



Illinois Parent Information
Resource Center

PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY TOOLKIT

A resource for schools and school districts



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change

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Illinois Parent Information
Resource Center

CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ARTS PARTNERSHIPS
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Dear Colleague:

In 2006 the Center for Community Arts Partnerships (CCAP) of Columbia College Chicago was awarded the opportunity to be the Illinois Parent Information and Resource Center (Illinois PIRC) by the US Department of Education. CCAP has a rich history of working with school communities in using the arts as a catalyst to connect, inspire, and empower teachers, school administrators, children and parents. As the Illinois PIRC, it will continue to promote holistic, arts-integrated education and programming that speaks to the needs of communities by directly supporting families and schools.

This toolkit was created to assist schools and school districts in creating their parent involvement policies. The toolkit was designed to provide a simple, comprehensive step-by-step guide in assisting learning communities through this process. Highlights of the toolkit include:

- Visual organizers
- References to online tools and resources
- Written in easy to understand language

In addition to this toolkit, the Illinois PIRC offers a variety of programs, resources and information with a unique arts-focused approach. To access additional information, please logon to www.colum.edu/ilpirc or call toll-free at 877.586.0007.

David Flatley,
Executive Director
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Columbia College Chicago

Columbia 
C O L L E G E C H I C A G O

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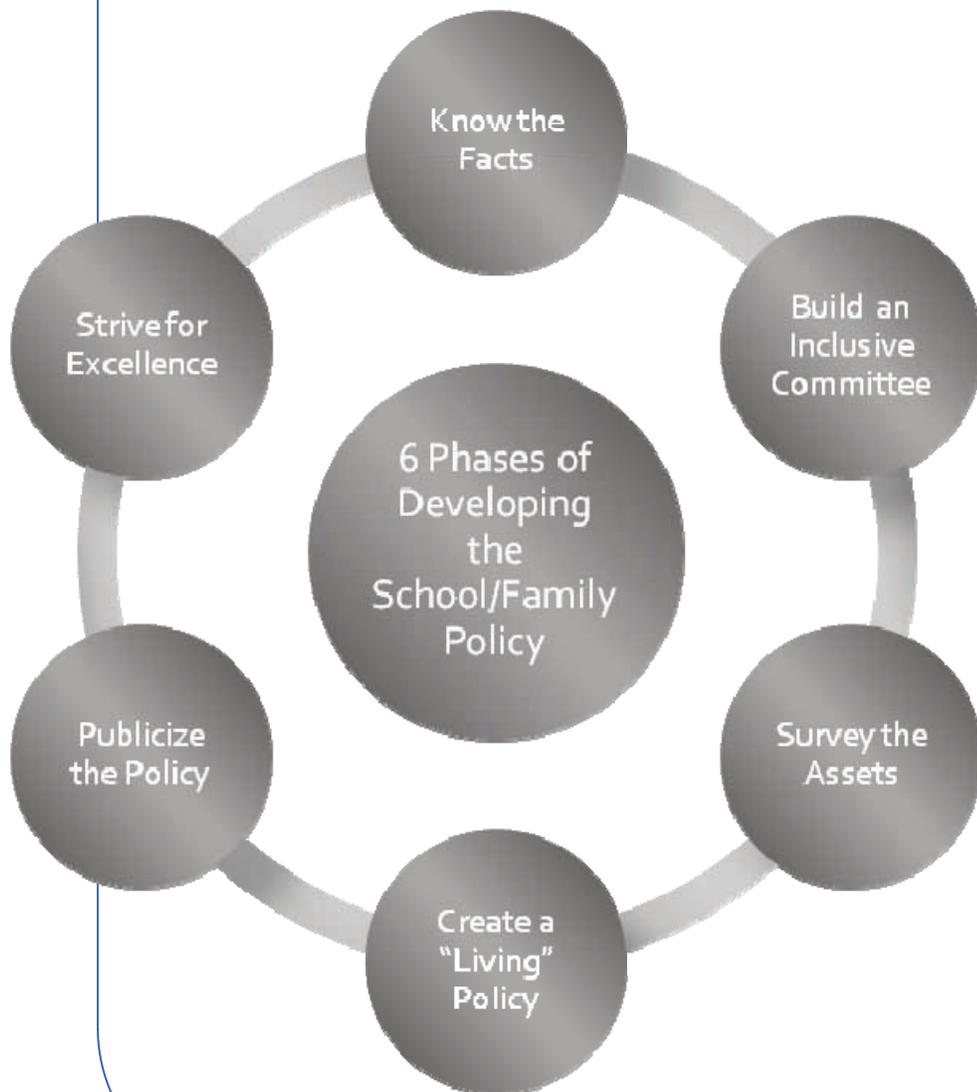
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How to Use this Toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to assist schools and school districts in the development of their parent involvement policies.

