AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS PARENT INVOLVEMENT PLAN[1]

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Footnotes

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS
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Similar to research on parent and family involvement in schools, research provides evidence that parent and family involvement in after-school programs increases students' achievement and success. Here are just a few of the research findings that link parent involvement to a child's success in- and out-of-school.

- Children achieve more when their parents are involved. This is regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic background, or parents' education level.
- Children exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior when their parents are involved.
- Children have higher graduation rates and greater enrollment rates in post-secondary education when parents are involved in their lives.
- Youth risk behaviors, such as alcohol use, violence, and antisocial behaviors decrease as parent involvement increases.

Of course, parents face many obstacles that prevent them from taking an active role in their child's after-school programs. One major challenge to successful parent involvement in after-school programs is the lack of communication between the youth development professional and parents. Frequent communication from program staff may increase parents' desire to become more involved in their child's after-school program. Youth development professionals (e.g., 4-H Youth Development Educators and after-school program managers) may want to employ multiple strategies to engage parents in their child's after-school activity. This document provides concrete strategies that youth development professionals can use to increase parent involvement in their child's after-school program.

Recommendations to Involve Parents in an After-School Program[3]

Recommendation 1. Recognize that all parents, regardless of income, education level, or cultural background, are genuinely care about their children's learning and want their children to do well in school.

- Create small, friendly settings that encourage parent involvement such as:
  - Encourage parents to participate in a debriefing session following a field trip (cover expectations of parents).
  - Invite parents to potluck dinners (at least one) to talk about upcoming events within the program.
  - Use Appendix 1 as a handout to give parents.

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[3] Adapted from Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement.* Austin, TX: National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Retrieved on March 13, 2003 from: http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf.

Recommendation 2. Create programs that provide support to families as they guide their children through learning experiences from preschool to high school.

- Host an informational session:
    - Elementary Program: Enjoying the summer while learning.
        - Identify fun books that parents can read with their children.
        - State the importance of summer time learning. For example, research shows that children and youth lose much of the academic gains over the summer months. As a way to counter this negative effect, parents should find ways to engage their children in learning through reading and other fun-filled educational projects (e.g., 4-H Rocketry program).
        - Create a list of fun day trip activities that parents can do with their children (e.g., visiting a museum or regional zoo).
    - High School Program: Everything you wanted to know about college
        - Present information on a variety of topics including student loans, scholarships, financial aid, SAT/ACT tests, and application process.
        - Provide handouts: Average earning with degree (see Appendix 2).
        - Set up the facility so that parents can work with their child on the computer to see some of this material.

- Create a newsletter insert (1 page) for the school newsletter at the beginning of the school year.
    - Describe program events and activities throughout the upcoming year.
    - Introduce program staff and state their roles in the after-school program.
    - Highlight activities from the summer programs.
    - Include important school news (e.g., ?).
    - Provide a copy of the *Family Report Card* on the backside of the insert. Go to http://www.nationalfamilyweek.org/REPORT_CARD.pdf to print a copy of *Family Report Card*. This document is also a PDF file entitled REPORT_CARD.pdf on the YET After-school Supporting Materials CD-ROM (to be released in March 2005).

Recommendation 3. Work with families to build their social and political connections.

- Ask schools to administer a short survey to parents regarding: (1) the best time for events, (2) the types of events they would attend, and (3) ideas to make the school better. It is best to conduct this on a three-year cycle.
- Host a planning meeting over the summer to get ideas from parents and youth about program activities.
- Create a program directory: Youth and Parent Contact information – Phone and email.

Recommendation 4. Link family and community engagement efforts to student leadership.

- Facilitate student-developed information brochures or flyers for parents and teachers about the program.
- Setup a student-run booth at Parent-Teacher Night.

Recommendation 5. Focus efforts on activities that will build trust and respect among families and community members.

- Schedule regular meetings with school contacts (e.g., principals, teachers, and community partners).
- Send a positive note home to one child's parent at least once a month.
- Coordinate an end-of-the-year ceremony for children, their families, and program partners.
- Contact schools to find out the current strategies in place to involve parents as a way to fulfill the No Child Left Behind requirements.
- Involve parents in behavioral problem-solving (solution seeking) for their child if necessary. That is, if their son of daughter has been involved in "incidents in their club."

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Web Resources

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
http://www.ncpie.org/

This web site contains information on numerous programs that are available and current issues of today's youth. Therefore, the NCPIE mission is to advocate the involvement of parents and families in their children's education, and to foster relationships between home, school, and community to enhance the education of all of our nation's young people.

