

**Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Office of Indian Education  
Programs  
Center for School Improvement**



**Parent Guidance  
Handbook 2003**

## **OUR MISSION**

The mission of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP) is to provide quality education opportunities from early childhood through life. OIEP's vision is to create a preeminent education school system by fulfilling its mission of serving children and their families from birth through life, working in partnership with Indian tribes, families, communities, and American Indian education organizations. OIEP has responsibility for 185 elementary and secondary schools and dormitories, as well as 27 colleges located on 63 reservations in 23 states across the United States serving approximately 50,000 students representing 238 different tribes.

This Parent Handbook is provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a tool for all Native American parents of school-aged children as an aid in advocating for their children's education. The overall objective is to increase the quality of education and enhance the academic performance of Native American students. This manual serves as a template for each tribe and state to adapt to their specific needs, concerns, and culture.

## **PARENTS**

It is our belief that you, the student's parents and family, are important to your children's education. Your involvement affects student performance and grades. We know that parents are more active in schools when they have a good understanding of how schools work. We have written this Parent Handbook to encourage your active participation. We want you to let us know your ideas and concerns. It is only through this mutual respect and purpose - between schools, families, and community - that students can receive the best education possible.

## **MATERIALS**

This handbook is one of many publications that are available upon request from OIEP. If you have any questions or would like to obtain additional education information, please call your local Education Line Office listed in the directory at the back of this handbook.



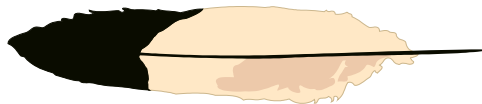


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## **FORMATTING YOUR PARENT HANDBOOK**

The information within this handbook is merely suggestions. Each school will find particular points that are important to your school such as emergency procedures, visitors, and rules that pertain to your school that you may wish to add along with material presented here. A sample of general handbook information is available in the Resource Booklet you received with this handbook.

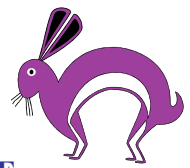




## GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS IN RAISING CULTURALLY HEALTHY CHILDREN

Parents are the first teachers of their children and provide the foundation on which the social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual well being of future generations rests. As the primary caregivers, parents can help nurture culturally-healthy youth through the following actions:

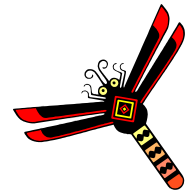
- Provide a loving, healthy, and supportive environment for each child to grow and achieve their fullest potential.
- Establish parenting circles in the community that provide an opportunity for young parents to share their joys and frustrations and learn from each other's experience.
- Connect with parents and grandparents in the community who can serve as role models for providing a nurturing family and home environment.
- Utilize the traditional disciplining roles of uncles, aunts, Elders, and other authority figures in the community to help children learn what is right and wrong in a constructive way.
- Participate as a family and encourage children to become actively involved in cultural activities and learn the traditional values of the community.
- Set aside time each day or week for family-oriented activities, including extended family members whenever possible.
- Make arrangements to accompany your child through part or all of a school day at least once per quarter to gain an understanding of what they are doing in school.
- Volunteer to participate in activities that help make the schooling experiences of each child an extension of their home and community life.
- Practice the locally identified cultural values and rules of behavior in all family activities and encourage other members of the community to do the same.
- Assist children in learning and using their native language.
- Make use of locally appropriate rituals and ceremonies to reinforce the critical events in children's lives.
- Serve as a positive role model and mentor for your children by practicing and reinforcing traditional values and appropriate behaviors.
- Participate in community-sponsored programs that enhance parenting skills.



## GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS TO STRENGTHEN NATIVE LANGUAGE

Parents are the first teachers of their children and provide the foundation on which the language learning of future generations rests. Parents and grandparents can strengthen their heritage language through the following actions:

- Take an active role in promoting the learning and use of your native language throughout the home, school, and community.
- Provide a loving, healthy, and supportive environment for each child to learn their native language as a natural part of growing up, making sure they hear and speak the language as much as possible.
- Volunteer to support, assist, and encourage the language program in the school, as there are many benefits of children growing up multilingual.
- Make use of traditional naming practices and help each child understand the significance of the names they carry.
- Help children understand their family history and the heritage that shapes who they are.
- Make use of local rituals and ceremonies to reinforce critical events in children's lives.
- Read materials and sing to children in the heritage language whenever possible, including published transcripts of Elder's conferences, traditional stories, family histories, children's literature, and songs, etc.
- Teach children to use traditional kinship terms in referring to members of their family and community and to understand and practice the meaning of those terms.
- Be an active and full participant in all aspects of a child's upbringing, including joint learning of the native language (if not already a fluent speaker) as a way of demonstrating the importance of the effort.
- Provide opportunities for children to participate in meaningful conversation with others under supportive, non-threatening circumstances.
- Believe in your child's ability to learn the language, and encourage and support them in doing so (if lacking in fluency yourself, join in with the child in learning the language).



## GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH

Culturally healthy youth take an active interest in learning their heritage and assume responsibility for their role as contributing members of the family and community in which they live. Youth can nurture their own cultural well being through the following actions:

- Learn all you can about your family, kinship relations, and community history and cultural heritage.
- Participate in activities with parents, Elders, and other members of the community, and learn the stories and lessons associated with those activities.
- Become actively involved in local activities and organizations that contribute to the quality of life in your community.
- Show respect to the Elders in your community by assisting them in any way you can.
- Get involved in regional, state, and national issues and organizations that impact your community.
- Make healthy choices in your lifestyle that contribute to the wholeness and well being of yourself and those around you.
- Always be a good role model; show respect and provide support to others.
- Participate in apprenticeships with cultural experts in the community and acquire traditional conflict resolution skills.
- Use critical judgment in the selection of popular media for reading, viewing, and listening, and make sure it is aligned with your aspirations as an adult.
- Associate with friends who can provide healthy role models that will make a positive contribution to your growth and development toward adulthood.



## GUIDE TO CREATING A PARENT CENTER

One way for you as parents to get involved in your children's education is to be part of creating a parent center in or near a school where you can meet other parents, your children's teachers, exchange information, and plan activities. You can also receive academic training that will help you understand the educational system and give you an opportunity to share your skills with others. These centers allow you and other parents to be identified as a well-informed group that can bring about major goals for the education of your children. Most importantly, a center is a place where you can become aware of important and vital periods in your children's educational career – a place where you can gain leadership and advocacy skills for yourself and your families creating a community for problem solving and decision-making. These centers can be funded through Title I or the U.S. Department of Education – Indian Education Title IX.

### What Is a Good Parent Center?

A parent center is a place where people have good cultural experiences. It provides parents with news about their children and the school, and it helps parents feel positive about their children's education and their role in helping their children learn.

The center should be located in a place that is easy for parents to reach and find. It should be open at times when parents are most likely to visit - possibly in the early morning, evening, and weekends. It should be attractive and safe with comfortable places to sit, read, and talk.

The center should have information about the school and materials to assist parents in improving their skills to help their children's learning – books, pamphlets, videos, and, ideally, a computer with an Internet connection.

The center should schedule events when most parents can attend, offer refreshments, and provide childcare while the parents are meeting with other parents or teachers. It should be



serious in its business of helping parents, but it should also schedule some fun activities to attract parents. A center should embrace and celebrate cultural events in the community.

### **How Do We Start a Parent Center?**

A parent center is most likely to be used by parents when they are involved in designing and operating it. It is also supportive to involve school staff members so they will feel welcome there and so the center can take advantage of all available school resources.

The most important resource of a parent center is the coordinator. The person in charge needs to have a positive attitude, be action oriented, and understanding – a person who enjoys people and is knowledgeable about the community he or she serves. The coordinator must be capable of providing service in a way that will both honor and enrich parents' knowledge.

### **Identify Needs and Resources**

The group of people - usually including parents, caregivers, and school staff that want to start a parent center - should begin to plan it by asking the following questions so both groups will have equal power and representation on the team giving community and school an equal standing in the parent center.

- What do families need from the center?
- What can families contribute to the creation and operation of the center - time, materials, skills?
- What resources are available from the school and community - space, materials, equipment, volunteer time, advice?
- How do families feel about the school?
- How do school staff members feel about the families, and how do they act toward the families?
- What barriers must be overcome?
- What realistic goals can be set?



Planners should find at least a temporary site for the parent center. Then parents invited to join in the planning will see that the center is real and not just a dream that will waste their time. Participants should realize that every center is unique to their particular community. Therefore, every center will be different from other centers, as needs are different from one area to another. It is important for you to know that parents and school staff hold the creative license in your hands. It is up to you to make it what you want.

### Contact and Involve Families

**Hold a First Meeting.** After the parent center organizers develop general strategies for the center based on the above questions, the next step is holding a meeting to involve more parents. If organizers do not yet feel comfortable in the school, the **first meeting can be held in a home, church, or community center**. One purpose of the meeting is to set goals and to recruit more parents as planners. Another is to encourage parents to use the center when it begins operating.

**Communicate with Parents.** Organizers should get parents interested by communicating with them or even visiting them. They can also use notes and signs, but these are not as successful as direct contact in promoting parents' involvement. Parents with limited English speaking skills often do not feel comfortable or welcome at school activities, so it is helpful for recruiters to speak with parents in their native language and reassure them that language differences will not prevent them from getting benefits from the center.

**Set Priorities.** At the first meeting, parents should be encouraged to talk about how they want the center to help them, their children, and the school. Having a survey available would encourage ideas from those parents who are not comfortable speaking up in a group setting.



