

## Parental Engagement and Support Recommendations

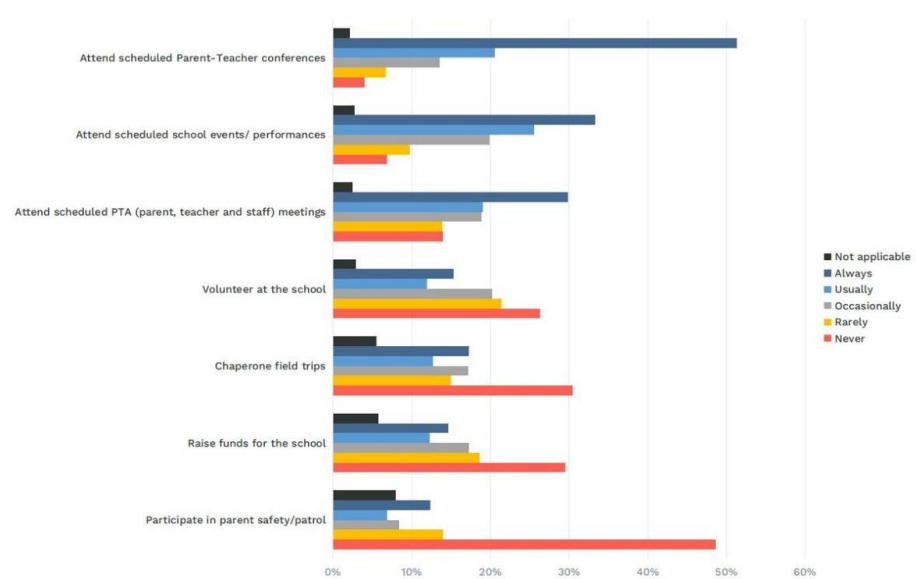
### Problem Definition: What's the problem?

Active parental involvement greatly improves a number of student outcomes. In fact, research shows that high parental engagement leads to increased academic performance, better behavior and less discipline, better attendance, and more students participating in postsecondary education. In Detroit's school systems, low parental engagement is a major barrier to these student outcomes, proving to have detrimental effects on students well beyond the time they spend in the classroom.

The 5Essentials parent survey conducted in 2015 cited that parent engagement and support is lacking. While many parents attend conferences, events, and PTA meetings, engagement in more involved activities - volunteer opportunities, fundraising, and safety patrol - drops off. According to 5Essentials, parents feel that they are informed and offered opportunities to come to school, but active support from parents is lacking. Barriers identified in the study included work obligations, events scheduled at inconvenient times, and lack of relevance of school activities.

### Active support from parents is lacking.

How often do you do the following?



Parent Results from the 5Essentials Survey, presented by Walt Cook and Eric Anderson

Research completed by Gallup in 2015 shows that only 20% of parents nationally feel actively engaged in their child's school. In Detroit, true parental engagement is suspected to be much lower. Not only does this impact student outcome, but Gallup also argues that "parent engagement is a crucial ingredient for successful schools...fully engaged parents are more than satisfied with their child's school; they have a powerful emotional relationship with it. They believe their child's school delivers on what it promises and are proud to be parents there." By building positive and engaging relationships between parents and schools, we can build both successful schools and successful students.

| Parental Involvement  | Parental Engagement   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest, ideas, vision, and goals generated by the school</li> <li>• Parents invited to participate when school deems it important</li> <li>• Administrative decision-making, parent buy-in</li> <li>• Focuses on strengthening the school's priorities in order to support students</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest, ideas, vision, and goals created collaboratively between the administration, teachers, and parents</li> <li>• Parents work with the school to create the opportunities for themselves and other parents to become engaged</li> <li>• Challenges parents to contribute</li> <li>• Gives parents the opportunity to lead</li> <li>• School administration and staff organize and facilitate; parents are empowered to lead</li> <li>• Relationships between administration, teachers, parents, and students are strengthened</li> <li>• Primary goal: transformational change</li> </ul> |

**Strategy: How can the community respond?**

In order to improve student outcomes, create more success in schools, and improve the current state of parental engagement, School Leadership Teams should be collaboratively created and implemented by Detroit School Leadership, including both DPSCD and the Charter Schools. By refocusing the decision-making process back to the school level, parents, youth, and community stakeholders will be better engaged. There are models across the country - Chicago, Boston, Newark and Los Angeles - that the Detroit school systems can utilize to model its own leadership teams in local schools. Additionally, local community groups have already begun looking at increasing parent engagement. The following strategies should be responsibilities of School Leadership Teams in order to create meaningful parent engagement:

