

POTTER-BURNS Elementary School

Pawtucket, Rhode Island
www.psdri.net



Parent Engagement Policy and Informational Handbook



Revised September 2016

The Potter-Burns Elementary School recognizes that parent and family involvement is essential to educating our students and preparing them for life-long learning. Schools, families, and the community must all be actively involved in developing strong programs and policies that support the academic success of every student in the Pawtucket Public Schools.

To this end, the Potter-Burns Elementary School will strive to involve parents and family members of children of all ages and grade levels by developing and implementing systemic and school-based strategies and programs based on the following National PTA standards, indicators and suggested activities (◊) for successful parent/family involvement programs:

Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful

Use a variety of communication tools on a regular basis seeking to facilitate two-way interaction. Establishing opportunities for parents and educators to share partnering information such as students' strengths and learning preferences. Communication in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

- ◆ Newsletters
- ◆ Student planners
- ◆ School calendars (monthly online)
- ◆ Signage outside schools
- ◆ Informational newsletters (monthly online)
- ◆ Parent orientations (June, September)
- ◆ Open houses (August/September)
- ◆ Home visits (as needed)
- ◆ Interpreters (as needed)
- ◆ Translations (as needed)
- ◆ Phone calls (ongoing)
- ◆ Potter-Burns Website (linked from district homepage)
- ◆ Student Progress Reports (trimester)
- ◆ First Day Celebrations/Welcome Back Night (August 29th, 2016)
- ◆ Home-School Compacts (online)
- ◆ Skylert System (ongoing)
- ◆ Individual student progress reports (6 times per year)
- ◆ Individual Learning Plans (as needed, Spec Education)
- ◆ Personal Literacy Plans (as needed)

- ◆ Parent/Teacher conferences (as needed and December and March)
- ◆ Assist parents in acquiring techniques to support their students' learning and develop tools to help establish those areas where support is needed (on-going)

Provide clear information regarding school activities and optional programs.

- ◆ School Calendar/Newsletter (monthly)
- ◆ School/District Web pages (bi-monthly)
- ◆ COZ Letter (3 times per year according to sessions)
- ◆ Email and Skylert Messages (ongoing)

Provide report cards and regular progress reports to parents. Provide support services and follow-up conferences as needed.

- ◆ Progress reports (Mid-trimester)
- ◆ Report Cards (Trimester)
- ◆ Parent-Teacher Conferences (ongoing, as needed, December and March)

Disseminate information on school reforms, policies, discipline procedures, assessment tools, and school goals, and include parents in any related decision-making process.

- ◆ Student Policy/Informational Handbook
- ◆ Mission Statements
- ◆ School Improvement Team
- ◆ District Strategic Plan
- ◆ School Report Night (Spring 2017)
- ◆ Parent Involvement and Informational Handbook
- ◆ Parent Letters
- ◆ District Website
- ◆ Parent-Teacher Organization

Communicate with parents regarding positive student behavior and achievement, not just regarding misbehavior or failure.

Conduct conferences with parents, with follow-up as needed. Encourage immediate contact between parents and teachers when concerns arise.

- ◆ Potter-Burns will demonstrate an effort to reach families that are underrepresented at school conferences due to lack of transportation or child care problems, lack of confidence or time, and/or have limited literacy or limited English language skills.

- ◆ Schedule meetings with families that are convenient and offered at flexible (AM and PM) times.
- ◆ Written Communication/email
- ◆ Phone Calls
- ◆ Conferences
- ◆ Student Progress Reports
- ◆ Phone call
- ◆ Written communication
- ◆ Open Houses
- ◆ Student planners or folders

Distribute student work for parental comment and review on a regular basis.

- ◆ Assignments/Projects with scoring criteria
- ◆ Homework/ Projects with scoring criteria

Translate communications to assist non-English speaking parents.

- ◆ Interpreters and Parent Liaisons

Promote informal activities at which parents, staff, and community members can interact. Provide opportunities for parents to communicate with principals and administrative staff.

