

The MISSING PIECE



OF THE PROFICIENCY PUZZLE

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Recommendations for Involving Families and
Community in Improving Student Achievement

Commissioner's Parents Advisory Council
Final Report to the Kentucky Department of Education
June 2007



The Commonwealth
Institute for
Parent Leadership

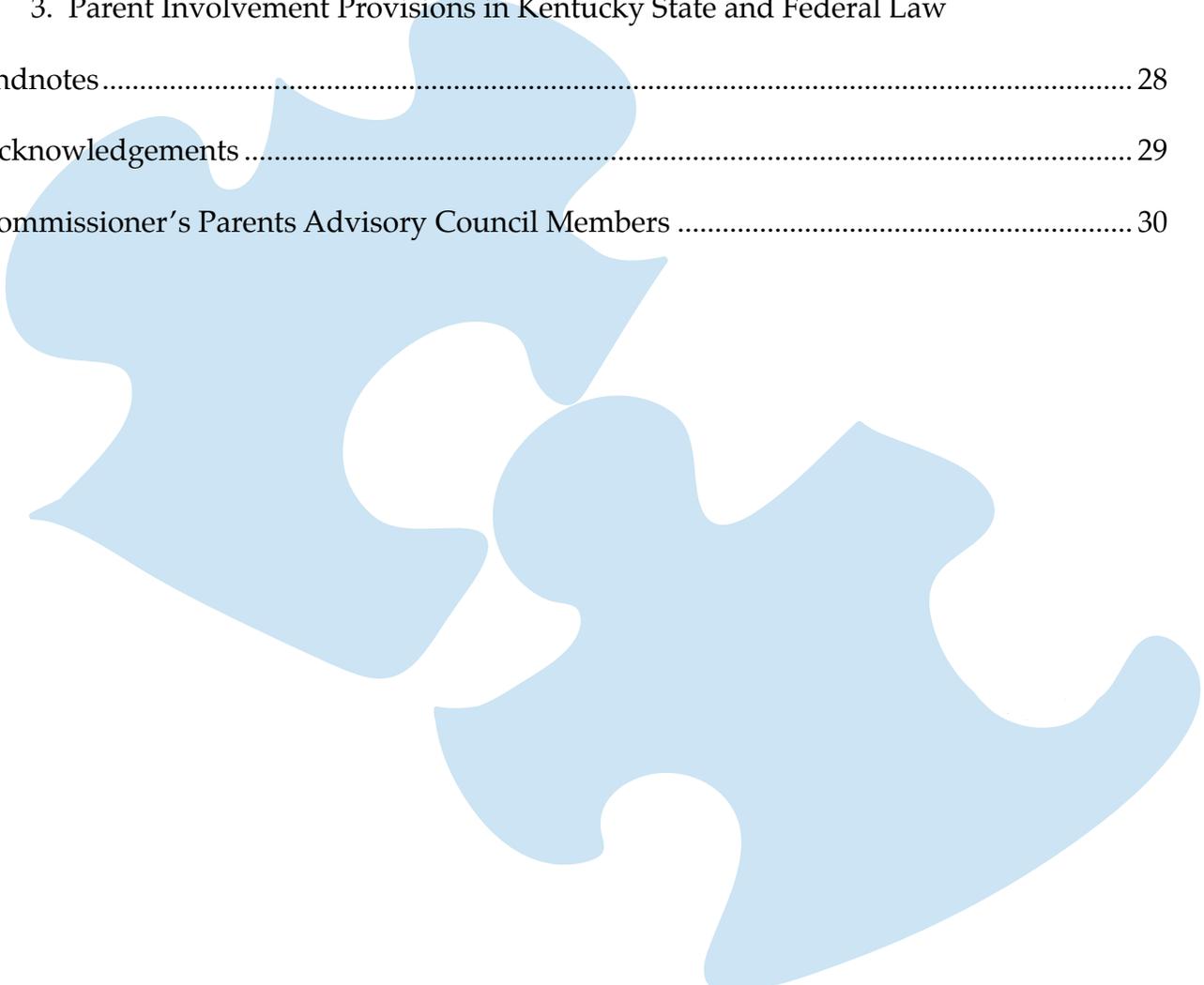


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Kevin M. Noland
Interim Commissioner of Education

Dear Friends of Education:

Although the Commissioner's Parents Advisory Council began under my predecessors and was given its current charge by Commissioner Gene Wilhoit, I and the Kentucky Department of Education staff fully share their deep commitment to increasing parent and community involvement in Kentucky schools.

I am proud of our state's accomplishments in education. The many provisions in Kentucky law for ensuring that parents and community members have a powerful voice in our public schools have, I am certain, been a wellspring of this success. But more remains to be done, and the proposed new standard for parent and community engagement in schools and recommendations for future action point the way.

Since becoming Interim Commissioner, I have attended every CPAC meeting from start to finish, and I know how dedicated its members are and how much effort they have put into their work. I am grateful to Cindy Baumert and Dennis Pearce for their leadership, and to the CPAC members for their constructive efforts and spirit of true partnership. I also commend the KDE staff for its fine work and many contributions.

The real work now lies before us. I will urge my successor to embrace this report and work closely with CPAC members and KDE staff to make our state the first in the nation to rise to proficiency in the practice of family and community engagement.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin M. Noland".

Kevin Noland
Interim Commissioner
Kentucky Department of Education

Executive Summary

From its beginning under Commissioner Wilmer Cody in 1999, the purpose of the Commissioner's Parents Advisory Council (CPAC) has been to advise the Kentucky Department of Education on policy issues and to increase parent leadership for improving public education. CPAC has over 30 parent members from across the state, selected at the discretion of the commissioner.

On March 30, 2006, the then Commissioner Gene Wilhoit gave CPAC members this instruction: "My goal is outstanding practice to involve parents in every school in Kentucky. Your charge is to pull together an agenda for the state and produce a document that builds on what exists and pushes us to a higher level."

Building on our state's long experience with reform, CPAC strongly recommends that Kentucky become the first state in the nation to set a standard for family and community involvement that is focused on improving student achievement. This standard includes six objectives designed to involve families and the community to improve student achievement, so that our state will meet its goal of all children reaching proficiency by 2014 and thereafter. We wish to make clear that for the purposes of this report, parents and/or families means natural, adoptive or foster parents; close relatives; legal or educational guardians; and/or community or agency advocates.

In the *Kentucky Family and Community Involvement Guide to Student Achievement*, a comprehensive performance assessment tool, CPAC proposes specific school-level descriptors for each objective. These descriptors include provisions that every student in Kentucky will have a parent, or another adult, who knows how to support that student's academic achievement. The objectives are as follows:

1. **Relationship-building:** The school staff builds productive, personal relationships with parents of all students.
2. **Communications:** Two-way information in many forms flows regularly between school staff and parents about students' academic achievement and individual needs.
3. **Decision-making:** School staff encourages, supports, and expects parents to be involved in school improvement decisions and to monitor and assist school improvement.
4. **Advocacy:** For each student, the school staff identifies and supports a parent or other adult who can take personal responsibility for understanding and speaking for that child's learning needs.
5. **Learning Opportunities:** The school staff ensures that families have multiple opportunities to understand how to support their children's learning.
6. **Community Partnerships:** The school staff engages and partners with community members to plan and implement substantive work to improve student achievement.

To implement these objectives, CPAC recommends that the Kentucky Department of Education take four major actions:

1. **Set high expectations, measure performance, and report progress.** Adopt the proposed Kentucky Family and Community Involvement Guide to Student Achievement as an audit tool that can serve as a scoring guide, or rubric. In addition, incorporate these individual performance descriptors, as appropriate, into the Standards and Indicators for School Improvement (SISI) document.
2. **Help schools improve relationship-building and communications.** Encourage schools to adopt a "customer satisfaction" model by developing training modules that local districts

can use. Make data and other information on family involvement available on the KDE website, including the results of a regular statewide parent survey. Establish family and community involvement advisory councils at all levels – local, district, and state.

3. Provide resources and support. Develop an infrastructure for state support of districts and schools that includes training, resources, tools, and recognition for real achievement in family and community involvement. Add reader-friendly information and resources to the KDE website, including the work of the CPAC, research on parent involvement and effective practice, as well as state and community-based resources that could facilitate coordination of family involvement.