The pages in the toolkit can be pulled out and used as handouts during the policy development process.

The process for developing a parental involvement policy has been organized into 6 phases. Each phase is covered in depth in a corresponding section of this toolkit. Below is a visual summary of the steps necessary to plan and develop your parent involvement policy.



What is the Illinois Parent Information and Resource Center?

The Illinois Parent Information Resource Center (Illinois PIRC) implements and supports a variety of programs and policies, and provides resources to increase parental involvement, improve student academic achievement, and strengthen partnerships among parents and schools. Illinois PIRC is an initiative of Columbia College Chicago in partnership with the Center for Community Arts Partnerships.

Core Values...

- ↳ Meaningful school/family partnerships benefit student academic achievement and the positive development of communities (“Beyond the Bake Sale” 2007)
- ↳ Parents are their child’s first teacher (The Hundred Languages of Children 1998)
- ↳ Schools can be vibrant hubs of learning when the arts are infused into their culture and curriculum. (A recent study in the Arts Education Partnerships, “Third Space: When Learning Matters” 2005)
- ↳ Community-based resources and services can help strengthen the school/family partnership and vice versa (Framework for Six Types of Parental Involvement, Joyce Epstein)

How Illinois PIRC Supports Parental Involvement Strategies Statewide

Specific resources and services are available to educational administrators, school districts, regional offices of education, institutions of higher education, and other key stakeholders in implementing effective parental involvement strategies.

Illinois PIRC offers the following:

- **A hotline**
- **Workshops and learning sessions**
- **Models of community-centered schools**
- **Technical assistance**
- **A website**
- **Information available for dissemination** about the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and parent involvement under Section 1118 and provisions of ESEA.

For more information, to access services, or become a statewide partner, please call **1-877-586-0007** or email pirc@colum.edu.

Why are School/Family Partnerships Important?

“All parents have dreams for their children and want the best for them. All parents have the capacity to support their children’s learning.”

—Excerpt from *Beyond the Bake Sale*

The school/family partnership is a necessity in developing quality public education. Facing financial challenges, high stakes testing policies, and school communities need all the help they can get to ensure each and every child receives a good education. When school, families and communities collaborate for education:



- Student achievement can increase
- Public support can be built and sustained for schools
- Families and communities can help schools overcome the challenges they face
- Teachers and families can work more collaboratively in building a relationship of trust and respect

Strong leadership by parents, teachers, principals, and community leaders can turn ideas into reality. Well-executed partnership goes hand in hand with school improvement, whether prompted by their own desire to create a better school. It is important to ask where does your school fit when it comes to partnering with families.

- Does your school cling to attitudes and practices that confine parents to limited, traditional roles?
- Has your school tried to define what it means by parental involvement and partnership with families?
- How is your school connecting with community resources?

Phase One: Know the Facts

How Does NCLB Define Parental Involvement



No Child Left Behind recognizes that parents are a critical component in determining the success of their child's education— schools need parents' help for the work they do.

For the first time in the history of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) the law contains a

definition of parental involvement. This definition should guide the development and implementation of parental programs in your school and school district, but should not limit additional parental involvement initiatives that may exceed the NCLB definition. The law defines parental involvement as, "the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic 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 committees to assist in the education of their child; and
- The carrying out of other activities such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA Section 9101(32).

The United States Department of Education (USDOE) has compiled a workbook for schools, districts, and parents on how to better understand the requirements of parental involvement as outlined under the Title I Part A. To reference the workbook, visit the url address:

www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/parentinvguid.doc

What is Section 1118 of the NCLB Act?