- ◆ Open Houses (August/September)
- ◆ Parent Orientations (September and June)
- ◆ “First Day” Celebrations / Welcome Back Night (August 30, 2016)
- ◆ Phone calls (on-going)
- ◆ Written Communication
- ◆ RTI, IEP, 504, Sp Ed Collaborative Meetings (as needed)
- ◆ Kindergarten Orientation (June and September, 2015)
- ◆ Parent-Teacher Organization (Monthly)
- ◆ Family Fun Nights (bi-monthly)
- ◆ Celebrate Success Events (Semester)
- ◆ Fundraisers (Fall and Spring)
- ◆ Field Trips (Slater Mill, Audubon Society, Philharmonic, others as planned by classroom teachers)

Provide staff development regarding effective communication techniques and the importance of regular two-way communication between the school and the family. Provide opportunities for staff members to learn

and share successful approaches to engaging parents in their child's education.

- ◆ Identify areas where professional development is necessary to help teachers, administrators, and staff to work effectively with families, especially those of culturally diverse backgrounds and special education needs.
- ◆ Professional development workshops

Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning

Seek and encourage parental participation in decision-making that affects students.

- ◆ Parent/Teacher conferences
- ◆ IEP Conferences, 504 Meetings
- ◆ School Counselor conferences
- ◆ Personal Literacy Plans (if applicable)
- ◆ RTI Team (monthly)

Inform parents of the expectations for students in each subject at each grade level.

- ◆ Curriculum Nights /Report Nights (Spring 2017, 2018)
- ◆ Open Houses (August 29th, 2016)
- ◆ Parent/Teacher Conferences (December and March)

Provide information regarding how parents can foster learning at home, giving appropriate assistance, monitor homework, and give feedback to teachers. Sponsor workshops or distribute information to assist parents in understanding how students can improve skills, get help when needed, meet class expectations, and perform well on assignments. Provide opportunities for parental involvement in setting student goals and in planning for post-secondary education careers.

- ◆ Newsletters, Written communications
- ◆ Home/School Compact
- ◆ Workshops, Conferences
- ◆ Instructional activities, Interactive homework activities
- ◆ Instructional research projects
- ◆ Provide guidelines for how to help students with their homework
- ◆ Interactive homework activities

- ◆ Curriculum (content) related websites
- ◆ Tutorial websites, Teacher recommended academic websites
- ◆ COZ Program
- ◆ School Improvement Team

Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are encouraged

Educate and assist staff members in creating an inviting climate and effectively utilizing volunteer resources. Establish volunteer activities that are meaningful and built on volunteer interests and abilities. Encourage office staff greetings, signage near the entrances, and any other interaction with parents, create a climate in which the parents feel valued and welcome.

- ◆ Create and maintain a responsive and welcoming atmosphere for parents and families.
- ◆ Parent/community bulletin board in foyer
- ◆ Professional development and informational workshops
- ◆ Utilize results of interests surveys
- ◆ Activities are well-planned and meaningful

Survey parents regarding their interests, talents, and availability, then coordinate the parent resources with those that exist within the school and among the faculty. Encourage parents who are unable to volunteer in the school building the option to help in other ways, at home or place of employment. Organize an easy, accessible program for utilizing parent volunteers, providing ample training on volunteer procedures and school protocol. Develop a system for contacting parents to assist as the year progresses. Show appreciation for parents' participation, and value their diverse contributions.

- ◆ Interest surveys
- ◆ School Improvement Teams
- ◆ Parent/Teacher Organization
- ◆ Involve parents, whenever appropriate, in a variety of instructional and support roles both within as well as outside of the school.
- ◆ Parent Involvement Team Workshops
- ◆ Parent-Teacher Organization
- ◆ Newsletters, written communications, phone calls
- ◆ Positive recognition of parental participation

Parenting skills are promoted and supported

Communicate the importance of positive relationships between parents and their children. Link parents to programs and resources within the community that provide support services to families. Support policies that recognize the variety of cultural traditions and religious diversity.