National Education Association

This web site includes information dealing with the communication of parents, teachers, and schools. There are guides for parents striving for achievement from their child in certain subjects, information for parent-teacher conferences, and practical suggestions and pointers for disciplining, motivating, and talking with children.

The National Campaign for Public School Improvement

The parental involvement checklist and the six standards of parental involvement are outlined on this website. They include volunteering, parenting, communicating, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Each standard gives goals, sample practices, challenges, and results for students, parents, and teachers.

Education World: The Educator's Best Friend

Partners in Education (PIE) program is a program from Phoenix, Arizona. The PIE program actively pursues and involves parents as true and equal partners. There are five ways in which parents can become involved: decision making, supporting, teaching, learning, and communicating. The web site also outlines the research involved and the status of the program.

National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs
This website outlines 10 strategies to help your child succeed. Each strategy that is listed on the website has numerous ideas and articles for parents to help their child succeed in school.

National Youth Development Information Center

This web site outlines the most up-to-date studies and programs involving today's youth. Research ranges form the electoral process to after-school programs and the efforts it takes to obtain quality youth development programs. Emphasis is placed on the positive feedback gained from after-school programs and the many benefits that can be achieved.

Casey Family Programs
http://www.casey.org/Resources/Tools/CaseyLifeSkills.htm

This web site is designed to provide information about the life skills every young person desires and needs. It is an assessment of a young person's strengths in life skills such as money management, work and study habits, self care, and readiness for seeking a job and housing. Feedback is offered for a full understanding of the assessment and the next steps to take in helping prepare youth for the future.

Healthy Schools, Healthy Youth
http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/index.htm

Staying healthy, improving adolescent health, and monitoring health behaviors are all important aspects for healthy schools and healthy youth. This site contains tips on staying healthy as well as information on coordinated school programs that deal with the nation's most serious health and social problems.

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
http://www.aacap.org/

This site is designed to assist parents and families in providing information to aid in the understanding and treatment of the developmental, behavioral, and mental disorders which affect an estimated 7 to 12 million children and adolescents in the United States at any given time. There is also information available on child and adolescent psychiatry, fact sheets for parents, current research, and managed care information.

Appendix 1

10 Ways for Parents to be Involved in Their Child's After-School Program[4]

1. Share your expectations and set goals with your children related to their participation in the program.

2. Meet your children's friends and get to know their parents.

3. Contact your school for information about family programs and resources.

4. Provide a quiet, well-lighted place with basic school supplies for studying/homework.

5. Provide children with books or magazines, and develop a family nighttime reading routine.

6. View selected TV programs together and then review and discuss.

7. Make family trips to library, zoo, museum, or park a fun learning experience.

8. Work with program staff to develop volunteer tasks that you can do from home for the program.

9. Help the program staff and school personnel develop a directory of social and community services.

10. Be a role model; be active in community service yourself or as a family.

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[4] Adapted from: National PTA (2003). 100 ways for parents to be involved in their child's education: Based on the National Standards for parent/family involvement programs. Retrieved on June 24, 2004 at: http://www.ctparentsplus.org/100ways.asp.

Appendix 2

The Importance of Education for Income[5]

Studies by the U.S. Census Bureau and many other agencies have consistently shown that people with a higher level of education make more money than those with less education. Youth development programs are interested in encouraging members to strive for success in college, trade schools, etc. after graduation from high school.

Highest Education Level Achieved	Average Annual Income (1999)
Professional Degree	$109,600
Doctoral Degree	$89,400
Master's Degree	$62,300
Bachelor's Degree	$52,200
Associate Degree	$38,200
Some College	$36,800
High School Graduate	$30,400
Not High School Graduate	$23,400

Moreover, according to 2001 data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics higher level of annual earnings translates into significant increases in overall lifetime earnings.

Highest Education Level Achieved	Lifetime Income (40 years)
Bachelor's Degree	$1,667,700
Associate Degree	$1,269,850
High School Graduate	$994,080
Not High School Graduate	$630,000

This relationship between education and earnings potential has been known since the 1970's, and has been consistently demonstrated by government surveys. The U.S. Census Bureau has suggested that the gap in earnings between those with higher education and those with lower education will continue to grow in the future.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has also shown that the unemployment rate steadily drops with higher levels of education. Unemployment in 2000 for non-high school graduates was 6.5%, 3.5% for high school graduates, and 2.3% for those with an associate degree.

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[5] Data for these results are drawn from: (1) U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2001); and (2) U.S. Census Bureau (2002). Retrieved July 35, 2004 from http://www.education-online-search.com/education_and_income.shtml.

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