

A group of diverse young people, including a woman in a dark purple hoodie and several children in blue and teal shirts, are looking up at the camera with various expressions of interest and joy. The background is a bright, slightly overexposed blue.

**Effective Family and Community
Connections:
Challenges at the Middle/High School Level**

Opening the Next Level of Involvement

**Southwest Educational Development Laboratory and
Harvard Family Research Project**

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Public Education Network (PEN) is...

- **A national network of 90 Local Education Funds = community-based 501(c)(3) organizations**
- **All in high-poverty areas (urban and rural)**
- **Independent from their school districts, professionally staffed, boards reflective of their community**
- **Committed to whole system reform, to ensure a high quality education for all children**



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Parents for Public Schools

- **National organization with 25 community-based chapters in 14 states.**
- **Constructive engagement of and support for parents in decision-making and leadership at district and school levels.**
- **Diverse membership holds schools, families and communities accountable for serving all children well.**
- **Recruits families to enroll in public schools because quality public education is vital to our democracy and to America's future.**

Parent Involvement in Change & Transition

“It isn’t the changes that do you in, it’s the transition. Change is situational: the new site, the new boss, the new team roles, the new policy. Transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Change is external. Transition is internal.”

William Bridges from *Managing Transitions*

Parent Involvement in Change & Transition

“Management does not need more information about what is happening inside the organization. It needs more information on what is happening outside.”

Peter Drucker from *Forbes*

Major Federal Policies on PI

- NCLB
 - Title I, Section 1118
 - Title II, Teacher Quality
 - Title III, ESL
 - Low Performing/Corrective Action Schools
- 21st Century Schools
- Drug Free Schools
- Head Start
- IDEA
- Comprehensive School Reform
- Even Start
- Drop Out Prevention

Involvement in Middle and High School: As Students Grow Older.....

- Contact between family and school declines: in number and in the positive nature of the contacts
- Drops dramatically at transition to middle grades
- Volunteerism drops
- Fewer involvement opportunities
- More of a “hands-off” attitude from school
- More focus on subject matter
- Increased bureaucracy



Six Major Elements of Involvement



1. School district /school commitment & leadership
2. Transition from elementary to middle/high school
3. Effective communications
4. Shared decision-making
5. Relationship and trust building
6. Staff expertise

Research Needs

Barriers to Involvement.....



- School not organized for involvement
- Cultural and Language Barriers
- Little connection made between involvement and achievement
- Poor communications
- Differing teacher/parent expectations

Barriers to Involvement.....



- Meetings scheduled when parents cannot attend
- Lack of principals/teacher expertise
- Sense of powerlessness
- Size of school and increased number of teachers
- School climate not welcoming

2004 PEN NCLB Web-based Survey: N=10,728

Have you been asked to become involved in any of the following educational activities related to NCLB? (check all that apply)	Response Ratio
Developing state standards	7%
Developing the state test required by NCLB	3%
Developing the state and/or local report cards required by NCLB	4%
Developing the district Title I parent involvement policy	6%
Giving input into the district annual Title I program	9%
Making recommendations for what constitutes a "highly qualified teacher" under NCLB	5%
Participating in the improvement team for schools that were identified as needing improvement under NCLB	13%
None of the above	75%

School District Commitment/Leadership

- District Mission & Formal Policy
- Comprehensive district-wide expectations
- Administrative and Funding Support
- District holds system accountable for implementing involvement
- Encourages Partnership & Ownership

Research Needs:

- ✓ *What does a responsive school organization look like? For achievement? For democracy?*
- ✓ *How do schools encourage involvement?*
- ✓ *What constitutes an effective district/school policy?*
- ✓ *Involvement for what?*

Transition from Elementary to Middle/High School

- Start transition processes early
- Focus on student and parent needs
- Share information between schools

Research Needs:

- ✓ *What helps smooth the transitions for parents, students, schools and communities?*
- ✓ *How does transition differ to middle school and high?*
- ✓ *How does the school organize to help parents make the transitions?*

Effective Two-Way Communications

- Timely communication
- Understandable to non-educators
- Native languages
- Training for school staff
- Training for parents

Research Needs:

- ✓ *What do parents want and need to know?*
- ✓ *What are effective tools for communication between home and school?*
- ✓ *How can the community support school-home communication?*

Shared Decision-Making

- Civic Side of involvement
- District/school policies, curriculum, hiring, instructional materials and reform
- Requirements of NCLB
- Focuses on building social and political capital: the power element
- Using data: involvement in school improvement plans
- Mobilizes parents and builds a constituency for quality public schools
- Role of community organizations

Research Needs:

- ✓ *What is parent's role in reforming high schools?*
- ✓ *What are most effective models to build political support for change?*
- ✓ *How to build demand for quality public high schools?*
- ✓ *Role of CBO's and parent organizations?*

Relationship and Trust Building

- Mutual respect
- Training for school staff
- Information and training for parents
- Time and priority given to building relationships
- Build on previous successes
- Share information between schools
- Address needs of parents

Research Needs:

- ✓ *What processes and schedules best support relationship building?*
- ✓ *How can the community encourage trust-building?*

Board and Staff Professional Development

- Continuous and integrated staff development at the pre-service and in-service levels
- Build PI into the administrator leadership and teacher prep college programs
- Developing common interests and bonds between school district and community
- Board commitment, understanding, policy development, and evaluation of involvement?

Research Needs:

- ✓ *What preparation & curriculum at pre-service levels is necessary? In-service?*
- ✓ *What skills are necessary for effective involvement?*
- ✓ *What is the research link between involvement and achievement? Political support?*
- ✓ *What is higher ed's understanding of their PD roles*