4. Build capacity through professional development.

- Invest in parents by providing funding for statewide parent leadership training, developing a parent education curriculum for monitoring a student’s progress, and developing a diverse network of parents who are trained and supported by the Kentucky Department of Education to act as mentors, trainers, and team members to assist Kentucky schools, districts, and parents.
- Invest in educators, through professional development, on strategies for engaging families in improving student achievement.
- Invest in collaboration by developing joint parent-teacher training on cultural competence, and by improving training for SBDM councils and audit teams on the effective use of the new objectives and performance descriptors.
- Invest in evaluation by developing measurements to assess the impact of professional development on levels of family and community involvement, teacher satisfaction, school climate, and student outcomes; and by recognizing schools and districts that have fully implemented the new objectives.

It’s easy to become overwhelmed with the number of underachieving students. I want this report to strongly express the importance of each student needing a parent, advocate, or mentor to assist in achieving academic success. If everyone could be encouraged to first reach one student and then continue to add others, I believe we could win the battle and close the achievement gap.

Tina Brooks, Fayette County

History and Mission

From its beginning under Commissioner Wilmer Cody in 1999, the purpose of the Commissioner's Parents Advisory Council (CPAC) has been to advise the Kentucky Department of Education on policy issues and to increase positive leadership of parents for improving public education. The CPAC considers topics that are of interest to parents, especially ways that parents and communities can assist schools in raising the achievement level for all schools and every student.

The Commissioner's Parents Advisory Council has over 30 parent members from across the state, nominated by the Kentucky Parent Teacher Association, the Kentucky Association of School Councils, and the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. CPAC members are selected at the discretion of the Commissioner for two-year terms and meet quarterly. A majority of CPAC members have completed the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL) training offered by the Prichard Committee. In addition, many have benefitted from training provided by the PTA and Kentucky Association of School Councils. These three leadership programs have created a cadre of experienced parent leaders who have become local, district, and state PTA leaders; members of local school boards and school based decision-making councils; and members of state bodies such as the state scholastic audit team, the state textbook selection committee, and the special education legislation committee.

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990, one of the first and best-designed standards-based state education reform laws, was a landmark both for the state and the nation. KERA relied partly on National PTA Standards when the general assembly in 1990 required that parents be members of school-based decision making (SBDM) councils, making Kentucky the only state in the union with required parent involvement in key decisions about learning and instruction for all K-12 schools.

It is our state's goal that all Kentucky children, no matter where they live or what their background, will become proficient learners of the core curriculum by the year 2014 and thereafter. CPAC members see their mission as establishing as a high priority the kind of parent and community involvement that will strengthen the accountability system established by KERA and will have a positive impact on student achievement throughout Kentucky.

Knowledgeable, informed parents from across the state have taken part in the process of writing this report. It's proof that parents understand the need for parent involvement to be a means to an end in schools, rather than an end in itself. It is our hope that this guide will help educators move to that perspective as well, so that engaging parents becomes an important strategy for improving achievement.

Beverly Raimondo, Fayette County

In the 17 years since the law was passed, we have traveled more than two-thirds of the way to 2014. At its April 2007 meeting, the state board examined performance data on the progress that schools are making toward proficiency and found that fewer than half of Kentucky's public schools are projected to meet the state's accountability goal by the 2014 deadline. State Board members have determined that a "cultural change" is needed in public schools across the state and emphasized the urgency needed to ensure that Kentucky schools reach the state goal.

In 2006, roughly 51 percent of schools were meeting their goals, 37 percent were “progressing,” and 12 percent were either “progressing but declining” or “in assistance.” Data projections of performance in 2014 indicate that only 37 percent of schools will achieve the state goal. Approximately 50 percent will be progressing, and 13 percent of schools will be in assistance.¹

This same concern has been building within CPAC discussions for the past few years. On March 30, 2006, the then Commissioner Gene Wilhoit personally gave CPAC members this instruction:

My goal is outstanding practice to involve parents in every school in Kentucky. Your charge is to pull together an agenda for the state and produce a document that builds on what exists and pushes us to a higher level.

The opportunity to build on Kentucky’s history as a pioneer in school improvement across an entire state was irresistible. Immediately, CPAC members began working to take this charge and make it their own. First, they developed a vision to share with the leadership of the Kentucky Department of Education, a vision centered on Kentucky children:

The vision of the Commissioner’s Parent Advisory Council is outstanding parent and community involvement practices that focus on improved student achievement and that touch all students in every Kentucky school.

Throughout our work, CPAC members have studied state and national standards, research on the impact of parent and community involvement on student achievement, and the literature on effective practice. Accordingly, the resolve was made to recommend proven practices, so that districts and schools would make available opportunities for family and community involvement that were defined by state and national standards, examined by well-designed and rigorous research, and tested through effective programs.

Building on these findings and on our state’s long experience with reform, CPAC members unanimously recommend that Kentucky become the first state in the nation to adopt comprehensive objectives and school-level performance descriptors for family and community involvement focused on improving student achievement. In the *Kentucky Family and Community Involvement Guide to Student Achievement* in Appendix 1, CPAC proposes specific school-level descriptors for each objective, which include provisions that every student in Kentucky will have a parent, or another adult, who knows how to support that student’s academic achievement. The purpose of each objective is to involve families and the community to improve student achievement, so that our state will meet its goal of all children reaching proficiency by 2014 and thereafter.

Educational Advocacy works. We should not be afraid to say that children need the support of their parents and/or other adult advocates to become college-ready graduates and productive citizens. All students need assistance in preparation for postsecondary education or a career. It is no longer acceptable to barely pass all your high school classes and get your diploma.

Cindy Baumert, Jefferson County

Why is this Important?

Thirty years of research and a long history of federal and state legislation demonstrate the importance of parent involvement in their children's learning and development. In the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, the federal government for the first time offered a definition of parent involvement:

Regular, two-way and meaningful communication about student learning and other school activities, including:

- Assisting their child's learning
- Being actively involved in their child's education at school
- Serving as full partners in their child's education and being included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committee to assist in the education of their child
- The carrying out of other activities such as those described in section 1118.
- Public Law 107-110, Title IX, Section 9109 (32)

CPAC has adopted this basic definition of parent involvement as its premise. This report further holds that schools should develop a productive relationship with every student's parent(s) or family, and provide enough resources and support so that each student will have a parent or other adult who knows and understands the following:

- The academic expectations and individual needs that must be addressed to prepare that child for post-secondary education or work
- A variety of ways to access resources to help the child meet these academic expectations and address his or her individual needs
- How to advocate for the child's educational rights under Kentucky law and federal programs such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- The basic duties, responsibilities and benefits of serving on committees, task forces, councils, and parent organizations

This definition and these basic expectations underlie all the recommendations proposed in this report. We wish to make clear that for the purposes of this report, parents and/or families means natural, adoptive or foster parents; close relatives; legal or educational guardians; and/or community or agency advocates.

It's the law. Both Kentucky law and the No Child Left Behind Act require that all students must achieve proficiency in reading and math by the year 2014, that gaps between different groups of students must be eliminated, and that every school must make adequate progress each year to meet those goals. In addition, Kentucky law requires all students reach proficiency in science, social studies, writing, practical living, and arts and humanities. These laws, and additional legislation such as the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and the state achievement gap bill (Senate Bill 168), specifically define ways in which parents are to be involved in ensuring that their child becomes a proficient learner.² (For more information about state and federal law, see Appendix 3.)

We know that our schools are staffed with dedicated, hard-working teachers and administrators, but we also know that all stakeholders must take part in the school improvement process. Disparities in parent and family engagement and in the use of community resources widen the achievement gap and contribute to poor school performance. Our state has raised its standards and expectations for students; now we must raise our expectations for parents, families and community members as well. We need a vision for parent and community involvement, one that will focus our efforts in identifying barriers and providing resources to improve achievement for all students.

