



Family Engagement e-Newsletter

A resource for schools and districts on partnering with families to increase student achievement



Message From State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch

On behalf of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), I am pleased to share with you the inaugural issue of the ISBE "Family Engagement E-Newsletter." This newsletter is part of a series of resources and tools to help schools and school districts strengthen meaningful partnerships with families that are linked to learning. ISBE recognizes that this type of engagement is a cornerstone of effective schools. In order to strengthen our agency's capacity to support this work on the ground we have initiated an intra-agency collaborative team charged with working across divisions to bring more cohesiveness and efficiency to our own efforts. This team will develop and disseminate resources and tools and build a common engagement framework. In the coming months, you will hear more about the work of this team both through this newsletter and on our family engagement website: www.IllinoisParents.org.

Thank you for all of the great work you do on behalf of Illinois children and families. If there are ways that we can better support your work in this area, we always welcome your feedback.

This Issue's Feature

Engaging Families to Make Pathways for Student Achievement

In Evanston School District 65, families are being engaged in multiple ways to achieve improved academic performance in core subject areas and to increase involvement of all parents (especially low-income parents) in school improvement efforts. [Click Here to Read More](#)

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Department Highlights

Division of Innovation and Improvement

The Division of Innovation and Improvement has conducted numerous activities over the past 18 months in the area of Parent Involvement and Family Engagement, including regional Parent Involvement/Family Engagement Summits and Webinars.

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Center for Language and Early Childhood Development

The seventh annual Bilingual Parent Summit was convened in Oak Brook on May 12, 2012. More than 700 parents from 89 school districts across Illinois attended. Special guests included Gery J. Chico, Chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education, and Rita Gonzalez, Du Page County Board Commissioner.

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Special Education and Support Services Division

The Special Education and Support Services Division offers a number of resources and services to support the education of students with special needs.

[Click Here to Read More](#)

The Parent and Educator Partnership (PEP)

The Parent and Educator Partnership (PEP), funded by the Special Education and Support Services Division, is a parent center working across Illinois to improve meaningful participation of parents in their child's education.

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Indicator 8 Webinars

The Special Education and Support Services Division and PEP will be co-hosting three webinars to provide training and support to parents and school personnel as they work together to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

[Click Here to Read More](#)

Full Articles

Feature Story:

Engaging Families to Make Pathways for Student Achievement

In Evanston School District 65, families are being engaged in multiple ways. Core engagement activities include:

- Monthly family nights where parents come together to learn about afterschool programming. They also engage in peer exchange in learning about supporting youth development and academic success.
- Special events for parents to help them prepare for important moments from parent teacher conferences to the transition between fifth and sixth and eighth and ninth grades.
- In addition, family counseling by the district's trained therapists is available for families (both youth and their parents) dealing with family challenges ranging from divorce to social and economic hardship.

ISBE Web Resources

For more Information and resources on meeting family engagement requirements, click on the following link:

<http://www.isbe.net/grants/html/parent.htm>

ISBE's family engagement website includes research, tools and links to services across the state.

<http://www.illinoisparents.org>

Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois can be downloaded in

English and Spanish at:

http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/parent_rights.htm

The Illinois Early Learning Project provides information and resources for schools and school districts in English, Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin, Polish, etc.:

<http://illinoisearlylearning.org/>

The Parent and Educator Partnership:

<http://www.pepartnership.org>



Evanston, IL—Tyler Dixon shares with her mother, Doris, her experience as a student mentor in her afterschool program.

- On a broader level, the district is in the process of expanding its engagement efforts as part of the move toward community schools at some of the 21st CCLC sites where the district has been able to recruit additional support.

The first step toward developing community schools at Nichols and Chute will be engaging and repositioning parents as leaders in the schools. The Evanston school district’s approach to family engagement will build on best practices like those documented by Soo Hong in her new book “A Cord of Three Strands: A New Approach to Parent Engagement in Schools” (Harvard Education Press, 2011). This research shows that community organizing practices are most effective at authentically engaging parents as partners in the community school.

Plans for engaging families include:

- Involving parents in open conversations about their interests, motivations, goals and challenges (e.g., Café y Conversación)
- Developing activities that invite parents into schools in specific ways that build on their strengths (e.g., Parent Mentors)
- Promoting parental leadership in schools by creating new spaces for leadership (e.g., Community School Action Team)
- Transforming school culture so that teachers and administrators view families as co-owners and co-authors of the school and community experience (e.g., Community Immersion Institute for Teachers)

In doing family engagement work, the Evanston school district hopes to achieve improved academic performance in core subject areas, increased involvement of all parents (especially low-income parents) in school committees and events, improved youth social competence, enhanced family relationships, enhanced school culture and an increase in the number of low-income parents feeling valued and included in school life.