School staff may also have suggestions, and frequently they are the same as the parents', but the wishes of the parents should come first.

### **Recruit Staff**

A parent center should be staffed by parents. Staff duties include hosting other visiting parents; buying or asking for gifts of groceries, detergents, equipment, library materials, and other resources; contacting parents personally who may need help; recruiting volunteers for the center and school activities; organizing center activities; and arranging meetings. In some schools, Title I funds can be used to hire a staff coordinator and pay other expenses.

### **What Are Some Parent Center Projects?**

Parents should choose projects for their center based on their needs and wishes and on the time and resources of the center. Among the most popular activities of parent centers now operating are:

#### **Parent Outreach**

There are special challenges in raising a family, so it is especially important for parents to reach out to other parents because school staff alone may not be able to involve them. Offering parents information about their children's education and development can encourage parent participation. Another way to encourage parents is asking for a contribution to the center, such as baked goods for a meeting or decorations for the walls, so parents will feel valued. Connecting families with health and social service agencies can also encourage center participation.

Most parents have knowledge and talents that they can share with others, so they can become involved in the center as both teachers and learners. For example, parents can trade tips on helping their children with their homework.



## **Children's Projects**

Dinners, potluck meals, and picnics can bring together the children and other relatives of center parents for games and other types of play. Children's artwork can be displayed, and award dinners can recognize children's accomplishments.

Center projects can help children by ideas such as a tutoring program that can use volunteer parents, community members, and teachers. Some tribal programs can link children with members of the community for before and after-school activities so children do not have to be alone when their parents are not home.

## **Parent-School Activities**

The following is an example of the organization that is necessary in order to provide a successful service to the community.

- School principal earmarks necessary monies to fund classes, possibly childcare and transportation if needed.
- A teacher is assigned to be responsible for setting up classes in local school or parent center.
- A GED teacher is hired to instruct classes. Check local resources first. If a GED teacher cannot be found locally, a community college or university, and/or other non-profit organizations often subcontracts GED teachers. It is important that:
  1. The organization that hires the teacher is state accredited – approved by your state.
  2. The teachers that are hired are Native-American or at least knowledgeable, respectful, and sensitive to Native American history and traditions.
- Develop a schedule that meets future participants' and teachers' needs, as well as site availability.
- Site is identified and secured that is available for both classes and for childcare – a site that is safe, cost effective, and near to where future participants live.



- Identify the number of possible participants and their need for transportation and childcare. This will decide the need for buses or vans. If there are not that many people who need transportation, participants may volunteer to provide transportation to friends and neighbors.
- If childcare is to be provided, identify the age and number of probable children. Plan for snacks, toys, hands-on materials, educational videos and television, as well as a study room for older students.
- If it is possible, centers can provide a cup of coffee to parents when they visit a parent center or school. Therefore, it is necessary to purchase a coffee pot and coffee supplies. If available, even if it is now and then, light refreshments are always welcomed.
- Advertise the event well:
  1. All school personnel including principal, teachers, educational assistants, counselors, nurses, librarians, cafeteria workers and custodians, as well as parents and community members should be given information and personally invite other parents and community members to the classes.
  2. Inform radio stations and local newspapers about classes.
  3. Inform community representatives so they can notify the community during religious ceremonies.
  4. Encourage active parents to personally invite and possibly take a friend to the classes offered.
- If a camera is available, take pictures of parents (with their permission, of course) attending the classes and display them in a public hallway or any other location where many people will see them.
- Extend an additional invitation to other parents to join the group. It is never too late!
- Publish a school newsletter that is given to families during the year, including parent activities. Use pictures of individuals and families (after receiving their permission).
- Provide flyers, brochures, and parenting information from other parent groups.
- Invite parents to participate in radio and television interviews where they can talk about their experience participating in classes offered at the parent center or at their children's school, and encourage other parents to participate.



**Develop Relations with School Staff.** The parent center can be a place where parents, teachers, and other school people get to know each other and explain what they expect from each other. One way to make everyone's expectations clear is for parents, teachers, and students to create and sign learning contracts (samples can be found in the Resource Booklet that you received with this handbook).

Meetings and events where parents and teachers talk about their native culture and lives and where school people describe the school's programs and goals are good occasions for breaking down barriers that prevent parents from participating in school activities. The center can also arrange for teams of parents and school people to resolve family-school conflicts and solve problems.

**Manage School-Parent Communication.** Home language surveys are often used as an initial screening device to identify the student's home language. The survey can take several different forms, such as a home language questionnaire, parent interviews, teacher completed surveys, and student completed surveys. A teacher observation approach is most reliable when used after the middle of the year when the teacher has had ample time to observe the students. An example of a questionnaire is listed in the Resource Booklet that you received with this handbook.