Research shows the way. Family and community involvement can have a powerful and positive impact on student outcomes. According to *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, a research review published by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in 2002,³ students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs
- Be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits
- Attend school regularly
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school
- Graduate and go on to post-secondary education

A solid body of research finds that families of all income and education levels, and from all ethnic and cultural groups, support their children's learning at home. Families with more income and education, however, tend to be more engaged at school and have more resources to help their children at home. Supporting all families to be more involved at school and better informed about what children are learning in class must become a widely-used strategy for improving learning and addressing the achievement gap.

Programs and special efforts to engage families make a difference. Teacher outreach to parents can result in strong, consistent gains in student performance in both reading and math. Effective outreach practices include meeting with families face to face, sending learning materials home, and keeping in touch about progress.⁴ Workshops for parents on helping their children are linked to higher reading and math scores.⁵ Schools with highly rated partnership programs make greater gains on state tests than schools with lower-rated programs.⁶



Higher performing schools effectively involve families and community. Schools that succeed in engaging families from diverse backgrounds share three key practices:

- Focus on building trusting, collaborative relationships and two-way communications among teachers, families, and community members
- Recognize, respect, and address families' needs, as well as bridge class and cultural differences
- Embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared and where families are effective advocates for their children⁷

Parent leadership and community organizing efforts are improving schools. Parent leadership training and community organizing programs, which are growing across the country, expand families'

knowledge of how the system works and how to make it work for their children. Unlike school-based parent involvement, parent leadership and community organizing programs build partnerships to support schools and hold them accountable for results. These organizing efforts have led to upgraded school facilities, improved school leadership and staffing, higher quality learning programs, new resources to improve teaching and curricula, and new funding for after-school and family support programs.⁸

The Process

In July 2005, the then Commissioner Wilhoit and CPAC members concluded that current ways used by the state to measure and hold schools accountable for parent involvement are inadequate. Districts and schools are not provided with enough training and resources to employ parent involvement effectively to improve student achievement. In researching actions taken by other states, a CPAC member found an interesting precedent, *A Shared Responsibility: Recommendations for Increasing Family and Community Involvement in Schools* (2005), a report produced by the Maryland Family and Community Involvement Initiative, chaired by the state PTA.

After further discussion of how Kentucky could best approach the task of producing its own report and recommendations to improve the practice of family and community engagement across the state, CPAC invited Anne Henderson, a senior consultant with the Community Involvement Program at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, to facilitate the process.

At the March 2006 CPAC meeting, Shaun Murphy, Branch Manager of Community Support for Students and Families at KDE, shared information about existing Department initiatives involving families and community. CPAC agreed to serve as the executive committee of a new family and

community involvement initiative, to drive the work, determine logistics, and involve others in carrying out the process. CPAC members Cindy Baumert and Dennis Pearce were chosen to serve as co-chairs.



Throughout the summer of 2006, Shaun Murphy and Linda Robinson, a program consultant with the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program, shared more information about current KDE initiatives. CPAC members also investigated Department data and reports on student achievement. In August, CPAC held a “data party,” where Cheri Meadows, Branch Manager

of Council Development and Planning, led a CPAC committee through an exercise of analyzing scholastic audit and review reports and other student data. The group found that while the Kentucky Standards and Indicators for School Improvement (KY SISI) have school-level performance descriptors that address parent involvement, some audit reports lacked adequate recommendations for using parent involvement to improve student achievement. (KDE uses the SISI document to conduct scholastic audits and reviews to identify opportunities for improvement and provide guidance for planning and development of comprehensive school and district improvement plans.)

CPAC members also found that in the School Report Card, data on parent involvement are limited to the number of volunteer hours and the number of voters in school council elections. There are no defined criteria for measuring these data, and accuracy differs from school to school and district to district. These data do not address the authentic participation (see box on the next page) necessary for improving student achievement.

Authentic Participation

The Harvard Family Research Project has defined “authentic participation in school reform” as having seven qualities:

1. A community of parents committed to school improvement
2. Relationship of trust between parents and school staff
3. Development of parent participation and leadership skills
4. Opportunities for parents to influence the process and outcomes of an issue
5. Parent involvement in a deliberation process where all participants are on an equal footing
6. New roles for administrators and teachers as partners who listen to parents’ concerns, work with them on issues, and engage them in open dialogue
7. Changes in local administrative systems to support authentic participation

At meetings in the fall of 2006, CPAC used information gleaned from the data party to identify four areas for inquiry: communications, expectations, training, and resources. CPAC members were charged with developing each area, defining parent involvement in terms of its impact on student achievement.

When I was concerned about instruction in my daughter’s elementary school, I started to ask questions and then join committees so I could help make decisions. Within a short time I completely understood and supported what the teachers were doing, and I was able to back up their work both at home and by volunteering at school. The best part was that it was great for my daughter. Her teachers and parents were all on the same page, supporting each others’ work and creating an environment in which she could thrive.

Lois Quilligan, Boyle County

From that work, a committee of CPAC members developed six objectives for family and community involvement and drafted performance descriptors in January 2007. In February and March, a small group of CPAC members met several times to refine the six objectives and in this process created a guide that would make clear to Kentucky parents, schools, and districts the stages of performance and development they have achieved. This guide, the *Kentucky Family and Community Involvement Guide to Student Achievement* is intended to reveal the path for improvement of family and community involvement in a similar way that KDE uses the SISI document in the scholastic audit process. This group presented the guide on March 29th to the entire CPAC for review. At that meeting, CPAC decided to recommend that these performance descriptors be incorporated, where appropriate, into the KDE school improvement process as a guide for a family and community involvement audit. This guide and its objectives and descriptors are described in the next section. A full copy is included in Appendix 1.

The Objectives

Building on Kentucky's pioneering tradition of setting high standards for students, CPAC strongly recommends that Kentucky become the first state in the nation to set a standard for family and community involvement that is focused on improving student achievement. This standard includes six objectives designed to involve families and the community to improve student achievement, so that our state will meet its goal of all children's reaching proficiency by 2014 and thereafter. We wish to make clear that for the purposes of this report, parents and/or families means natural, adoptive or foster parents; close relatives; legal or educational guardians; and/or community or agency advocates.

The basis of these objectives comes from the work of Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at the National Network for Partnership Schools which has been published by the National PTA.¹⁰ The CPAC built on that work to further define how schools can involve parents and community in improving student achievement.

In addition, CPAC developed the *Kentucky Family and Community Involvement Guide to Student Achievement*, a comprehensive performance assessment tool, which proposes specific school-level descriptors for each objective so schools can make continuous improvement. These objectives and descriptors are supported by the research that CPAC reviewed¹¹ and include provisions that every student in Kentucky will have a parent, or another adult, who knows how to support that student's academic achievement.

Working together to support students is viewed with cynicism by parents with histories of being disrespected in and outside the schools because of where they live and who they are. Awareness of that cynicism might temper harsh judgments (on both sides) and promote school activities designed to demonstrate early and often the schools' commitment to all students. Many parents and families must be convinced. My experience (on CPAC) has helped me realize the urgency and the challenge of bringing socio-economically challenged parents to the table.

Bani Hines-Hudson, Jefferson County

This list includes each objective, along with the descriptors of *proficient* level school performance. The full guide appears in Appendix 1.

1. Relationship-building: The school staff builds productive, personal relationships with parents of all their students.

- Parents report that school staff understands and demonstrates how strong relationships with parents contribute to effective teaching and learning.
- School staff implements systematic steps to welcome the parents of new and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students (for example, using home visits, personal calls or letters, open houses and/or other methods).

- Parents and other stakeholders report that they are actively welcomed when they visit the school.
- School staff implements systematic steps to encourage parents to attend school activities and participate in decisions about their children’s learning.
- School staff involves parents in personal communication about their students’ progress at least once a month.
- School staff completes needs assessment with all parents to determine resources necessary for their child’s academic success.
- All parents are asked for feedback on the school’s efforts to welcome and engage parents and the feedback is used to improve the school’s efforts.

2. Communications: Two-way information in many forms flows regularly between school staff and parents about students’ academic achievement and individual needs.