Division of Innovation and Improvement

The Division of Innovation and Improvement has conducted numerous activities over the past 18 months in the area of Parent Involvement and Family Engagement. Beginning in the fall of 2010, in partnership with the Academic Development Institute, the Illinois Parent Information Resource Center and Great Lakes West, a series of webinars was conducted. These webinars were open to district staff, school staff, parent facilitators and parents. Topics included Creating a Welcoming Environment, Parent Involvement Resources, School-Home Communication and Parent Involvement as a Collaborative Process.

In the spring of 2011, a series of regional Parent Involvement/Family Engagement Summits was presented at various locations throughout the state. These summits engaged school district personnel in understanding Title One, Section 1118 requirements for parental involvement and planning activities. The summits were held in Oak Lawn, Lisle, Springfield and Marion. Follow-up summits were conducted in the fall of 2011, and school teams including parents, were in attendance. These summits provided opportunities for district staff to work with each other in developing action plans for family engagement. Panels consisting of practitioners who have been successful in engaging families in meaningful ways presented valuable insight and information at each summit.



Georgetown, IL—Family portrait taken at Mary Miller Junior High’s first annual family fun festival.



Quad Cities, IL—Lights ON immigrant families engaged in adult education classes provided in partnership with professors from St. Ambrose University.

To continue the work begun at the summits, a series of webinars was produced in the winter and spring of the 2011-2012 school year. These sessions focused on relevant topics and were facilitated by the practitioners who served as panelists during the summits. Topics included: High School Parent Support Centers, VIPs (Very Important Parents), Parent Involvement in High Poverty Schools, Engaging Families in Early Childhood Settings, At-risk Families, Response to Intervention (RtI) and ELL and Improving High School Family Engagement through Social and Emotional Learning.

Each webinar provided specific program and practice models that align with the research and evidence base and have yielded significant family engagement outcomes for students, families, and school improvement efforts. Please review these webinars for those examples that can be developed within your schools and districts and let us know how they are working.

All of the resources pertaining to the summits, in addition to the webinars, are archived on the ISBE website and at <http://www.illinoisparents.org>.

The Division of Innovation and Improvement will continue this most important work in the coming months.

Center for Language and Early Childhood Development

The seventh annual Bilingual Parent Summit was convened in Oak Brook on Saturday, May 12, 2012. More than 700 parents and family members from 89 school districts across Illinois attended the summit. As an example, there were parents from school communities that included: Aurora East SD 131, Cicero SD 99, CHSD 218 (Oak Lawn), Beardstown SD 15, Bloomington SD 87, Carbondale SD 95, Champaign SD 4, Kankakee SD 111, De Kalb SD 428, De Pue SD 103, East Moline 37, Mendota HSD 280, Rantoul SD 137, Rochelle SD 231, Rockford SD 205 and City of Chicago SD 299.

At the summit, families heard from speakers that included Dr. Margarita Ramos from the Centro de Investigación y Asesoría Educativa (CIAE) in Monterrey, Mexico. Dr. Ramos focused on the Common Core State Standards and the critical importance for parents of ELL students to be aware and cognizant of these standards. Reyna Hernández, Assistant Superintendent of the Center for Language and Early Child Development at ISBE, also delivered a keynote address outlining many of the parent engagement initiatives that ISBE is undertaking, including supporting the annual Summit for Bilingual Parents. Other special guests who spoke at the summit included Gery J. Chico, Chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education, and Rita Gonzalez, Du Page County Board Commissioner, State Representative Linda Chapa La Via (D-Aurora) also attended the summit.

Parents also attended more than 35 breakout sessions and learned from:

- Community based organizations, including Arab American Family Services (Bridgeview), Brighton Park Neighborhood Council (Chicago), Casa Jalisco (Melrose Park), Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (Chicago), Frida Kahlo Community Organization (Chicago), Niles Township Schools ELL Parent Center (Skokie), and the Southwest Youth Collaborative (Chicago). Representatives from the Illinois

“Improving High School Family Engagement through Social and Emotional Learning”

A webinar facilitated by Dr. Tim Dohrer—Principal at New Trier High School (District 203).

“Parent Involvement in High Poverty Schools”

A webinar facilitated by Dr. Sandra Lewis—Principal at Harold Washington Elementary (District 299).

“Utilizing Parents during the School Day as a Resource to Improve Reading Outcomes for Students”

A webinar facilitated by Adam Zbrozek—Principal Lincoln Elementary School (St. Charles SD 303).

“Involving at Risk Families in RtI Supports with an ELL Focus”

A webinar facilitated by Sandy Anderson—Principal Oak Terrace Elementary School (District 112).