Parent centers can also contribute to school-parent communication by:

- Collecting and sharing important information about school programs, rules, and needs, and help parents contact teachers and administrators;
- Keeping parents aware of what their children are learning and their homework assignments so they can help at home;
- Passing along suggestions from the school about how to promote children's learning by reading with them or taking them to local activities;



- Making contact between parents and the school easier by helping parents understand the school routine and rules, directing them to the school staff member who can give them what they need, and setting up meetings;
- Making the job of school staff easier. The center can collect information from parents that the school can use to improve its programs for students and its communication with families.
- Encouraging all members of the community to take an active role in the education and cultural upbringing of local children and youth, at home and in school.
- If possible, providing an annual open house/workshop for parents, perhaps at each grade level, on how they can help their child be successful at what they will be learning during the year and seeking parent ideas on the aspirations they have for their child.
- Encouraging parents to regularly accompany their child through part or all of a school day to gain an understanding of what they are doing in school.
- Encouraging all children and their families to become actively involved in cultural activities and learn the traditional values and language of the community.
- Assisting in the implementation of a cultural orientation program for new teachers and establishing an adopt-a-teacher program linking a local family and Elders with each teacher in the local school.
- Assisting teachers in understanding the importance of integrating local knowledge and ways of knowing into the curriculum and helping them gain access to related resources that enhance all learning, linking academic subject matter to students' lives, not just as another subject added on as an extracurricular activity at the end of the day.
- Taking an active role in all educational activities and providing input to the school board on educational issues of concern to your school and community, including the selection and performance of local school staff.
- Providing encouragement and support for community members (students, aides, teachers) who show an interest in pursuing a career in education.
- Maintaining ongoing two-way communication with the school board, including regular reports of local community meetings.
- Assisting local administrators in planning staff development activities, including curriculum development workshops and community/cultural orientation programs.
- Adopting policies and practices that provide opportunities for community members to actively participate in the review of local instructional programs.



**A culturally supportive parent center incorporates the practice of local cultural traditions in its everyday affairs. A center that meets this cultural standard:**

- Provides respected Elders with a place of honor in community functions;
- Models culturally appropriate behavior in the day-to-day life of the community;
- Utilizes traditional child rearing and parenting practices that reinforce a sense of identity and belonging;
- Organizes and encourages participation of members from all ages in regular community-wide, family-oriented events;
- Incorporates and reinforces traditional cultural values and beliefs in all formal and informal community functions.

**A culturally supportive parent center nurtures the use of the local heritage language. A center that meets this cultural standard:**

- Recognizes the role that language plays in conveying the deeper aspects of cultural knowledge and traditions;
- Sponsors local heritage language immersion opportunities for young children when they are at the critical age for language learning;
- Encourages the use of the local native language whenever possible in the everyday affairs of the community, including meetings, cultural events, print materials, and broadcast media;
- Assists in the preparation of curriculum resource material in the local native language for use in the school;
- Provides simultaneous translation services for public meetings where persons unfamiliar with the local native language are participants.



**A culturally supportive parent center takes an active role in the education of all its members. A center that meets this cultural standard:**

- Encourages participation of parents in all aspects of their children's education, both in and out of school;
- Insures active participation by community members in reviewing all local, regional, and state initiatives that have bearing on the education of their children;
- Encourages and supports members of the local community who wish to pursue further education to assume teaching and administrative roles in the school;
- Engages in activities, sponsors cultural camps, and hosts community events that provide an opportunity for children to actively participate in and learn appropriate cultural values and behavior;
- Provides opportunities for all community members to acquire and practice the appropriate knowledge and skills associated with local cultural traditions.

**A culturally supportive parent center nurtures family responsibility, sense of belonging, and cultural identity. A center that meets this cultural standard:**

- Fosters cross-generational sharing of parenting and childrearing practices;
- Creates a supportive environment for youth to participate in local affairs and acquire the skills to be contributing members of the community.

**A culturally supportive parent center assists teachers in learning and utilizing local cultural traditions and practices. A center that meets this cultural standard:**

- Sponsors a cultural orientation camp and community mentoring program for new teachers to learn about and adjust to the cultural expectations and practices of the community;
- Encourages teachers to make use of facilities and expertise in the community to demonstrate that education is a community-wide process involving everyone as teachers;
- Sponsors regular community/school potlucks to celebrate the work of students and teachers and to promote ongoing interaction and communication between teachers and parents;



- Attempts to articulate the cultural knowledge, values, and beliefs that it wishes teachers to incorporate into the school curriculum;
- Establishes a program to insure the availability of Elders' expertise in all aspects of the educational program in the school.

**A culturally supportive parent center contributes to all aspects of curriculum design and implementation in the local school. A center that meets this cultural standard:**

- Takes an active part in the development of the mission, goals, and content of the local educational program;
- Promotes the active involvement of students with Elders in the documentation and preservation of traditional knowledge through a variety of print and multimedia formats;
- Facilitates teacher involvement in community activities and encourages the use of the local environment as a curricular resource;
- Promotes parental involvement in all aspects of their children's educational experience.