Section 1118 of NCLB Title I Part A clearly outlines how parents should be active and involved partners in the education of their children. The tenants of Section 1118 are outlined below:

School districts and schools must have a parental involvement policy

- Section 1118 requires schools and school districts to have a parental involvement policy. It should explain how parents can become involved. The policy should also explain how the district would provide help to schools to improve the effectiveness and the involvement of parents.

Annual meetings should be convened to review the policy

- It requires an annual public meeting to review the policies. Section 1118 also requires that parents be involved in the decision-making of the use of specific set aside funds for Parent Involvement Activities at the school district and school level.

Home-school communication should be varied and frequent.

- Parents should be frequently notified about their child's performance and the school's curriculum. There should also be opportunities for parents to ask questions and share experiences. Written translations of printed information must be provided to parents with limited English proficiency in a language they understand, and/or orally in a language that parents understand.

Access for all

- Parents of children with disabilities should be given opportunities to learn more about the school so they can better use the resources of the school.

To obtain a full copy of Section 1118, go to the Illinois State Board of Education website to the following url address:

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

I think the impact of parents and communities is at least as significant as the amount of money that's put into education.

— U.S. President Barack Obama
(As printed in the New Yorker, May 7, 2007)

Phase Two: Build an Inclusive Committee

Convene Key Stakeholders



Building an inclusive committee is the next stage in building a successful and actionable parent involvement policy. During this phase, a committee should be formed to embark upon the creation of the district-wide or school-based parent involvement policy. The committee will define who this team is and how the team will operate.

In keeping with requirements of Section 1118, the committee should have representative membership, use consensus decision making processes and ensure that there is shared leadership. These core concepts will help hold the committee together over time. Stressing them early in committee's development builds a strong foundation for long-term success.

Making conscious decisions about how the committee will operate provides an opportunity to make real, systemic change. A highly functioning committee balances team building with taking action. Committees that focus only on results (action) and ignore the process for achieving them (team building) will make many accomplishments at first, but, they probably won't survive in the long term. The committee won't have built support for the groups efforts, because it will tend to "steamroll" people instead of listening to their input.

By concentrating on team building early in the process, there will be a chance to involve stakeholders who have historically been left behind and to build connections with others in the school community.

Characteristics of an Effective Committee

Establish a Representative Membership

Your committee will begin to identify who should be on the team to ensure that it's representative as outlined in Section 1118. The committee should consider developing strategies for recruiting “non-traditionally involved” members to join the committee. Representatives should include teachers, parents, school staff, and community members. The committee should consist of no more than 8 people for it to be effective. During this process, the committee will have a real opportunity to involve new people in the school community in meaningful ways.

Determine Communication Ground Rules

With participation of all the members, the committee will set guidelines for communicating and interacting, both during and outside of meetings. Establishing these rules helps set a tone of respect and consideration for all voices and opinions. It also helps committee members to begin to take ownership. It helps the committee to operate more effectively and to achieve team goals as well.

Support Consensus Decision Making

Consensus decision making gives all members an opportunity to voice their opinions on a topic. It also helps ensure that individuals are committed to support decisions. Consensus decision making will encourage the committee to keep its action focus, as members look for solutions everyone can live with instead of arguing for their own position.

Identify Shared Leadership Opportunities

and learn more about members' skills and strengths. It will be important to take advantage of the committee most important resource—the members. Committee members must be prepared to actively help accomplish the goals as outlined in Section 1118 in building an effective parent involvement policy. Individuals often don't recognize their own potential or the important contributions others on the committee can make. Identifying shared leadership opportunities will help the committee understand that everyone can and must contribute to improve results for students and their families.

Compiled from the Southwest Education Development Laboratory, Collaborative Action Toolkit For the complete guide, logon to <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/fam18/>

What do We Need to Know about Developing a District-Wide Parent Involvement Policy

Section 1118 of NCLB requires that every school district and every schools receiving Title I dollars must have a written parent involvement policy, as well as build school capacity to effectively implement the parent policy provisions. This policy must be developed jointly with, approved by, and distributed to parents of participating children and the local community. It must ensure that strong plans for parental involvement are in place in every Title I school, and should be designed to encourage and sustain active parental involvement.

