

# Research and Best Practices for Engaging Families to Increase Student Success



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# Today's Agenda

- Overview of PTA
- PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships
- Best Practices in Family Engagement
- Noteworthy State Laws Targeting Children and Youth in High Risk Situations

# Overview of PTA

- National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
  - Founded in 1897, PTA is the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the nation, representing over five million members.
  - Over 24,000 local units in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and the Department of Defense schools in Europe and the Pacific.
  - PTA has a long history of protecting the rights of youth involved in the juvenile justice system. In 1899, PTA passed its first resolution in support of a separate system for youth in the corrections system.

# PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

- PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships provide research-based guidance on how to meaningfully engage all families
- Fifteen states have codified these standards into law or adopted them as state policy
- The U.S. Department of Education used PTA's Standards in its *Family Guide for Getting Involved with Correctional Education*

# Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community

In Wichita Public School District in Kansas, school staff conduct “porch visits,” where they visit the homes of students and families to introduce themselves and make parents feel welcomed into the school community.

## Standard 2: Communicating Effectively

Due to the diverse languages spoken by its families, St. Paul Public Schools in Minnesota partners with community-based organizations to create videos and host local forums for families and parents.

# Standard 3: Supporting Student Success

In California, Oakland Unified School District's "Engagement Unit" provides professional development to parent–community liaisons and principals about how to partner with families to reduce chronic absenteeism and truancy.

## **Standard 4: Speaking up for every child**

Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland is developing Parent Academies, whose course offerings will be determined by local community members and parents. The academies are designed to provide parents with the skills and tools to advocate for their children's academic success and overall school improvement.

## Standard 5: Sharing power

### *Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)*

- A model developed by the American Humane Association through which families, youth, and agency personnel responsible for youth's care collaborate to create and carry out a strength-based plan for the youth.
- FGDM is implemented in public child service agencies, including juvenile justice, child welfare, and mental health.
- In the juvenile justice field, these meetings are youth-focused and plans are based on youth's strengths and needs.

## Standard 5: Sharing power

### *Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)*

#### Results:

- Recent studies have found that FGDM reduces the number of child welfare cases as well as children living outside of family networks.  
*(Pakura, 2004)*

## Standard 6: Collaborating with community

Oakland Unified School District has a Complementary Learning Department that works to align mental health services, afterschool programming, early childhood education, and health services across the district to provide comprehensive supports for families.

# Noteworthy State Laws Targeting Children and Youth in High-Risk Situations

- Utah's *Families, Agencies, and Communities Together for Children and Youth At Risk Act* supports collaboration between families, agencies and community-based organizations to implement a comprehensive service plan for youth in high-risk situations
- In Maine, each school is required to establish a **dropout prevention committee** that includes students, parents, educators, and administrators. This committee must also include a youth who has dropped out of school.

# Noteworthy State Laws Targeting Children and Youth in High-Risk Situations

- Colorado requires that schools *provide support services to youth at risk of being suspended or expelled from school*. Families must be engaged in the development and implementation of these interventions.
- North Carolina law authorizes *the creation of innovative high school programs that target youth in high-risk situations*. These programs must focus on engaging parents and provide parents with support and training on academic decision-making.

# Learn More and Take Action

PTA's Standards and Assessment Guide

[http://pta.org/family\\_school\\_partnerships.asp](http://pta.org/family_school_partnerships.asp)

Family Guide to Getting Involved with Correctional Education: <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/resources/spotlight/familyGuide2008.asp>

Seeing is Believing: Best Practices in Family Engagement: [http://pta.org/Issue\\_Brief-SeeingisBelieving.pdf](http://pta.org/Issue_Brief-SeeingisBelieving.pdf)

# Learn More and Take Action

## Family Group Decision Making

<http://www.americanhumane.org/protecting-children/programs/family-group-decision-making/>

## Sign up for PTA Takes Action Network

[http://www.pta.org/take\\_action.asp](http://www.pta.org/take_action.asp)