- School staff implements systematic efforts to inform parents about academic goals, class work, grades and homework for their children in their home language. (For example, classroom contracts, student assignment books, homework websites, and online grade books).
- School staff offers varied ways that parents can share information with teachers about their children’s learning needs. (For example, phone and e-mail contacts, offering parent conferences, making home visits, or other methods).
- School staff partners with community leaders and organizations to build parent understanding of academic expectations, school strategies, and student achievement results.
- School staff offers parents opportunities to discuss school-wide achievement issues, including assessment data, at least once a semester.
- School staff implements systematic efforts to maximize parent-teacher conference participation. (For example, offering multiple locations, convenient times, follow-up with parents who do not reply to first notices, and opportunities for student-led conferences).
- At least 50 percent of parents respond to annual school and/or district stakeholder surveys.
- Stakeholder survey data is consistently used to plan school improvement efforts and to evaluate their effectiveness.

3. Decision-making: School staff encourages, supports and expects parents to be involved in school improvement decisions and to monitor and assist school improvement.

- The school staff offers professional learning community opportunities, workshops, and easily accessible written information to equip parents for service on the SBDM council and committees.
- School council and committees facilitate broad parent participation by actively recruiting diverse membership, providing interpreters and translated materials when needed, setting convenient meeting times, and seeking wide parent input. At least 40 percent of parents vote in SBDM parent election.
- Parents on the SBDM council and committees engage and mentor many other parents by reporting to multiple groups and seeking input through surveys, meetings, and varied other methods.
- The school council adopts measurable objectives and plans coherent strategies to build authentic parent participation, and the school council monitors the implementation and impact of that work.
- School council policies ensure active roles for parents on SBDM council and committees, and other groups making decisions about school improvement.
- Parents report that they are treated as valued partners on school leadership teams,

SBDM council and committees, the school council, and other groups making decisions about school improvement.

- School staff has a plan to identify new and experienced parent leaders who support and build capacity for parents to serve effectively on the school council and committee work.

4. Advocacy: For each student, the school staff identifies and supports a parent or another adult who takes personal responsibility for understanding and speaking for each child's learning needs.

- School staff ensures every student has a parent and/or another adult who knows how to advocate, or speak up for them, regarding the student's academic goals and individual needs.
- Most parents participate actively in student led conferences or other two-way communication about meeting their child's individual learning needs.
- Parents report participating actively and effectively in required planning for individual learning, for example, Individual Education Plans, Individual Learning Plans, Gifted Student Plans, 504 Plans, and intervention strategies to ensure college readiness (Senate Bill 130).
- School staff gives parents clear, complete information on the procedures for resolving concerns and filing complaints, and the council reviews summary data on those complaints to identify needed improvements.
- School staff ensures that parents and community members are well informed about how to become educational advocates, or how to access a trained educational advocate when needed.
- As students are identified by school staff as having disabilities or performing at the novice level, additional intentional steps are taken to ensure that parents have the option to use a trained advocate to assist them in speaking for their child's needs.

5. Learning Opportunities: School staff ensures that families have multiple learning opportunities to understand how to support their children's learning.

- Parents have multiple opportunities to learn about and discuss the following:
 - Kentucky standards and expectations for all students
 - The school's curriculum, instructional methods, and student services
 - The school's decision-making process, including opportunities for parents to participate on SBDM councils and committees
 - Their children's learning and development, along with legal and practical options for helping their children succeed, such the IEP and/or ILP process
 - Community resources to support learning
 - Opportunities to participate in state and district school improvement efforts, such as forums, committees, and surveys
- School staff makes systematic use of written communications (for example, newsletters, websites, and bulletin boards) to help parents understand their own children's progress and the progress of the school.
- School staff displays proficient student work with scoring guides to demonstrate academic expectations to parents and students, and updates the displays regularly.
- School staff offers parent workshops and meetings in convenient locations to help parents develop skills in supporting their children's learning and the school's improvement efforts.
- School council has a classroom observation policy that welcomes families to visit all classrooms.
- School staff develops parent leaders who contribute regularly to other parents' understanding and who help meet other parent learning needs.

6. Community Partnerships: The school staff engages and partners with community members to plan and implement substantive work to improve student achievement.

- School leadership regularly shares information on student achievement and involves business and community leaders in school improvement efforts.
- School leadership develops partnerships with several businesses, organizations, and agencies to support student learning and create mentors for students and parents.



- School leadership collaborates with employers to support parent and volunteer participation in students' education.
- School staff collaborates with businesses, organizations, and agencies to address individual student needs and shares that information with parents.
- Parents make active use of the school's resources and community resources and report that they provide meaningful help to resolve family challenges that could interfere with student learning. (For example, FRYSC or Title I coordinators connect family with community resources and follow up.)

- School staff offers and publicizes community-based learning activities aligned with the curriculum, such as tutoring linked to the curriculum and internships, for all students and parents.

Productive working relationships lead to effective communication, enabling families to become partners in decision-making. When sound decisions are made putting the school on track to serve all students well, policies will be in place to support and encourage advocacy, learning opportunities, and community partnerships.

Carol Edelen, Jefferson County

The objectives and school-level performance descriptors proposed in the attached *Kentucky Family and Community Involvement Guide to Student Achievement* follow the four ratings used in the Kentucky assessment of student performance: novice, apprentice, proficient, and distinguished. CPAC hopes that this rating system will allow schools to identify opportunities for improvement and will offer guidance for improving their practice of family and community involvement.

Recommendations

To implement these objectives, the Commissioner’s Parents Advisory Council recommends that the Kentucky Department of Education take four major actions:

1. Set high expectations, measure performance, and report progress.

Adopt the *Kentucky Family and Community Involvement Guide to Student Achievement* as a scoring guide, or rubric, for measuring continuous improvement. The guide includes performance descriptors that identify how schools can assess their family and community involvement procedures, policies, and other efforts toward improving student achievement. This guide can be used in a similar manner as the culture, equity, and school safety audits. In addition, CPAC recommends that these individual performance descriptors be incorporated as appropriate into the KDE SISI document.

2. Help schools improve relationship-building and communications.

KDE should encourage schools to adopt a “customer satisfaction” model in order to become welcoming and family-friendly, build relationships, and to develop a system of two-way exchange of information and ideas.

- Make data on family and community involvement available on the KDE website and in other media and formats.
- Implement a systemic, on-going statewide student, parent and community survey to yield required information for KDE and to build a database for further analysis and research.
- Develop a “Frequently Asked Questions” feature on the state and district websites that includes school or district communication policies and processes.
- Develop “customer satisfaction” training modules that districts can use for school staff.
- Establish Student, Family and Community Involvement Advisory Councils at all levels – local, district and state.

3. Provide Resources and Support.

Develop an infrastructure for state support that includes training, resources, tools, and recognition for real achievement in family and community involvement. The department charged with coordinating this effort should have direct access to the commissioner.

- Offer incentives and recognition for exemplary practice that has resulted in improved outcomes for students, including student achievement.
- Add a section to the KDE website that includes the work of the CPAC, research on parent involvement, and effective practice in reader-friendly language.
- Identify and categorize community-based resources that could be used to facilitate coordination of family involvement with public school staff.
- Identify and categorize state resources that could be used to facilitate coordination of family involvement, such as categorical funding programs including Title I, IDEA, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Family Resource and Youth Service Centers.

4. Build capacity through professional development

Administrators, teachers, other school staff, and parent leaders need to acquire knowledge, skills, and resources to work together productively to improve student achievement.

Invest in parents:

- Introduce legislation to provide funding for statewide parent leadership training and a network of support. Cover parents’ rights as well as responsibilities.

- Develop a parent education curriculum that parallels the student’s progress from pre-school to graduation.
- Develop a diverse network of parents who are trained and supported by the Kentucky Department of Education to act as mentors, trainers, and team members to assist Kentucky schools, districts, parents, and community groups in the involvement tasks necessary to support each Kentucky child to reach proficiency.

Invest in educators:

- Add strategies for engaging families in improving student achievement to existing professional development programs for administrators and teachers
- Include proficient performance rubric in E-walk tool. Offer embedded professional development on effective strategies to engage families in schools.
- Offer incentives for professional organizations to develop and offer professional development on parent / family involvement.