Per Section 1118 every school district receiving Title I funds is REQUIRED to:

- Develop, for the school district at large, a written parent involvement policy jointly with parents, agreed on with parents, and distributed to parents and incorporated in the school district's Title I plan that it must submit to the state in order to qualify for Title I funding under section 1112.
- Submit to the state at the time that the school district forwards it's Title I plan, any comments of parents who find that in their view, the school district's Title I plan is not satisfactory.
- Include parents in the development of the school district and individual school improvement plans.
- Provide coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist participating schools in planning and implementing effective parent involvement activities.
- Assist individual schools in building greater capacity and expertise in developing strong parent involvement programs.
- Reserve no less than 1% of its Title I allocation for the implementation of parent involvement programming, which includes the promotion of family literacy and parenting skills. However, if 1% of the agency allocation under the written policy for the fiscal year will be \$5,000 or less, then no money is required to be reserved.

Phase Three: Survey the Assets

Review Checklist of Required Components for a District-Wide Parent Involvement Policy

REQUIRED COMPONENTS	YES	NO
The Policy must be:		
Developed jointly with and agreed on by parents of children participating in Title I programs		
Written in an understandable format and provided in a language parents can understand		
Directly distributed to all parents of children participating in Title I programs		
The Policy describes how the district will:		
1. Involve parents in the development of district parental involvement policy		
2. Involve parents in the process of school review and improvement		
3. Assist schools in planning and implementing effective parental involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance		
4. Coordinate parent involvement strategies with other programs such as Even Start, Head Start, and Parents as Teachers		
5. Involve parents in an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parent involvement policy in improving the quality of schools		
The evaluation will identify any barriers to greater participation of parents of diverse backgrounds		
The evaluation findings will be used to design more effective strategies for effective parental involvement		
6. Build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parent involvement		
6A. Assist parents in understanding the state's academic content standards, student academic achievement standards, state and local academic assessments, requirements of Title I, Part A, how to monitor their child's academic progress, and how to work with educators		
6B. Provide materials and training to help parents work with their children to improve their children's academic achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, to foster parent involvement		
6C. Educate school personnel in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners; in the value and utility of contributions of parents; and in how to coordinate parent programs and build ties between parents and schools		
6D. Coordinate and integrate parent involvement programs and activities with other organizations such as Head Start or Parents as Teachers and conduct other activities that encourage parents to fully participate in their child's education		
6E. Ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings and other activities is sent to parents in a format and language that parents can understand		

Checklists were compiled courtesy of the Florida Department of Education, www.fldoe.org/bsa

What do We Need to Know about Developing an Individual School-Based Parent Involvement Policy

School planning documents and assessments that have parental involvement components should be gathered. They should be integrated into the policy. The documents include:

- School-Parent Compact
- School Improvement Plan
- School and Student Report Card
- Classroom Visitation Policy
- Survey Data

Per Section 1118 every school receiving Title 1 funds is REQUIRED to:

- Have a vision statement that says what the school community believes about the importance of family-school partnership to high student achievement.
- Specify steps that the school and families will take to work as partners to improve achievement, such as a school-family compact, family learning activities, personal learning plans, and student support teams.
- Have terms of engagement – such as times for parents to observe in classrooms, availability of interpreters and translation, principal office hours, opportunities for parent-teacher communication, and so on.
- Information about standards and assessment, and how to monitor student progress.
- Identify who will be responsible for carrying out the policy, including school staff, parents, and community members. Resources, such as funding, space, equipment, and staff time and positions.

The policy also needs to lay out how it will be developed, promoted and assessed:

- How parents, school staff, community members and students will be involved in developing and approving the policy.
- Guidelines for measuring whether the policy is working, such as increased parent involvement in school activities and improved student attendance.
- How parents, school staff, and community members will learn about what the policy says.