- ◆ Inform parents of current research findings investigating Parent Involvement and student success.
- ◆ Assist parents in acquiring techniques to support their student's development socially and academically.
- ◆ Provide access to and coordinate community and support services for children and families (COZ program).
- ◆ Parent Liaisons
- ◆ Social Workers
- ◆ Work in breaking down barriers and negative perceptions that stand in the way of education being recognized as a vital part of each child's development into full and productive citizens of the community.
- ◆ Parent Involvement Centers (286 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI)

Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families

Provide a process for addressing issues and/or concerns, appealing decisions, and resolving problems.

- ◆ Student Policy and Informational Handbooks
- ◆ Work closely with PTO and parents in supporting parent and family initiatives that support academic achievement.

Include parents on decision-making and advisory committees, and provide training for such areas as policy, curriculum, budget, school reform initiatives, safety, and personnel. Encourage parents to participate as partners when setting school goals, developing or evaluating programs and policies, or responding to performance data. Promote parent participation on school district, state, and national committees and issues.

- ◆ School Improvement and District Parent Involvement Teams

- ◆ Action Planning, Title I, Home-School Compact
- ◆ Provide parents with current information regarding school policies, practices, and both student and school performance data.
- ◆ Student Policy and Informational Handbook
- ◆ Parent Involvement Policy and Informational Handbook
- ◆ Report Night

Encourage active parent participation in the decisions that affect students such as interventions, and individual personalized education plans. Treat parental concerns with respect and demonstrate genuine interest in developing solutions. Provide training or information for staff and parents on collaborative partnering and shared decision making.

- ◆ Parent/Teacher informational sessions/workshops
- ◆ Invite parents to help create a plan to deal with individual student problems/issues.
- ◆ Approval of Individualized Educational Plans

POTTER-BURNS HOME SCHOOL PACT

As a school, we agree to:

- Teach classes using best practices to address the needs of all our students
- Have high expectations and help every child to develop a love for learning
- Communicate regularly with families about student progress
- Provide a safe and caring learning environment

- Actively participate in collaborating with families and my colleagues to make our school an accessible and welcoming place which will help students achieve our schools high academic standards
- Respect school, students, staff, and families by being Approachable, Available, and Affirming (3 A's)

As students, we agree to:

- Read for at least 30 minutes every day
- Strive to ACE (Achieve Core Excellence)
- Ask for help whenever there is a problem
- Come to school ready to learn and work hard (**3 R's: Respectful, Responsible, and Ready**)
- Know and follow school and class rules
- Respect the school, classmates, staff and families

As family, we agree to:

- Provide a quiet time and place for homework
- Read to my child and/or encourage my child to read at least 30 minutes every day
- Ensure that my child attends school every day, gets adequate sleep, and is at school on time
- Regularly monitor my child's progress in school
- Participate in school activities such as school decision making, volunteering and/or attending, parent/teacher conferences
- Communicate the importance of education and learning to my child
- Respect the school, staff, students, and families

School _____

Student _____

Parent/Guardian _____

What is *Every Student Succeeds Act*?

What is a Title I School?

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) targets federal funds to high-poverty communities to provide compensatory educational services to low-achieving students. These funds are distributed by a

poverty-based formula to approximately 90 percent of the school districts in the nation.

Parent involvement has always been an integral part of Title I. Under the new Law, *No Child Left Behind*, one of the new purposes of Title I is to ensure that funds are used to promote parent involvement. Parents should take full advantage of the opportunities for involvement that the law provides.