Invest in collaboration:

- Implement joint parent / teacher training in cultural responsiveness.
- Incorporate family and community members in school level professional learning communities.
- Include teachers in training programs for working with community resources and developing relationships with families in their neighborhoods.
- Improve the training of SBDM councils to include effective use of objectives and performance descriptors.
- Improve the training of audit teams to include effective use of objectives and performance descriptors.
- Sponsor and or host community parent involvement forums.

Invest in evaluation:

- Develop measurements and a monitoring plan to assess the impact of professional development on parent involvement.
- Identify schools and districts that have fully implemented the objectives and performance descriptors and assess the impact on levels of family and community involvement, teacher satisfaction, school climate, and student outcomes.

While I was campaigning for a position on my local school board, several residents in my community expressed how disconnected they felt to the school system because they did not have children in the school. They also said they would like to participate and possibly contribute financially to our school if someone would simply take the time to keep them informed.

**Tina C. Crase,
Walton-Verona Independent Schools**

Follow-up and Conclusion

As a pioneer in the national standards-based education reform movement, Kentucky's example has been an inspiration to other states. In this spirit, CPAC has created a *Kentucky Family and Community Involvement Guide to Student Achievement* that includes these six objectives and performance descriptors for continuous improvement in family and community involvement in schools to assist KDE in reaching the state's goals for student achievement. All our members look forward to a continued collaboration with KDE staff to bring these proposals to life.

Because CPAC is a standing council, not a committee charged with a single task, we anticipate working on a number of related initiatives in the future, as the new Commissioner of Education may request and our members will propose. On the drawing board are a new state parent and community involvement policy, guidelines for districts and schools, an annual or bi-annual state survey of parent satisfaction, and tool kits for school and parent leaders.

We hope this report will help to unleash a powerful wave of activity in our schools and a great leap forward in student achievement. The future of our state depends on it.

When I was state PTA president and traveling around Kentucky, it amazed me how many parents were eager to be a part of their child's educational life but were not given that chance. I believe these six objectives will set a high standard for teachers and administrators to open the door to these parents.

Sharon Whitworth, Spencer County

Objective 1: Relationship-building
School staff builds productive, personal relationships with parents* of all their students.

Distinguished	Proficient	Apprentice	Novice
<p>Teachers and staff have developed collaborative partnering relationships with all parents and students to improve teaching and learning.</p> <p>Administrators and school staff welcome and actively seek parents of all new and ESL students to encourage early relationship building.</p> <p>District and school staff provide training to involve all stakeholders in the process of improving the interaction between school, home and community.</p> <p>Parents and community stakeholders have authentic participation, help plan and implement school and district improvement activities.</p> <p>District and school staffs encourage continuous and meaningful communication with all parents about their student's academic goals and progress.</p> <p>District and school staff identify family interests, needs and barriers and provides services to ensure academic success.</p> <p>Student/family feedback data on school welcoming and engagement efforts is retained in a useable confidential format and can be retrieved for district or school assistance to families.</p>	<p>Parents report that school staff understands and demonstrates how strong relationships with parents contribute to effective teaching and learning.</p> <p>School staff implements systematic steps to welcome the parents of new and ESL students (for example, using home visits, personal calls or letters, open houses, and/or other methods).</p> <p>Parents and other stakeholders report that they are actively welcomed when they visit the school.</p> <p>School staff implements systematic steps to encourage parents to attend school activities and participate in decisions about their children's learning.</p> <p>School staff involves parents in personal communication about their students' progress at least once a month.</p> <p>School staff completes needs assessment with all parents to determine resources necessary for their child's academic success.</p> <p>All parents are asked for feedback on school's efforts to welcome and engage parents, and the feedback is used to improve school's efforts.</p>	<p>Parents report their relationship with school staff is about discussing student academic performance and/or behavior.</p> <p>Relationships with parents of new and ESL students are informal, occasional or accidental, and information is provided if requested.</p> <p>Some parents report they are welcome to visit school.</p> <p>Parents are invited to attend school activities related to their own child and are encouraged to attend parent teacher conferences.</p> <p>Administrators and school staff are available to parents by appointment only to discuss their student's progress.</p> <p>Teachers informally collect some student needs data and some parents are contacted to discuss those needs.</p> <p>Staff occasionally asks for feedback on school's efforts to welcome and engage parents, in an informal or casual way with no regular data collection.</p>	<p>Parents report that teacher/parent relationships are limited to discipline issues and/or reports of poor academic performance.</p> <p>School staff has limited involvement with parents of new and ESL students.</p> <p>Parents report that school staff makes little effort to welcome parents or community members when they visit the school.</p> <p>Parents receive information on school activities and are invited to conference if child is not doing well.</p> <p>Most communication from administrators is regarding safety and discipline issues,</p> <p>School staff has no plan for gathering information about students' learning needs.</p> <p>Student/family feedback is not included in any assessment of the school's efforts to welcome and engage parents.</p>

* By parent or family, we mean a natural, adoptive or foster parent; or other adult serving as parent, such as a close relative, legal or educational guardian, and/or a community or agency advocate

Objective 2: Communications

Two-way information in many forms flows regularly between school staff and parents* about students' academic achievement and individual needs.

Distinguished	Proficient	Apprentice	Novice
<p>Multiple two-way communications in the home language are used to communicate academic goals, class work, and homework, and grades. (See Proficient examples.)</p> <p>District /school staff, parents and community stakeholders work together to learn from and use all resources available to meet the student's and parent's learning needs.</p> <p>School and district staffs use several strategies to involve community leaders to assist in parent education on issues directly related to student achievement.</p> <p>District and school leadership ensure that student achievement is discussed each semester with all parents.</p> <p>A conference is held twice a year for all students and includes parent or advocate, student and teachers. School council develops ways to address data that is collected.</p> <p>District and school culture audits or surveys are conducted each year with all stakeholders and response rate is at least 75%.</p> <p>Stakeholders help plan district and school survey content regarding school performance as it relates to their child.</p>	<p>School staff implements systematic efforts to inform parents about academic goals, class work, grades and homework for their children in their home language. (For example, using classroom contracts, student assignment books, homework websites, and online grade books.)</p> <p>School staff offers varied ways that parents can share information with teachers about their children's learning needs. (For example, phone and e-mail contacts, offering parent conferences, and making home visits.)</p> <p>School staff partners with community leaders and organizations to build parent understanding of academic expectations, school strategies, and student achievement results.</p> <p>School staff offers parents opportunities to discuss school-wide achievement issues, including assessment data, at least once a semester.</p> <p>School staff implements systematic efforts to maximize parent-teacher conference participation. (For example, offering multiple locations, convenient times, follow-up with parents who do not reply to first notices, opportunities for student-led conferences.)</p> <p>At least 50% of parents respond to annual school and /or district stakeholder surveys.</p> <p>Stakeholder survey data is consistently used to plan school improvement efforts and to evaluate their effectiveness.</p>	<p>School staff relies on one-way communication in English to inform parents about academic goals, class work, grades and homework. (For example, newsletters, marquees, and agendas.)</p> <p>School staff uses informal conversation and /or a parent teacher conference to listen to parents or inform parents of students' learning needs.</p> <p>School staff sometimes provides community organizations with information about academic expectations for parents who use their services.</p> <p>Student achievement data or achievement results are communicated informally to parents by school staff.</p> <p>Parent -teacher conferences are held twice a year on school grounds and some teachers send invitations to parents.</p> <p>District-wide stakeholder surveys are given to parents and teachers encourage parents to respond.</p> <p>School staff develops a survey that is sent to parents, with low response rate and results are reported in school improvement plan.</p>	<p>School staff uses only one-way communication with parents to inform them about student work. (For example, student report cards and behavior reports.)</p> <p>Parents receive information about student's learning needs when the student is failing academically.</p> <p>School staff rarely provides general information to the community about academic expectations of students.</p> <p>School staff, as mandated by law, addresses data on student achievement.</p> <p>Optional parent-teacher conferences are offered at school and parents are notified if a teacher wants to conference.</p> <p>Parents are not encouraged to give feedback on school or student performance.</p> <p>School staff develops a short survey that is distributed to parents, response rate is low and results are not shared with all stakeholders.</p>

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Objective 3: Decision-making

School staff encourages, supports and expects parents to be involved in school improvement decisions and to monitor and assist school improvement.