- Review and approve a School Improvement Plan
- Review and comment on the entire school budget, including the General Fund and External Funds budgets
- Thoughtful input on school programming, school budget- such as, approval for discretionary school materials, supplies, textbooks and equipment; usage of school improvement award funds
- Review and approve recommendations from any other committee or group that is established to recommend changes that will have a major effect on the school community
- Develop and approve plans for increasing parent engagement in the school
- Develop, review annually, and approve the School-Parent Compact as required by Title I
- Receive information about all outside programs or outside professionals that come into the school
- Have input on school policy decisions
- Help to identify solutions to student barriers

In order to most effectively implement and sustain School Leadership Teams, the following should be accomplished:

- A memorandum of understanding MOU (or other informal agreement) be drafted between the district and school administration stipulating the team's role, administration's commitment, and the overall support of School Leadership Teams

- School Leadership Teams should be “tested” on a pilot basis in a designated number of schools first (5-10), then evaluated for their successes and opportunities for improvement before a city-wide plan can be implemented (within 2-3 years)
  - Evaluated by school administration, staff, and parents
- While teams should include a school leader, school staff, and teachers, there should be a concerted effort to ensure the team’s majority is made up of active parents, parent leaders, community stakeholders, and/or other active community members. SLT’s should very closely mirror the culture of the school community
- The directive of the Leadership Team will be both collaborative and self-determining in nature; all decisions and solutions identified by the SLT would be in direct response to each school’s identified need
- A district staff member be designated to each leadership team. The designated staff member would be responsible for:
  - Measuring the progress of the leadership team
  - Determining the assets and needs of the leadership team
- School Leadership Teams would receive regular and ongoing trainings in order to ensure all members are properly equipped
  - Trainings in (but not limited to): relationship-building, shared decision-making, engagement and involvement, funding and budgeting, programming, operating as an advisory board, and community and youth organizing
  - Would allow for school administration, staff, and parents to shape the team
- Once SLT are established, sustainability, continuous growth and improvement should be embedded into the culture of the team

#### **Case Studies: Who can we look to model?**

- DPSCD
  - School District leaders have pledged to implement SLT/Team Councils in an effort to improve schools and increase student achievement
- Boston Public Schools
  - 1989: Boston Public Schools (BPS) establishes the School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making Project in order to decentralize school decision-making. Over four years, voluntarily adopted by 36 schools.
  - 1993: Massachusetts Education Reform Act mandated that every school establish a school council composed of parents, teacher, and the principal.
  - “The best quality of decisions at the local level is likely to result from the process of shared decision-making” (Boston School Site Council Manual, 11)
  - Role of the School Site Council:
    - Review and approve the Quality School Plan
    - Approve the budget for discretionary school materials, supplies, textbooks and equipment, and use of school improvement award funds
    - Develop and approve plans for increasing parent involvement
    - Approve waivers
    - Review and approve recommendations of school groups and subcommittees (such as the Instructional Leadership Team) that will have a major effect on the school community
    - Receive information on all outside programs or professionals who come into the school
    - Review and comment on the entire school budget
    - Finding additional ways to implement the intent of shared decision-making

**Assumptions: What conditions do we believe to be true?**

In order to be successful, the following are all important components that need to occur:

- School Leadership Teams are seen as valuable by all parties:
  - Principals and administration will need to have buy in to the teams, and approve that they occur in their school
  - Teachers will need to be given the capacity and
  - Parents will need to want to be engaged with the school's decision-making and feel as if their voice will make an impact
- While it will make sense to have early adopters to start the program, ultimately all schools should participate
- Involvement of the School Leadership Teams needs to be meaningful
- Training will need to occur to create capacity in community members and staff
- Expectations from the implementation of this program will be improved student success, and community support and enrichment.

**Risks: What could go wrong?**

Without proper implementation, such a program could be unsuccessful. Items to be mindful of when implementing this program that would lead to an unsuccessful implementation include:

- No buy in from principal/central office/school staff
- Lack of understanding
- Poor communication about what the program is and why it is being implemented
- No clear definition of what School Leadership Teams are
- People will not recognize the value of the program
- Lack of participation
- Staff/parents seeing it as "one more change", again missing the value

**Success Measures: How do we know it worked?**

In order to most effectively measure the success of school leadership teams, the following measurements should be taken:

- Pre- and post-School Leadership Team implementation surveys to parents
- Evaluation of pilot school success

Based on the research, we should see improvement in the following indicators:

- Increased parent involvement
- Improved student attendance
- Lower student behavior incidents
- Increased academic success