Every district receiving Title I money is required to:

- ◆ Develop with parents a written parent involvement policy that is then distributed to parents and made available to the local community.
- ◆ Convene an annual meeting of parents to inform them of the policy and their right to be involved.
- ◆ Offer flexible parent involvement meetings, if necessary, with Title I money to provide child care, transportation, or home visits.
- ◆ Involve parents in an organized and ongoing way in the planning, review, and improvement of school programs.
- ◆ Develop with parents a Home-School Compact that outlines actions to be taken to improve individual student academic achievement.
- ◆ Increase opportunities for parent involvement in the school by helping parents understand academic content standards and state achievement standards and assessments.
- ◆ Provide materials and training for parents, teachers, pupil services personnel, and other staff to foster greater parent involvement.
- ◆ Integrate activities with other programs: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), English as a Second Language (ESL), etc.

Research Findings

(Henderson A. & Berta N: *The Evidence Grows (1981); The Evidence Continues to Grow (1987); and A Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement (1995)*. An analysis of more than 85 studies.

Parent Involvement and Student Success

- When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' educational level.
- The more extensive the parent involvement, the higher the student achievement.
- When parents are involved in their students' education, those students have higher grades and test scores, better attendance, and complete homework more consistently.
- When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.
- Students whose parents are involved in their lives have higher graduation rates and greater enrollment rates in post-secondary education.
- Different types of parent /family involvement produce different gains. To have long-lasting gains for students, parental involvement activities must be well-planned, inclusive, and comprehensive.
- In programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships, student achievement for disadvantaged children, not only improves, but also can reach levels that are standard for middle-class children. In addition, the children who are farthest behind make the greatest gains.
- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the learning institution.
- Student behaviors, such as alcohol use, violence, and antisocial behavior decrease as parental involvement increases.
- Students are more likely to fall behind in academic performance if their parents do not participate in school events, fail to develop a

working relationship with their child's educators, or keep up with what is happening in their child's school.

- The benefits of involving parents are not confined to the early years; there are significant gains at all ages and grade levels.
- Junior and senior high school students, whose parents remain involved, make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, and develop realistic plans for their future. Students whose parents are not involved, on the other hand, are more likely to drop out of school.
- The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to 1) create a home environment that encourages learning; 2) communicate high, yet reasonable expectations for children's achievement and future careers; and 3) become involved in their children's education and in the community.

Parent Involvement and School Quality

- Schools that work well with families have improved teacher moral and higher ratings of teachers by parents
- Schools where parents are involved have more support from families and better reputations from the community.
- School programs that involve parents out perform identical programs without parent and family involvement.
- Schools where children are failing improve dramatically when parents are enabled to become effective partners in their child's education.
- The school's practice to inform and involve parents are strong determinants of whether inner-city parents will be involved with their children's education, family size, marital status, and even student grade level.

Parent Involvement and Program Design

- The more the relationship between parents and educators approaches a comprehensive, well-planned partnership, the higher the student achievement.
- For low-income families, programs offering home visits are more successful in involving parents than programs requiring parents to visit the school. However, when the parents become involved at school, their children make even greater gains.
- When parents receive frequent and effective communication from the school or program, their involvement increases, their overall

evaluation of educators improves, and their attitudes toward the program are more positive.

- Parents are much more likely to become involved when educators encourage and assist parents in helping their children with their schoolwork.
- Effective programs are lead by a team of administrators, educators, and parents, and have access to financial resources.
- When they are treated as partners and given relevant information by people with whom they are comfortable, parents put into practice the involvement strategies they already know are effective, but have been hesitant to contribute.
- One of the most significant challenges to conducting an effective program is the lack of instruction on parent and family involvement that educators and administrators receive in their professional training.
- Collaboration with families is an essential component of a reform strategy, but it is not a substitute for high-quality education programs or comprehensive school improvement.

**SEDL: The National Center for Family and Community Connections
with Schools**

<http://www.sedl.org/connections/>

[*The School-Family Connection: Looking at the Larger Picture - A Review of Current Literature*](#) (PDF file: 1.3MB) In SEDL's latest review of family involvement literature, *The School-Family Connection: Looking at the Larger Picture, A Review of Current Literature* surveys thirty research reports and meta-analyses published between 2005 and 2008. These studies explore a wide range of family involvement programs, challenges, needs, strategies, and contexts—ways to *get out of the box* and increase school-family connections. This review of the literature provides greater clarity about creating partnerships among schools, families, and community groups. Most importantly, these studies provide insight into the *how* and *why* of programs adopting contextually driven approaches rather than limiting efforts to those activities that are convenient to school staff, time, and facilities. The document contains 1) an overview of new literature, 2) a matrix of the trends across the studies, 3) an explanation of the types of research studies included in the review, and 4) detailed descriptions of each of the included reports.