**Identity, Schooling, and Success**

In an article in *NABE News*, Jon Reyhner stressed the importance of helping students build a strong positive sense of identity, as well as developing their academic knowledge and skills. "Identity is not just a positive self-concept. It is learning your place in the world with both humility and strength... It is children as they grow up finding a 'home in the landscapes and ecologies they inhabit.' " Children also need to develop a strong identity to brace themselves against the "materialistic popular TV and Hollywood culture, terrorism, and the pervasive culture of poverty that envelopes many reservations and inner cities. Teachers need to help children develop resilience so they can bounce back from the negative experiences that they, and all of us, are sure to face in life."

Teachers of Native American students often find a theme of "teacher as learner." Teachers need to learn about the lives of their students beyond the school grounds to learn more



about the home language and culture of their students and see better the challenges that their students face in their lives. Parent centers can assist teachers in their learning, for "if teachers are not learning much from their students, it is probable that their students are not learning much from them."

Educators need not only to teach but also to help students with their identity as Native Americans, as Americans, and as citizens of the world. A key factor for academic success is how students, parents, and communities view themselves and schools. Ideally, they need to change the meaning and content of schooling so that they can see it as true education and part of their maturing process as human beings. It is important whether teachers are viewed as enemies or friends seeking to build students' identities, showing them the wider national world they will spend their lives dealing with, and introducing them to the wider international world our country has to deal with as well.

Basketball and rodeo performances are no substitute for education, whether traditional or modern, but academics alone are not a full education. Grandmother will probably not be an enthusiastic supporter of schooling if she perceives that her grandchild will move hundreds, if not thousands, of miles away to get a job once successfully educated, leaving her with no one to chop her firewood and take her to town for groceries. She also wants to see and be near her great grandchildren. Being educated needs to extend beyond sports and other such limited definitions and be strengthened with traditional wisdom, the collective wisdom that needs to be the foundation of our educational system.

Native Americans rightly tend to focus on their traditional moral and spiritual strengths. However, there is a danger that Native Americans can define themselves as opposite everything that the materialistic and individualistic Euro-American man is perceived as being. This is a



version of "blame the victim" becoming an unthinking "blame the oppressor" for everything that is going wrong in life and in the community.

The danger for students of this "oppositional identity" is that things like literacy and academic success, which are increasingly critical for economic survival, can be seen as un-Indian, acting White, and selling out to the White man. Educators need to realize that Native Americans can have "oppositional identities" in regard to schooling or at least mixed feelings. For success, one must make a decision to learn despite all the cultural insensitivity that can be displayed in schools, but one need not assimilate.

### Dismantling Barriers

It is recommended that teachers study the history and culture of their students and have special counseling programs to help students separate attitudes and behaviors enhancing school success from those that lead to "acting White," and promote "accommodation without assimilation" or "playing the classroom game." It is further recommended that communities:

- Teach children to separate attitudes and behaviors that lead to academic success from those that lead to a loss of ethnic identity, culture, and language;
- Provide children with "concrete evidence" that one's group appreciates and values academic success;
- Insist children recognize and accept the responsibility for their school adjustment and academic performance; and
- That educational success should not be seen as a "ticket out" to leave one's community behind.



## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement is mentioned many times throughout this handbook because it is a key ingredient to helping your child succeed in the classroom. The most important thing you can do for your child is to encourage a love of learning. To begin, here are five ways:

- Every day, read to your infant or young child, or read with an older child.
- Let your child see you reading books, magazines, newspapers, school notices and other written materials.
- Use your public library and discover its resources with your child. Talk about the kinds of books you want to check out. Make sure that everyone gets to check out a book!
- Use your television as a teaching tool. Watch it with your child and talk about what you are viewing.
- When you learn something new, share it with your child. Let your child see how learning continues throughout a lifetime.

### Encourage Your Child

- Listen to your child. Pay attention to what he/she says with both his/her words and actions.
- Build self-esteem. Teach your child to think positively. Help him/her to look for what he/she does well in every situation. Be sure he/she knows that it is OK to make a mistake, and show him/her ways to learn from what went wrong.
- Teach self-discipline. Help your child to concentrate and accomplish what has to be done. Compliment him/her on work that is well done.
- Help your child get along with others. This is a lifelong learning process. Teach your child by treating him/her the way you want him/her to treat others and to be treated by others.
- Praise from a parent is often the best reward. Find time to do special things with your child. Make sure your child knows how important and special these times are for you.

A checklist for evaluating parent involvement may be found in the Resource Booklet you received with this handbook.



## PARENT INVOLVEMENT RESOURCES

The following Internet resources may be helpful in getting parents involved.

