enrollment is needed.

5. Improve teacher retention in rural Alaska. Successful methods used by some school districts need to be scaled to the state level. Providing consistent incentives for teaching in rural Alaska, improve living conditions, and extending mentoring to all new rural teachers should be considered. Incentives such as providing an extra trip or two to Fairbanks, Anchorage or the teacher's home have made a difference in some districts. Growing our own teachers by region also has worked well but has not been scaled to the state level. When a new school is built or an existing school has a major renovation, build a home for a teacher; ship the materials and use the same labor force for efficiency. Perhaps partner with the Cold Region Housing Research Center to create a model home for the community; the home could serve as a living lab where mathematics could be addressed.