[*Readiness: School, Family, and Community Connections*](#) (PDF file: 940K) The fourth research synthesis focusing on family and community connections with schools, *Readiness: School, Family, and Community Connections* describes 48 research studies on the contextual factors associated with children's readiness. In particular, this synthesis explores children's abilities as they make the transition to kindergarten, factors associated with these abilities, and implications of these factors on children's later success. It also discusses the effectiveness of a variety of early childhood or preschool interventions that include a family or community focus. [**Print copies are available**](#) from the SEDL Store.

[*Diversity: School, Family, and Community Connections*](#) (PDF file: 840K) is the third in a series of reports to help local school, community, and family leaders obtain useful research-based information about key educational issues. This synthesis focuses specifically on three categories: race or ethnicity, culture (including language), and socioeconomic status. The report also explores barriers to involvement for minority and low-income families, strategies that have been used to address those barriers, and recommendations that local educational leaders can adapt to address their specific needs. It is based on a review of over 64 studies. [**Print copies are available**](#) from the SEDL Store.

[*A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*](#) (PDF file: 1.2 MB) This review of the research examines the growing evidence that family and community connections with schools make a difference in student success. It is a synthesis of 51 studies about the impact of family and community involvement on student achievement, and effective strategies to connect schools, families and community. This publication is the second in the series of annual research syntheses by SEDL's National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, and the fourth in the series of *Evidence* publications authored or co-authored by Anne T. Henderson. [**Print copies are available**](#) from the SEDL Store.

[*A New Wave of Evidence Key Findings*](#) (PDF file: 28k) This short handout lists the eight key findings from *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement*. It cites specific studies

supporting each key finding, and provides a full reference list for those studies.

[A New Wave of Evidence Family and Community Engagement Self-Assessment](#) (PDF file: 12k)

Developed by Dr. Karen Mapp, co-author of *A New Wave of Evidence* and Lecturer in Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, this simple tool can help you assess where your school or school district is in relation to the report's recommendations. It is designed to be used as a supplement to presentations or discussions about *A New Wave of Evidence*.

[Emerging Issues in School, Family, & Community Connections](#)(PDF file: 531K) is the first in a series of research syntheses that will examine key issues in the field of family and community connections with schools. The issues highlighted in this synthesis represent critical areas of work in family and community connections with schools where clarification, agreement, and further development are needed, as well as promising new directions that are emerging. It is based on a review of over 160 publications. You may also view this document in [HTML format](#). [Print copies are available](#) from the SEDL Store.

Ways Families and Communities Can Help Children Succeed in Our Schools

- ◆ Join the School Improvement Team
- ◆ Talk to your child about homework
- ◆ Display student artwork at your workplace
- ◆ Talk with your child about school activities
- ◆ Let your school know you are available to help
- ◆ Organize a parent workshop
- ◆ Take your child to the library
- ◆ Establish daily “quiet time” at home for study
- ◆ Praise your child’s efforts
- ◆ Participate in educational task forces and advisory councils
- ◆ Adopt a school
- ◆ Attend school programs
- ◆ Accompany students on field trips or other extracurricular activities
- ◆ Attend school committee meetings
- ◆ Participate in your child’s school parent programs or clubs

For more information contact Dr. McWilliams at Potter-Burns at 401-729-6250 or one of the District Parent Involvement Coordinators:

Lisa Fonseca, Parent & Community Coordinator

- ◆ Speaks: English and Portuguese
- ◆ Pawtucket School Department
- ◆ 729-6330