

National PTA Standards Document: Parent Community Involvement

Explanation of Standards and Purposes

National PTA Standards

by Pat Draper

There is no alternative to high expectations. If we want children to achieve at high levels, we must also expect more from their parents and families. These six PTA Standards identify what parents, schools, and communities can do together to support student success. For each standard, the guide provides the following information: A definition of the standard, followed by a brief explanation of its importance, and discussions of the key goals. Motivating Parent Involvement Researchers have found three key factors that affect whether parents are motivated to become involved in their children's learning:

- How parents develop their job descriptions as parents: Do they know what the school expects them to do? What do their friends and family think is acceptable?
- How confident they feel about their ability to help their children: Do they feel they have the knowledge and skills to make a difference?
- Whether they feel invited, both by their children and the school. Do they get strong, positive signals from teachers and students that they should be involved?

Standard 1: **Welcoming All Families**. The goal is that all 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. Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning. The lifeblood of any relationship and any organization is communication. Communication is a process through which information is exchanged. Yet many ways that schools give out information, such as handouts, newsletters, handbooks, automatic phone messages, and websites, do not provide an easy and routine way for families to respond. Even PTA/parent group meetings are often seen by school leaders merely as a way to get the message out to families. The most effective way to build a real partnership is to create regular opportunities for open, honest dialogue. ***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.***

Standard 2: **Communicating Effectively**. The goal is sharing information between school and families. All families should feel that the school keeps them informed on important issues and events and that it is easy to communicate with teachers, the principal, and other school staff. The perception, however unwittingly, that a dominant group of parents is in the know while everyone else is in the dark reduces trust and stifles communication. 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. No parent should ever feel that they are not included in the 'secret' decisions made by others. ***Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.***

Standard 3: **Supporting Student Success**. There are two goals. The first is sharing information about student progress. Families should be kept fully informed of how their children are doing in school, as well as how the entire school is progressing. The second is supporting learning by engaging families who should have opportunities to learn how to be active participants in their children's learning at home and at school. Engaging families in their children's learning can have a powerful impact on student success, not just in school but throughout life. When their families are involved both at home and at school, students earn higher grades and test scores, come to school more regularly, like school more, behave better, and are more likely to graduate and go on to postsecondary education. However, to become engaged in ways that boost achievement, many families will need information, encouragement, and support from school staff and PTA/parent group leaders. ***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.***

Standard 4: **Speaking Up for Every Child**. There are two goals for this standard. The first is understanding how the school system works. Parents must know how the local school and district operate and how to raise questions or concerns about school and district programs, policies, and activities. They also must understand their rights and responsibilities under federal and state law and local ordinances and policies. The second goal for this standard is empowering families to support their own and other children's success in school. Parents must be prepared to monitor students' progress and guide them toward their goals so they graduate from high school ready for postsecondary education and a career. Many parents need to be enlightened about American education practices, and tutored to have confidence in learning and speaking up for their children. Parents must be taught to be advocates, as every child needs someone who will step in and look out for him or her as an individual. To be a strong advocate for a child, a person should know the child well, talk to him or her often, and deeply want him or her to succeed. ***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.***

Standard 5: **Sharing Power**. There are two goals for this standard. The first is strengthening the family's voice in shared decision-making. Families must be full partners in making decisions on issues affecting their children, both at school and within the local community. In a true partnership, parties have an equal say in important decisions. The lessons we teach our students about democracy in social studies class should come alive in our schools. If families, students, teachers, other school staff, and community members can speak their concerns, take part in elections and other decision-making processes, and meet openly to debate important questions, they will be actively practicing democracy. The second goal is building families' social and political connections. Every school should have a strong, broad-based parent organization that offers families and school staff regular opportunities to network and discuss concerns with each other and with school leaders, public officials, and business and community leaders. The second goal is building families' social and political connections. The parent organization should be strong and broad-based, offering families and school staff regular opportunities to network and discuss concerns with each other and with school leaders, public officials, and business and community members. ***Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create public policies, practices, and programs.***

Standard 6: **Collaborating with Community**. The goal is connecting the school with community resources. Parent and school leaders should work closely with neighborhood associations, government agencies, businesses, and institutions of higher education to strengthen the school. These collaborations should make resources available to students, school staff, and families and build a family-friendly community. Partnerships that connect a school with businesses, hospitals, colleges, service clubs, social service agencies, youth organizations, public housing projects, labor unions, tenant groups, churches, other faith-based organizations, and other community groups can turn a neighborhood into a thriving place to live, work, and raise a family. ***Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.***

Parents and the school should consider the following:

- Host a community resource fair, highlighting programs that support cultural, recreational, academic, health, social and other needs of families.
- Reach out to retired/senior citizens to invite them to volunteer at the school.
- Work with local newspapers to promote special events at the school.
- Invite alumni to participate in an alumni sponsor program getting volunteers to donate time or make a donation to the school.

School staff and leaders can:

- Sponsor an annual 'give-back- day for which students go into the community to perform needed work or service.
- Invite local business to sponsor community resource workshops for teacher involvement activities.
- Host a community breakfast at the school for local businesses and civic leaders.
- Get the news out about all the good things happening at the school.

For more specific information follow this link to the booklet provided by the National PTA: [PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships: An Implementation Guide](#). This link takes you to the section of the [National PTA](#) where the standards are discussed and additional resources are provided.



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