Distinguished	Proficient	Apprentice	Novice
<p>All stakeholders are provided with multiple opportunities to learn about the decision-making process and to participate at all levels including professional learning communities, school council, and its committees</p>	<p>School staff offers professional learning community opportunities, workshops, and accessible written information to equip parents for service on SBDM council and committees.</p>	<p>Parents elected to serve on school council and some other parents who serve on SBDM committees are invited to attend training offered by school or district.</p>	<p>Parents elected to serve on school council are invited to attend basic district training. No effort to include other parents on SBDM committees.</p>
<p>School council and committees have all stakeholder groups represented, provide interpreters and translated materials, meetings are well publicized and convenient. At least 60% of parents vote in SBDM parent election.</p>	<p>School council and committees facilitate broad parent participation by actively recruiting diverse membership, providing interpreters and translated materials, setting convenient meeting times, seeking wide parent input. At least 40% of parents vote in SBDM parent election.</p>	<p>School council and committees have some parent members, may provide translators, meet at time and place convenient to staff. Elections are held at convenient times and are publicized, but less than 20% of the parents vote in SBDM parent election.</p>	<p>School council has parent members as required by law, parents are not asked to serve on committees, meeting time and place is determined by principal. Low voter turnout for SBDM parent election.</p>
<p>School council seeks all parents' input and mentors participation through multiple sources and seeks all stakeholder groups' involvement.</p>	<p>Parents on the SBDM council and committees engage and mentor many other parents by reporting to multiple groups and seeking input through surveys, meetings, and varied other methods.</p>	<p>School council chair reports feedback to head of largest parent organization who then decides further dissemination methods or input. There is no provision for parent input other than as required by school law.</p>	<p>School council chair sends council minutes to largest parent organization with no follow-up.</p>
<p>Parents and community stakeholders are trained in academic achievement planning and authentic participation, with school council regularly checking the implementation and impact of that work.</p>	<p>School council adopts measurable objectives and plans coherent strategies to build authentic parent participation, and the school council monitors the implementation and impact of that work.</p>	<p>School council has some parent involvement components and action items that deal with specific academic areas. Little or no funding is provided. Little or no implementation and impact checking is done.</p>	<p>School council has some parent involvement action items imbedded in a few components. They are usually not measurable, have little to no funding, and consistent implementation and impact checking is not done.</p>
<p>School council actively recruits parents to serve on committees related to school improvement that review and revise objectives continuously and is informed by data.</p>	<p>School council policies ensure active roles for parents on SBDM committees, in school improvement planning, and also in decisions about the education of their individual children.</p>	<p>School council encourages parents to serve only on SBDM committees that deal with parent involvement and/or school climate.</p>	<p>School council does not encourage parent participation on SBDM committees or school planning.</p>
<p>Parents and stakeholders are trained to create, measure and sustain authentic participation in all areas of school improvement at School and district level.</p>	<p>Parents report that they are treated as valued partners on school leadership teams, SBDM council and committees, and other groups making decisions about school improvement.</p>	<p>Parents report that they are sometimes encouraged to take part in discussions about school improvement.</p>	<p>Staff and parents have no knowledge of authentic participation.</p>
<p>School staff fosters a community of stakeholders and parents who continually sustain and support each other in school council and committee work.</p>	<p>School staff has a plan to identify new and experienced parent leaders who support and build capacity for parents to serve effectively on the school council and in committee work.</p>	<p>School staff provides opportunities for outgoing parent council members to meet with new parent council members to share knowledge of serving on the council.</p>	<p>Teachers share information from year to year with parents who serve on the school council and/or overlaps council terms of parents.</p>

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Objective 4: Advocacy

For each student, school staff identifies and supports a parent* or another adult who can take personal responsibility for understanding and speaking for that child's learning needs.

Distinguished	Proficient	Apprentice	Novice
<p>District and school staff supports a community of trained parents and advocates who work together to ensure all students are meeting their academic goals and learning needs.</p> <p>District and school staff partners with all parents and advocates to discuss, monitor and share successful strategies for meeting individual learning needs</p> <p>Parents report that district and school staff facilitates sharing of ideas and training to effectively participate in developing IEPs, ILPs, GSPs, 504 plans and interventions for college readiness.</p> <p>School staff collaborates with stakeholders in developing policies and procedures to resolve issues and complaints and to identify needed improvements.</p> <p>District and school staff ensure that parents and community members are trained to serve as educational advocates or to access trained educational advocates for students to meet their academic goals.</p> <p>District and school staff partners with advocates of students with disabilities and/or novice level performance to improve the way school meets student learning needs.</p>	<p>School staff ensures every student has a parent and/or another adult who knows how to advocate, or speak up for them, regarding the students academic goals and learning needs.</p> <p>Most parents participate actively in student led conferences or other two-way communication about meeting their child's individual learning needs.</p> <p>Parents report participating actively and effectively in required planning for individual learning, for example, Individual Education Plans, Individual Learning Plans, Gifted Student Plans, 504 Plans, and intervention strategies to ensure college readiness (Senate Bill 130.)</p> <p>School staff gives parents clear, complete information on the procedures for resolving concerns and filing complaints, and the council reviews summary data on those complaints to identify needed improvements.</p> <p>School staff ensures that parents and community members are well informed about how to become an educational advocate or how to access an educational advocate when needed.</p> <p>As students are identified by school staff as having disabilities or performing at the novice level, additional intentional steps are taken to ensure that the parent has the option to use a trained advocate to assist them in speaking for their child's needs.</p>	<p>There is evidence that school staff know which students have a parent or another adult who can speak up for them regarding their academic goals and learning needs.</p> <p>Some parents are involved in informal conversation with school staff to address their child's individual learning needs.</p> <p>Parents report that they are invited to attend meetings to discuss Individual Education Plans, Individual Learning Plans, 504 plans and/or intervention strategies.</p> <p>School council has a policy and a process to resolve issues or complaints and outcomes are sometimes tracked and reported to the council.</p> <p>School staff makes minimal effort to encourage parents to advocate for their child's academic success.</p> <p>Novice level students are identified by school staff to receive targeted strategies for academic improvement. Parents are informed of the strategies but do not receive training on how to use those strategies or how progress will be measured.</p>	<p>School staff does not know which students have a parent or another adult who can speak up for them regarding academic goals and learning needs.</p> <p>School staff does not involve parents to address their child's learning needs. School staff only informs parents of student's academic progress.</p> <p>Parents report that they are informed as required by law to participate in Individual Education Plans, Individual Learning Plans, and intervention strategies.</p> <p>Teachers handle parent complaints but outcomes are not tracked or reported.</p> <p>School staff puts forth no effort to encourage parents to advocate for their child's academic success.</p> <p>Some teachers provide additional help or strategies to novice learners in their classroom but do not inform the parents about strategies used.</p>

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Objective 5: Learning Opportunities

School staff ensures that families have multiple learning opportunities to understand how to support their children’s learning.