### ***Increasing Parental Involvement: A Key to Student Achievement***

<http://www.mcrel.org/resources/noteworthy/danj.asp>

### ***Partners in Learning: How Schools Can Support Family Involvement in Education***

[http://ws1.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/schools\\_involvement.html](http://ws1.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/schools_involvement.html)

### ***The Parent Institute***

<http://www.par-inst.com>

### ***Critical Issue: Supporting Ways Parents and Families Can Become Involved in Schools***

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa100.htm>

### ***Parent Involvement at the Middle School Level***

<http://www.middleweb.com/ParntInvl.html>

### ***Parent Involvement in Education***

<http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/3/cu6.html>

### ***50 Simple Things You Can Do***

[gopher://gopher.ed.gov:10001/00/initiatives/family/50things](http://gopher.ed.gov:10001/00/initiatives/family/50things)

### ***Education and Parental Involvement in Secondary Schools: Problems, Solutions, and Effects***

<http://www.valdosta.peachnet.edu/~whuitt/psy702/files/parinvol.txt>

### ***Project Appleseed***

<http://www.a-zuc.com/org/apples>

### ***National Parent Teacher Association's National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs***

<http://www.pta.org/programs>



## SCHOOL-PARENT COMPACTS

### Why Do We Need Compacts?

Parent/School compacts are a voluntary agreement between the school and the home that stress responsibilities of students, parents, and schools in order to achieve student success. Compacts can also be a tool during parent-teacher conferences to discuss responsibilities that the school, family, and child have in making the most of the school year.

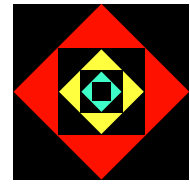
### Suggestions on How to Create Parent/School Compact

A compact should be designed by a team of parents and educators to fit the vision and mission of each school community. Start with your school's mission statement. Then, questions that can be asked:

- What could teachers and schools do to help all children achieve in schools?
- What could parents do?
- What could students do?
- What supports would teachers, parents, and students need to meet their responsibilities?
- How will we know if the compact is working?

After exploring these and other questions, the design team can:

- Gather compacts from other schools as examples, but be sure to avoid adopting another school's compact without going through a discussion and agreement process.
- Create a draft compact by agreeing on about 5 to 7 responsibilities for students, school, and home that would help all children achieve educational standards or goals.
- Develop a plan for using the compact, such as:
  - How and when will it be used?
  - Will it be used with all families school wide?
  - Do parents need to agree to all items on the compact?
  - How will you know if the compact is useful?
- Share the draft compact with parents, teachers, and students to get other opinions.



## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement creates partnerships in developing programs and resources that people can share and achieve more by working together. Through careful planning, partners are able to make great changes in the community.

Schools are the reflection of the communities in which they exist. Whether through school-to-work or technical preparatory programs, businesses are increasingly approached for active involvement in the educational community. As they recognize the growing need for better-trained and educated employees, businesses are prepared to work with schools to provide up-to-date education and training for the students who will be their future workers. Technical preparatory programs take advantage of employers' need for qualified workers by drawing employers into recognizing skills for employment in their industries. Most partnerships between schools and businesses focus on the delivery and development of academic and vocational skills. Such joint efforts can help students develop needed skills for the workplace through revised up-to-date curriculum, youth apprenticeships, and mentoring experiences.

Youth apprenticeships create an avenue for community businesses to become involved in the career education and development of youth. Apprenticeships require a partnership between educators and business people who are willing to provide jobs and worksite learning experiences for young people. They have the advantage of taking students out of the classroom and exposing them to the rapidly changing work environment, complete with new technologies and new management processes.

### Involvement of Community Agencies

Service learning projects that link students and community organizations offer another type of exposure to career development. Such projects offer students opportunities to learn the habits and conditions of the workplace, as well as the personal benefit of doing service work. By



combining community service with learning activities and thinking about their experiences, students realize increased personal, social, and intellectual growth and preparation for work.



## PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**These are suggestions only. You may encounter other areas or topics you wish to incorporate. Please adapt to your specific needs and procedures.**