“Improving High School Family Engagement through Parent Support Centers”

A webinar facilitated by Anne Coffman—Director for Federal and State Projects (Community High School District 218).

To access the handouts and the PowerPoint presentations associated with these webinars, click on the following link: <http://www.illinoisparents.org/Toolbox.htm>

Welcoming Center were present, including Director Silvia Villa, who presented on a parental involvement program available through this Center.

- Participation in an interactive Parent Café. Here, parents shared and exchanged information/ideas from different school districts.
- Isabel Reyes of the Mexican American Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) about Parent Rights and Responsibilities.
- Presenters discussed specific education programs, including early childhood, bilingual and special education programs.

In summary, interest in the Bilingual Parent Summit continues to grow on an annual basis. In addition to presentations that were led by parents in English and Spanish, translation kits facilitated communication and understanding of summit proceedings in other languages.

Special Education and Support Services Division

Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois is a document developed by ISBE's Special Education and Support Services Division for parents and others to learn about the educational rights of children who have disabilities and receive special education services. The Rights Guide, available in English and Spanish, can be found at:

http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/parent_rights.htm.

Parents of students currently receiving special education and/or related services can obtain a free, printed copy by contacting the ISBE Information Center at 1-866-262-6663.

A companion document, the Illinois Student Records Keeper, is available for download at:

http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/parent_rights.htm#records

The Records Keeper is a resource that is useful in keeping important information about dates, people, meetings, reports and copies of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The Records Keeper contains guiding questions to help parents prepare for IEP and transition meetings and get ready for evaluations and reevaluations. The booklet can be used to collect and file paperwork and other materials. The Records Keeper cross-references the Rights Guide discussed above.

The Parent and Educator Partnership (PEP)

"When families are involved at home and at school, children do better in school, and the schools get better" (Anne T. Henderson, 2007).

PEP is a parent center funded by the Special Education and Support Services Division to improve the meaningful participation of parents in their child's education across Illinois. PEP's work includes:

- Developing, equipping and supporting Parent Leadership;
- Providing training and information on the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA);
- Assisting school districts with developing School, Family and Community Partnerships and
- Supporting the implementation of Illinois State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicator #8, which addresses parent involvement.

Comments from parents that attended the Bilingual Parent Summit

"This is very important for our own personal knowledge and for our children."

"Very good conference. I feel personally that I learned a lot."

"Marvelous. A wonderful experience."

Tips and Tools

Webinar: [Creating a Welcoming Place](#)

What schools can do to create an environment where families experience the support needed to become full partners in the education of their children. [Download PPT.](#)

Family Engagement Resources for Illinois Families and Schools Webinar

This webinar introduces and explores a number of resources that will help Illinois schools in the implementation of meaningful parent involvement objectives when used in conjunction with the school improvement plan. [Download PPT.](#)

Family Engagement Tool

Districts and schools are required to review their parent involvement policies annually. To help with the review and in creating new policies, we encourage you to use this tool. For more information contact Marci Johnson at marjohns@isbe.net.

PEP provides support to parents and educators through:

- A toll-free support line (1-877-317-2733),
- A website (<http://www.pepartnership.org/default.aspx>) and
- A Lending Library that includes free checkouts and returns.

Indicator 8 Webinars

Each year, in accordance with Indicator 8 of the Illinois SPP for IDEA Part B, ISBE is required to conduct a survey with parents of children with disabilities in order to receive feedback regarding their perceptions of how schools facilitated their involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. The 25-question survey is mailed to a representative sample of parents throughout the state. The survey results are used for program improvement and reporting in the IDEA Part B Annual Performance Report to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. The Special Education and Support Services Division and PEP will be co-hosting three webinars to provide training and support to parents and school personnel as they work together to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

The free webinars will discuss transition from school to work (August 21), state conflict resolution processes (September 11) and least restrictive environment (October 2). All webinars will be live from noon to 1:00 p.m., then archived on the PEP website at <http://www.pepartnership.org/>.

Upcoming Dates: Free Indicator 8 Webinars

Topic: Transition from school to work
Date: Aug. 21, 2012
Time: 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

Topic: State conflict resolution processes
Date: Sept. 11, 2012
Time: 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

Topic: Least restrictive environment
Date: Oct. 2, 2012
Time: 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

All webinars will be live then archived on the PEP website at <http://www.pepartnership.org/>

Quick Links

[ISBE Website](#)

[Illinois Parents](#)

[Department of Innovation and Improvement](#)

[Special Education and Support Services Division](#)

[The Parent and Educator Partnership \(PEP\)](#)



Chicago, IL—The Logan Square Neighborhood Association's 21st CCLC program at Monroe Elementary hard at work during homework and tutoring time.