Distinguished	Proficient	Apprentice	Novice
<p>District and school leadership involve all stakeholders, use many community resources and opportunities to explain standards and rights as defined under Proficient, and expects that all parents will have adequate information and understanding of these practices. Parents with barriers to learning are individually assisted.</p> <p>All stakeholders are engaged in conversation and written communication about the academic progress of all students in school and district.</p> <p>School staff exhibits and rotates proficient and distinguished work and provides resources to achieve at higher levels.</p> <p>District and school staffs collaborate with parents and community members to provide training on how to support children’s learning, district and school improvement efforts.</p> <p>School staff has posted council policy on classroom visits, with access to all classrooms.</p> <p>Parent leaders regularly work with all parents to develop ways to improve parent understanding of learning issues.</p>	<p>Parents have multiple opportunities to learn about and discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kentucky standards and expectations for all students. • School’s curriculum, instructional methods, and student services. • School’s decision-making process, including opportunities to participate on SBDM councils and committees. • Their children’s learning and development, along with legal and practical options for helping their children succeed such as participation in IEP and/or ILP process. • Community resources to support learning. • Opportunities to participate in state and district school improvement efforts, such as forums, committees, and surveys. <p>School staff makes systematic use of written communications (for example, newsletters, Web sites, bulletin boards) to help parents understand their own children’s academic progress and the progress of school.</p> <p>School staff displays proficient student work with scoring guides to demonstrate academic expectations to parents and students, and updates the displays regularly.</p> <p>School staff offers parent workshops or meetings in convenient locations to help parents develop skills in supporting their children’s learning and school’s improvement efforts.</p> <p>School council has a classroom observation policy that welcomes families to visit all classrooms.</p> <p>School staff develops parent leaders who contribute regularly to other parents’ understanding and who help meet other parent learning needs.</p>	<p>School provides open house and family nights for some parents to learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kentucky standards and expectations for all students. • School’s curriculum, instructional methods, and student services. • School’s decision-making process, including opportunities for parents to participate on councils and SBDM committees. • Their children’s learning and development, along with legal and practical options for helping their children succeed such as participation in IEP and/or ILP process. • Community resources to support learning. <p>School staff provides parents with information about their child’s academic progress and the progress of the school.</p> <p>School staff exhibits some student work with scoring guide and proficient level work.</p> <p>School staff offers targeted parent workshops and meetings to help parents develop skills to support their child’s learning.</p> <p>School council has a classroom observation policy that allows parents access to most classrooms by appointment only.</p> <p>School staff relies on the parent organizations to provide learning opportunities for parent leadership.</p>	<p>School provides one open house a year and offers some written materials about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kentucky standards and expectations for all students. • School’s decision-making process, including opportunities for parents to participate on councils and SBDM committees. <p>School staff provides parents only with information mandated by reporting requirements on student achievement.</p> <p>Some student work of various levels is exhibited in the classroom.</p> <p>School staff offers some information to parents to learn how to support their child’s learning.</p> <p>School staff allows parents to visit regular education classrooms upon request. There is no school policy.</p> <p>There is little or no development of parent leaders.</p>

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Objective 6: Community Partnerships

School staff engages and partners with community members to plan and implement substantive work to improve student achievement.

Distinguished	Proficient	Apprentice	Novice
<p>School staff networks and partners with multiple businesses and organizations to support student achievement at a school council and a programmatic level.</p> <p>District and school staff leverages all partnerships to gain maximum benefit to support all students learning from the human and financial resources available.</p> <p>School leadership and council compacts with an employer network that promotes adult participation in education.</p> <p>District and school staffs collaborate with all willing organizations to support parents and advocates in addressing individual student needs.</p> <p>School staff and parents have seamless integration of consistent and sustained family support services from school and the community to reduce student barriers to learning.</p> <p>District staff and school leadership ensures all stakeholders are aware of community-based learning opportunities that are linked to student-specific needs.</p>	<p>School leadership regularly shares information on student achievement and involves business and community leaders in school improvement efforts.</p> <p>School leadership develops partnerships with several businesses, organizations, and agencies to support student learning and create mentors for students and parents.</p> <p>School leadership collaborates with employers to support parent and volunteer participation in students' education.</p> <p>School staff collaborates with businesses, organizations, and agencies to address individual student needs and shares that information with parents.</p> <p>Parents make active use of school and community resources and report that they provide meaningful help to resolve family challenges that could interfere with student learning. (For example, FRYSC or Title 1 coordinators connect family with community resources and follow up.)</p> <p>School staff offers and publicizes community-based learning activities, such as tutoring linked to the curriculum, for all students and parents.</p>	<p>School leadership periodically meets with some business leaders to discuss information on student achievement.</p> <p>Some teachers ensure that students participate in programs within the community that are linked to student learning.</p> <p>Employer-partners adopt practices to promote and support parent and volunteer participation in students' education.</p> <p>School staff occasionally collaborates with community agencies to address individual student needs. Information is provided to parents upon request.</p> <p>Parents are made aware of family support services in school and in the community that are provided for students. (For example, families know about community resources through school coordinators but it is up to the family to access those resources.)</p> <p>School staff maintains a resource directory on some agencies, programs and services that will provide services for students.</p>	<p>School leadership informs the community once a year about student achievement. (For example, letters to editor or newspaper article).</p> <p>After school programs are offered to some students.</p> <p>School leadership rarely invites employers to support adult participation in education.</p> <p>Staff sometimes collaborates with community agencies to address general student academic needs.</p> <p>Parents are given information about community resources from school program coordinators or school staff.</p> <p>School staff rarely updates or communicates with local agencies or programs that provide learning services.</p>

* By parent or family, we mean a natural, adoptive or foster parent; or other adult serving as parent, such as a close relative, legal or educational guardian, and/or a community or agency advocate

Appendix 2. Glossary

CDIP	Comprehensive District Improvement Plan
CIPL	Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, a program operated by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
CPAC	Commissioner’s Parent Advisory Council
CPL	Center for Parent Leadership, a program of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
CSIP	Comprehensive School Improvement Plan
FRYSC	Family Resource and Youth Services Center
GSP	Gifted Student Plan
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
KASC	Kentucky Association of School Councils
KERA	Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990
KDE	Kentucky Department of Education
KPTA	Kentucky Parent-Teacher Association
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
Parent	A natural, adoptive or foster parent or other adult serving as parent, such as a close relative; a legal or educational guardian; and/or a community or agency advocate
PLC	Professional Learning Community is composed of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals linked to the purpose of learning for all.
SA	Scholastic Audit
SBDM	School-Based Decision Making
School Staff	All full and part-time regular permanent employees of the school.
School leadership	Principal, school based decision making councils, department chairperson(s), team leaders, committee chairperson(s), coordinators of special programs parent organizations, support centers, the instructional team, and the administrative team.

Appendix 3: Parent Involvement Provisions in Kentucky State and Federal Law

Kentucky Law

Kentucky's commitment to family involvement is strong and clear: "The General Assembly recognizes that public education involves shared responsibilities. State government, local communities, parents, students, and school employees must work together to create an efficient public school system. Parents and students must assist schools with efforts to assure student attendance, preparation for school, and involvement in learning. The cooperation of all involved is necessary to assure that desired outcomes are achieved . . ." (KRS 158.645)

Kentucky's education law recognizes the importance of parent involvement in a number of different statutes, including the landmark Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA).

- KERA requires that parents be members of school-based decision making (SBDM) councils, which make key decisions about learning and instruction. Parents also must be involved in setting targets and developing plans to close achievement gaps. (KRS 160.345) For the purpose of SBDM, parents are defined as "parents, step-parents, or foster parents, or a person who has legal custody of a student and with whom the student resides." (KRS 160.345)
- Yearly school and district report cards are required by state law (as well as in NCLB) to give parents and citizens more information about their schools. (KRS 158.6453)
- Kentucky school law provides for family resource and youth services centers (FRCs at elementary schools and YSCs at middle and high schools), based at local schools with at least 20 percent of low-income students. FRCs and YSCs must have advisory councils, with at least one-third parent members. (KRS 156.497)
- Kentucky law also requires parent involvement in the preschool and primary programs. A "critical attribute" of the primary program is "positive parent involvement." (KRS 158-031) The preschool program requires that schools involve parents. (KRS 157.3175)

The Achievement Gap Bill, Senate Bill 168 (KRS 158.649), enacted in 2002, requires all schools to close achievement gaps, which are defined as a "substantive performance difference" in all subject areas on Kentucky's test for accountability by gender, disability, English proficiency, race, and poverty.

- In schools with substantive achievement gaps, school councils must establish targets and plans every two years to close the gaps.
- Schools failing to meet targets after the first two-year cycle must submit plans to the superintendent for review and approval.
- Parents, faculty, and staff must be involved in establishing the targets and plans for closing achievement gaps.
- Public meetings at the school and district levels must be held to report on progress and plans.

The Readiness Examination Bill, Senate Bill 130 (KRS 158.6453), enacted in 2006, requires a high school or college readiness exam at the expense of the Kentucky Department of Education. The assessment program shall include:

- A high school readiness examination to assess English, reading, mathematics, and science in grade 8;
- A college readiness examination to assess English, reading, mathematics, and science in grade 10;

- The ACT college admissions and placement examination to assess English, reading, mathematics, and science, to be taken by all students in grade 11.