- Parents are partners with schools and teachers in their children's education. Parents shall be encouraged to actively participate in creating and implementing educational programs for their children.
- Unless provided by law, no one may limit parental rights.
- Each school board shall provide a format for considering complaints that a parent's right has been denied.
- Each school board shall make sure there is at least one parent-teacher organization at each school in its district to promote parent involvement.
- A "parent" includes a person in a parental relation. It does not include anyone whose parent-child relationship has been terminated or a person not allowed possession or access to a child under a court order.
- A parent is entitled reasonable access to the school principal or to a school administrator who has the authority to reassign a student or to request a change in the class or a teacher to which the parent's child has been assigned if the reassignment or change would not affect the assignment or reassignment of another student.
- A parent is entitled to expect that the request be honored.
- If students show enough interest in an additional subject, a parent is entitled to request a specific academic class be added if it is in keeping with the required curriculum.
- A child can attend a class for credit above his/her grade level, whether in his/her school or another school, if the child would be expected to perform satisfactorily in the class.
- A child can be permitted to graduate from high school earlier than he/she would normally graduate if the student completes each course required for graduation. The student would be allowed to participate in graduation ceremonies at the time of graduation.
- A parent is entitled access to all written records of a school concerning his/her child, including attendance records, test scores, grades, disciplinary records, counseling records, psychological records, applications for admission, health and immunization information, teacher and counselor evaluations, and reports of behavioral patterns.
- A parent is entitled to review all teaching materials, textbooks, and other teaching aids used in the classroom of his/her child.



- A parent is entitled to review each test administered to his/her child after the test is administered.
- A school district shall make teaching materials and tests readily available for review by parents. The district may specify reasonable hours for review.
- A parent is entitled complete access to any meeting of the school board, other than a closed meeting. The school board must hold each public meeting of the board within the boundaries of the school except as required by law or except to hold a joint meeting with another school. All public meetings must comply with government code.
- A parent is entitled to full information regarding the school activities of his/her child.
- No school employee may attempt to encourage or threaten a student to withhold information from his/her parents. Such action is grounds for discipline.
- An employee of a school must obtain written consent of a student's parent before the employee may conduct psychological examination, test or treatment, make a videotape of a student, or record or authorize the recording of a student's voice unless the examination, test, or treatment is required under state or federal law regarding requirements for special education.
- An employee of a school is not required to obtain consent of a child's parent before the employee may make a videotape of a child or authorize the recording of a child's voice if the videotape or voice recording is to be used only for purposes of safety, including the maintenance of order and discipline in common areas of the school or on school buses; a purpose related to a co-curricular or extracurricular activity; a purpose related to regular classroom instruction; or media coverage of the school.
- A parent is entitled to remove his/her child temporarily from a class or other school activity that conflicts with the parent's religious or moral beliefs if the parent presents or delivers to the teacher of the child a written statement authorizing the removal of the child from the class or other school activity. A parent is not entitled to remove his/her child from a class or other school activity to avoid a test or to prevent the child from taking a subject for an entire semester. This does not exempt a child from satisfying grade level or graduation requirements in a manner acceptable to the school district and the local education agency.



## LIBRARY SKILLS

**Helping your children enjoy reading is one of the most important things you can do as a parent.** Children will learn reading skills in school, but often they associate reading with work, not pleasure. As a result, they lose their desire to read. The most effective way to encourage your children to love books and reading is to **read aloud to them**, and the earlier you start, the better. Even a newborn baby will listen to your voice, and a baby of a few months can both see pictures and listen to your voice. Make this time together a special time when you hold your children and share the pleasure of a story without the distractions of TV or telephones. Don't stop taking the time to read aloud once your children have learned to read for themselves. **Encourage them to read to you** some of the time.

Some libraries invite parents to bring in their children - no matter how young - for special programs, such as parent-child story hours. Parents can learn finger plays, songs, rhymes, and other activities they can use at home to entertain and stimulate their infants.

How you handle books will eventually influence how your kids treat them. Children imitate, so if they **see that you enjoy reading** and treat books gently and with respect, it is likely that they will do the same.

As soon as you can, it is a good idea to **include children - even toddlers - in weekly trips to the library**. Libraries are often open in the evening for working parents, and most will issue a library card to any children who can print their names and whose parent will countersign for them. See that your children get **their own library cards** as soon as possible so that they can check out their own books.

Also, it's a good idea to **encourage your children to ask** on their own for help in finding books and materials. Keep in mind, however, that a librarian is there to point out different choices, not to decide what ideas your children should be exposed to. That is your job. No



matter how helpful or knowledgeable a librarian may be, your participation in selecting and sharing books with your child is very important.

Gifted children usually have a love for reading and are able to learn on their own. They tend to have a great deal of curiosity and desire for answers on a variety of subjects. The public library can be a "learning laboratory" for these children, and very often they can make good use of its resources with relatively little assistance. However, if you want specific guidance for your children, do not hesitate to ask the librarian for suggestions. Also, be sure to check with the **school librarian** who should be involved with the teachers in curriculum development and able to recommend library materials.

If your children are handicapped in any way, don't let this discourage you from introducing them to the world of books in your community library. The kinds of library services vary greatly for children who have **learning disabilities** or who are **mentally handicapped**. To find out what is available in your area, the best starting point is your local public library. If its programs do not address the special needs of your children, perhaps you can work with the library staff to help meet your children's needs.

In some places there are successful programs, such as book talks and storytelling, carefully designed to suit the interests and developmental levels of mentally handicapped children, as well as a list of books to use with these children. While developmentally disabled youngsters may need special help, they have much to gain through reading and using library resources. It is well worth your extra effort to let library personnel know about your children's special needs and abilities.