Phase Three: Survey the Assets

Review Checklist of Required Components for an Individual School-Based Parent Involvement Policy

REQUIRED COMPONENTS	YES	NO
The Policy must be:		
Developed jointly with and agreed on by parents of children participating in Title I programs		
Written in an understandable format and provided in a language parents can understand		
Directly distributed to all parents of children participating in Title I programs		
Made available to the local community and updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school		
Policy Involvement • The Policy describes how the school will:		
Convene an annual meeting at a time convenient for parents of participating children		
Offer a flexible number of meetings and may provide with Title I funds, transportation, child care, or home visits, as such services related to parental involvement		
Involve parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely manner, in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs. This should include the planning, review, and improvement of the school parental involvement policy, as well as the joint development of the school-wide program plan under section 1114 (b)(2)		
Provide parents of participating children timely information about the Title I programs		
Provide parents of participating children description and explanation of the curriculum at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet		
Provide parents of participating children opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children		
If the school-wide program plan under section 1114 (b)(2) is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, the school will submit the parents' comments on the plan that will be available to the local education agency		
Compact: Shared Responsibilities for High Student Academic Achievement • The Compact describes how the school will:		
Provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the participating children to meet Florida's student academic achievement standards		
Hold parent-teacher conferences during which this compact will be discussed as it relates to the individual child's academic achievement		
Provide parents with frequent reports on their children's progress		
Provide parents reasonable access to staff		
Provide parents opportunities to volunteer and participate in their children's class and to observe classroom activities		
The Compact describes how the parents will support children's learning		
Building Capacity for Involvement • The Policy describes how the school will:		
Provide assistance to parents in understanding such topics as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ISBE's academic content standards ISBE's and local academic assessments including alternate assessments The requirements of Title I, Part A How to monitor their children's progress How to work with educators to improve the achievement of their children 		
Foster parental involvement by providing materials and training, such as literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to help parents work with their children to improve their children's academic achievement		
Educate teachers, student services personnel, principals, and other staff on the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to and communicate and work with parents as equal partners		
Coordinate and integrate parental involvement programs and activities that teach parents how to help their children at home		
Ensure that information related to the school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to parents of participating children in a format and language the parents can understand		
Accessibility • The Policy describes how the school will:		
Provide full opportunities for the participation of parents with children with limited English proficiency, parents with children with disabilities, and parents of migratory children		

Phase Four: Create a “Living” Policy

Understanding the Framework of a Parental Involvement Policy

Once the committee has gathered and reviewed the assets and understand what requirements must be embedded into the policy, it is time to put the pieces together.

A parent involvement policy commits a school to certain goals and actions. The policy is the “plan” and requires both parents and schools to frame/construct procedures and elements believed to constitute the most effective partnership between the school and families.

The policy should clearly describe what each activity will be, who will be doing each activity, when each activity will take place, how the activity will be carried out, and how success of each activity will be measured. The policy should be concise and parent-friendly.

There is no required format for the parent involvement policy. It is recommended that the policy be constructed using language and a format that is easy to understand and navigate. This information may be incorporated in various ways using narrative and/or through a charts like the one below.

Below is a chart that can be embedded into a parent involvement policy:

Goal: Convene an annual meeting at a time convenient for parents of participating children:

Activity/Task (What will be done)	Staff Responsible (Who will be doing it)	Timeline (When it will be done)	Steps (How it will be done)	Accountability/ Evaluations (How success will be measured)
Market the meeting	PTA president, grade-level advisory teachers and school secretary	Two months prior to the meeting	Create a flyer to be distributed with students Post meeting date in school newsletter Make robo calls Announce at family nights, parent meetings and on school marquee Put flyers in the main office	Number of parents who RSVP for the meeting—looking to obtain 75% attendance rate of parents

Chart was compiled courtesy of the Florida Department of Education, www.fldoe.org/bsa

Phase Four: Create a “Living” Policy

Constructing the Parent Involvement Policy

The parent involvement policy should be a statement of the district’s and school’s commitment to the partnership concept. The policy should also present specific strategies on how the district or the school will support partnership, including providing on-site support and help from the central office.