A student whose scores on the high school readiness examination indicate readiness shall be counseled to enroll in accelerated courses; and a student whose scores on the college readiness examination administered in grade 10 or the ACT college admissions and placement examination administered in grade 11 indicate a high degree of readiness for college shall be counseled to enroll in accelerated courses, with an emphasis on Advanced Placement classes.

Students in grades 10, 11, and 12 may take the WorkKeys assessments from ACT, Inc. in reading for information, locating information, and applied mathematics.

- A student whose scores on the WorkKeys assessments indicate that additional assistance is required in reading for information, locating information, or applied mathematics shall have intervention strategies for accelerated learning incorporated into his or her learning plan.
- A student meeting the WorkKeys threshold established by the Cabinet for Workforce Development shall be issued the appropriate Kentucky employability certificate.

The Kentucky Board of Education has a policy statement titled “Parent and Family Involvement Initiative” that recognizes the importance of the family’s role in educating children. The statement encourages schools to welcome parents and families and engage them in their child’s education.¹²

A number of committees at the state and local level must include parents:

- The membership of superintendent screening committees must include parents.
- The state board requires that parents be represented on local facilities planning groups that study building and redistricting needs of school districts.
- Parents are represented on the School Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability Council that advises the board of education and legislature on implementation of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System and No Child Left Behind.
- State law provides that four of the 19 members of the Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education must be parents. (KRS 158.648)
- Parents are included on school audit teams. (KRS 158.6455)

Federal Law

The No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) of 2001 (P.L. 107-110) holds public schools accountable to provide all students with a quality education and has extensive requirements for involving families in setting policy, developing agreements on how to work with staff to improve achievement, and writing school improvement plans. This law is modeled on state reform laws such as KERA.

Families in schools that receive funding under Title I of NCLB (because they serve concentrations of low-income children) may transfer their children to a higher-performing school, if the current school does not make “adequate yearly progress” for two years in a row. Students who do not transfer must be offered supplemental services, such as after-school tutoring or classes in reading and math, paid for by the school district.

The law’s obligations and opportunities for parent involvement can offer resources to make that adequate yearly progress. Section 1118 requires parent involvement at several points:

1. **School-parent compact:** Every Title I school must have a school-parent compact, developed with and approved by parents. The compact must describe how the school and parents will build a partnership to improve student achievement.
2. **School and district policy:** Each Title I school and district must write a parent involvement

policy that also has been developed with and agreed upon by parents. The district policy must describe how parents will be involved in developing plans to improve schools and engage families.

3. **Report cards:** Each year, the school district must distribute a report card specifying how every school and the district as a whole are performing. Both the school and district report cards must be in a language and format that parents can understand.
4. **Parent choice:** If a Title I school has not made adequate yearly progress in improving student performance, parents have two options. They may request a transfer or they can ask for supplemental services and become involved in developing a school improvement plan.
5. **State review:** The state education agency must monitor the school districts' Title 1 programs to make sure they carry out the law. If the district is not involving parents as the law requires, parents can appeal to the state.
6. **Communication:** For the first time, federal law defines parent involvement as regular, two-way, and meaningful communication about student learning and other school activities.

Some provisions of NCLB apply to all public schools, not just Title I schools. Every school district or school can choose to develop a strong partnership program, even if such action is not required. Other federal laws also require parent involvement. For example, the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that parents be included on individual education planning meetings for students with special learning needs.

Endnotes

¹ Cathy Lindsey, *Kentucky Teacher*, May 2007, page 1

² This information is drawn from: Anne T. Henderson, *No Child Left Behind: What's in it for Parents* (Lexington, KY: Center for Parent Leadership, 2002) and Cindy Heine, *Kentucky School Updates: A Parent/Citizen Guide for 2006-08* (Lexington, KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, December 2006).

³ Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (Austin TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002)

⁴ Westat and Policy Studies Associates, *The Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance in Title I Schools, Volume I*. (Washington, DC: US Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary, Planning and Evaluation Service, 2001) www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/esed/lescpl_highlights.html

⁵ Ann V. Shaver and Richard T. Walls, Effect of Title I Parent Involvement on Student Reading and Mathematics Achievement (*Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 31 (2) , 1998, 90-97)

⁶ Joyce L. Epstein et al., *Scaling Up School-Family-Community Connections in Baltimore: Effects on Student Achievement and Attendance* (Baltimore, MD: CRESPAR and the Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University, 1997).

⁷ Karen L. Mapp, *Having Their Say: Parents Describe How and Why They Are Involved in Their Children's Education* (*School Community Journal* 13, no. 1 2003, 35-64.)

⁸ Kavitha Mediratta, Norm Fruchter and Anne Lewis, *Organizing for School Reform* (NY: Institute for Education and Social Policy, New York University, 2002)

⁹ M. Elena Lopez and Holly Kreider, "Beyond Input: Achieving Authentic Participation in School Reform," *The Evaluation Exchange*, IX, 2, Summer 2003 (www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue22/theory.html)

¹⁰ We are indebted to the work of Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at the National Network for Partnership Schools for developing the framework of six types of family involvement, and to the National Standards for Parent Involvement in Education, based on Epstein's work, published by the National PTA. These objectives are built upon their work.

¹¹ See Henderson and Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence*; Joyce Epstein, *School, Family and Community Partnerships* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 2001), and the Web site of the Harvard Family Research Project: <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine.html>

¹² Cindy Heine, *KENTUCKY SCHOOL UPDATES: A Parent/Citizen Guide for 2006-08*, (Lexington KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, December, 2006)

Acknowledgements

Two years of meetings, conversations, conference calls, e-mail exchanges, and committee work have gone into this report. A majority of the members of the Commissioner's Parents Advisory Council (CPAC) listed on the following page participated actively and made important contributions. We would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication.

We would like to make special mention of Carol Edelen, Alice Nelson, Lois Quilligan, Lou Ann Cavenee-Ramos, Bev Raimondo, and Sande Shepherd, who worked with us for many hours to develop and refine the language of the *Kentucky Family and Community Involvement Guide*. Susan Perkins Weston, former director of the Kentucky Association of School Councils, now director of Council Coach, reviewed our work and gave us considerable suggestions for clarity and simplification. Tina Brooks and Cheri Meadows made many helpful suggestions about wording. Bev Raimondo found and recommended the report from the Maryland Parent Advisory Committee to Commissioner Wilhoit.

CPAC also worked closely with staff of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) during CPAC meetings and in committees. Special mention must go to former Commissioner Gene Wilhoit, whose vision inspired our work; to Shaun Murphy, Branch Manager, Community Support for Students and Families, who went beyond the call of duty to set up meetings, engage KDE colleagues, design agendas, and provide guidance and advice; and to Kevin Noland, Interim Commissioner, for his steadfast support and attendance. We also thank the following KDE staff:

Annette Bridges, Branch Manager, Preschool Education
Stephanie Christenson, Program Consultant, Community Education
David Cook, Policy Advisor, Office of Leadership & School Improvement
Missy Drury, Legal, Legislative, and Communication Services
Linda France, Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Learning Results Services
Lisa Gross, Director, Division of Communications
Joan Howard, Program Consultant, Service Learning, FRYSC Liaison
Barbara Kennedy, Director, Division of Scholastic Assistance
Ginger Mason, Program Consultant, Targeted Assistance
Erin McGee, Program Consultant, Council Development & Planning
Cheri Meadows, Branch Manager, Council Development & Planning
Jay Roberts, Database Analyst, Data Management
Linda Robinson, Program Consultant, 21st Century Community Learning Centers
Brigette Stacy, Program Consultant, Community Support for Students & Families
Terry Vance, Program Consultant, Community Support for Students & Families -

Anne Henderson, senior consultant with the Community Involvement Program at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, facilitated meetings, advised on the research, worked on drafts, and edited this report. This report has truly been a collaborative endeavor. We could not have done it without support from everyone on the CPAC and from the KDE staff. Many thanks should go to all of you.

Cindy Baumert and Dennis Pearce
Co-Chairs, Commissioner's Parents Advisory Council

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