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Legislative News

February 6, 2006

Parent Involvement Policy Bill Expected To Be Debated This Week!

A bill (HSB523) has been passed out of the House Education Committee that would require the board of directors of each Iowa school district to adopt a parent and guardian involvement policy. The bill identifies language that, at a minimum, must be included in the policy. The language is derived from National PTA's National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs and is based upon the extensive research of Dr. Joyce L. Epstein of Johns Hopkins University. The standards have been endorsed by nearly 100 national education, health, and parent involvement groups, and are included in No Child Left Behind as the federal definition of parent involvement. An effective parent involvement program must be comprehensive and include each of the six standards identified in the proposed legislation:

1. Ensures that communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful
2. Promotes and supports parenting skills
3. Recognizes and supports the integral role parents and guardians play in assisting student learning
4. Welcomes parents and guardians in school and seeks their support and assistance
5. Makes parent and guardians full partners in the decisions that affect children and families
6. Utilizes community collaborations productively and community resources prolifically to strengthen schools, families, and student learning

The proposed legislation (HSB523) further requires that the policy adopted shall be published in the student handbook and on the school district's website, if it has one.

More than 35 years of research has proven beyond dispute the positive connection between parent involvement and student success. Effectively engaging parents and families in education can have profound benefits for students, parents, teachers, and overall school quality, such as:

For students

- Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
- Better school attendance
- Greater enrollment in postsecondary education

For teachers and administrators

- Greater morale
- Increased teacher effectiveness
- Greater job satisfaction

For parents

- Improved communication with teachers
- Increased education skills
- Improved attitude toward school and school personnel

Research has also shown that parent involvement has a positive effect on student behavior. For example:

- When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.
- When students report feeling support from both home and school, they have more self-confidence, feel school is more important, and they tend to do better in school.
- Student behaviors such as alcohol use, violence, and other antisocial behaviors decrease as parent involvement increases.

(The word "parent" refers to any adult who plays an important role in a child's family life.)

There is a parent component in Title I funding from the federal government. However, the requirement is designed to engage parents of only those students being served by Title I. The percentage of students being served by Title I in Iowa is quite low (approximately 14 percent), and relatively few parents are actually impacted by this parent involvement requirement. In addition, Title I funds in Iowa are overwhelmingly distributed to elementary schools and rarely would parents of secondary students be affected by the parent involvement provision. The proposed legislation requires that a district-wide policy be adopted that would include every school and apply to every parent. If enacted it would take the next step in what the goal of parent involvement in Title I hoped to achieve, and that is to engage every parent.

The legislation proposes a philosophical mindset that values parent involvement as a way to increase student achievement and improve student behavior. It presents an awareness of parent involvement as an important tool for school improvement. While the legislation does not require action beyond the adoption and disclosure of the policy, there are many activities in each of the six standards that could be implemented at no cost to the schools.

Contact Your Representative Today!

Please contact your state representative TODAY and urge him/her to support HSB523, the parent involvement policy bill.

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Call to leave a message for your representative by calling (515) 281-3221

E-mail Your Representative Today!

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Thank you for being an advocate for children!

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- For information on National PTA issues, go to: http://www.pta.org/ia_issues.html

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