A strong policy should cover:

- Personnel policies that support partnership
- A partnership plan that requires every school to create a parent involvement planning committee to develop their school-based plan for school/family partnership
- School-home communication
- Ground rules for agreements with health and social services
- District- and school-level decision making
- Learning materials for families
- Business partnerships
- Adult and community education
- Parent Choice

In addition to these areas, the policy must meet the requirements of Section 1118 and components of 1112 of NCLB. Note There is no required format for the parent involvement policy or for the descriptions of each item required to be contained in the policy.

The Illinois State Board of Education has compiled a template for districts to use in creating the parent involvement policy. To reference the parent involvement templates and other guides provided by the ISBE, logon to:

<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/grants/html/parent.htm>

Excerpts taken from the Beyond the Bake Sale book, authored by Anne Henderson, Karen Mapp, Vivian Johnson, and Don Davies 2007 ed.

Strategies on Communicating the Policy



Section 1118 requires that the parent involvement be communicated to parents, school staff, and community members. Building awareness to the policy is a key to its long-term success in ensuring that it is a living document. In many school communities, collaboration is a new way of “doing business.” The policy must clearly and frequently communicated. This will work to prevent confusion and to establish credibility.

Strategies in communicating the policy:

- Once a draft of the policy has been completed and approved by the committee, hold a public forum to obtain additional feedback and gain school wide investment.
- Publicize the policy completion in local newspapers Radio announcements, public access television channels, and in other media.
- Ensure that all school staff and district personnel are aware of the policy
- Identify parent ambassadors/advisory teachers to assist in communicating the policy on a one-to-one basis with other parents.
- Create visual messages in the school/district that highlight the tenants of the policy
- Develop programs and procedures that are aligned with the policy.
- Hold at least four parent involvement planning committee meetings to ensure the policy is being enacted and evaluated.

Phase Six: Strive for Excellence

Reflect Upon the Work and Make it Meaningful

Ensuring that the policy is meeting the requirements of Section 1118 on paper and in practice will determine the success of the work effort.

In general an effective evaluation should assess whether the policy, as it is currently implemented, is meeting its goals. Therefore the common approach to evaluation is to use the goals and objectives of the policy as a framework to guide the evaluation.

Using the goals and objectives as the guideline, the parent involvement committee should consider whether the policy was a) implemented as originally planned and b) assessing the degree to which the policy is reaching its intended outcomes.

The committee should also review how the implementation strategies responds to the following key elements:

- Leadership and Communication
- Teamwork and Collaboration
- Decision-making and Action Planning
- Implementing and Evaluating
- Continuous Learning and Development

For a comprehensive evaluation tool to measure level of effectiveness on parental involvement practices at the district and school level, log onto:

<http://www.spac.k12.pa.us/parentinvolvement.htm>

Additional Resources



Illinois Parent Information and Resource Center

offers a variety of programs, resources and information with a unique arts-focused approach. These resources and services help ensure that Illinois children are receiving the best education possible.

www.colum.edu/ilpirc

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

The ISBE's Parent Involvement page offers guidelines and samples for districts to use in creating the parent involvement policy.

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

A Toolkit for Title I Parental Involvement

Published 2009

Prepared by Chris Ferguson at the Southwest Education Development Laboratory

An interactive toolkit is designed to provide information to those who are implementing Title I Part A parental involvement provisions.

<http://www.sedl.org/connections/toolkit/toolkit-title-parent-inv.pdf>

Beyond the Bake Sale

2007 Edition

Written by Anne Henderson, Karen Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies

A practical, hands-on primer on helping schools and families work better together to improve children's education

Florida Department of Education

Review Florida's Department of Education Parent Involvement Evaluation Toolkit designed to assist schools and districts in conducting evaluations of the parent involvement policies under Section 1118 of No Child Left Behind, the toolkit contains guidance, policy details, and evaluation instruments including a parent survey, teacher survey and focus group protocols.

<http://www.nclbeval.org/>



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Statewide partnerships are critical to the development and sustainability of Illinois PIRC. For more information, to access services, or become a statewide partner, please call 1-877-586-0007 or email pirc@colum.edu.

WWW.COLUM.EDU/ILPIRC

TOLL FREE 877-586-0007

This publication was produced in whole or in part with funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, Parental Information and Resource Center program, under Grant # 84.310A. The content herein does not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Education, any other agency of the U.S. government, or any other source.