**Hearing-impaired children**, of course, have different communication needs. Helping your hearing-impaired child read and use the library can be very beneficial, as well as

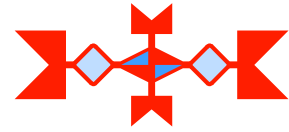


challenging. Check with your library to find out what special services for hearing-impaired children are available in your area. Many libraries have staff members who use sign language or who are trained to work with hearing-impaired people.

There are a variety of **free** library services available for children, as well as adults, who are **blind or physically disabled**. Braille and talking book services are available free of charge to any person who is unable to read because of limited vision, who is physically unable to hold a book or turn a page, or who has a reading disability due to a dysfunction. If you do not have this service available locally, contact your state Department of Education for assistance.

You can apply to the library on behalf of your child. There are hundreds of children's books in Braille, print/Braille, cassette and disc formats, including picture books and popular fiction and nonfiction at varying levels of interest and difficulty for children from preschool through junior high. There are also children's magazines and even music instruction materials available. Blind and physically handicapped children are entitled to the same range of reading materials as their non-handicapped classmates and friends. The same philosophy extends to their adult services, which are available to teenagers who read at the high school level and beyond. If you do not have this service available locally, contact your state Department of Education for assistance.

Library books are everybody's property and should be treated carefully. Know the library's policy regarding loan periods and fines for overdue books. Explain to your children that the library is there for the whole community, and they need to be considerate of others. It is your responsibility as a parent to see that your children behave and are not disruptive to others using the library.



## FAMILY LITERACY

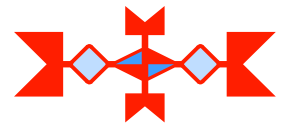
All parents have the right to information about special educational programs that could directly affect their children's education. School representatives need to organize meetings to discuss details about programs so parents will have a better understanding of their children's educational progress. Programs such as:

- Title I
- Talented and Gifted
- Special Education
- English as a Second Language and
- LEP

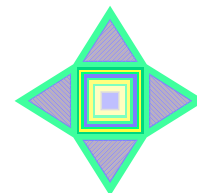
Discussion should include:

- Guidelines that outline how children enter and leave the program
- Program budget
- Purpose for the service
- Special support services available to the students
- Special support services available to the parents of identified students
- Evaluation of the program – progress report for each student
- Identifying ways that the program can change to better meet the students' needs.
- Identifying how parents can participate in program goals and evaluation.
- Identifying the role of Parent Advisory Councils (PAC's).
- Identifying who should participate in Parent Advisory Councils (PAC's).

The home is a child's first teacher, and reading is the first subject. Family literacy is parents and children learning together to provide a foundation for life-long learning and success. Family Literacy programs encourage parents and extended family members to read aloud with



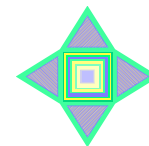
young children, especially in the first five years, for the educational and emotional benefits of everyone.



## INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) strengthens academic expectations and accountability for the nation's 5.8 million children with disabilities and bridges the gap between what children with disabilities learn and what is required in regular curriculum. From now on, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) - the plan that spells out the educational goals for each child and the services he or she will receive for his or her education - must relate more clearly to the general curriculum that children in regular classrooms receive. In an effort to promote effective communication with individuals with disabilities, the school must provide progress reports in an alternative format upon request and with appropriate advance notice. Primary consideration will be given to the requests of the person with a disability in the selection of appropriate aids and services. Regular progress reports should be given to parents of children with disabilities, and children with disabilities should be included in state, district, and school evaluations and reports on performance goals in the same manner as for non-disabled children.

Funded by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Parent Training and Information Centers in each state provide training and information to parents of infants, toddlers, school-aged children, and young adults with disabilities and the professionals who work with their families. This assistance helps parents participate more effectively with professionals in meeting the educational needs of children and youth with disabilities. The following website lists the parent centers for families with children with disabilities by state: <http://www.dssc.org/frc/TAGuide/pti.htm#id2>. If you do not have access to a personal computer to reach these websites on the Internet, simply take this list with you to your local public library, and ask a library staff member or help in using the computer.



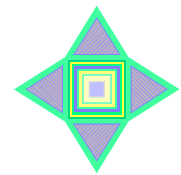
The website addresses listed below were compiled by The Technical Assistance about Transition and the Rehabilitation Act (TATRA). A wealth of information related to transition and rehabilitation issues can be found at these websites.

Information about a course that teaches academic self-management to beginning university students who have learning disabilities or are otherwise at risk for academic failure is available at: <http://www.ccer.org/natamer/natvamer1.html>. The course emphasizes the development of college study skills, self-management skills, and academic problem-solving skills.

Information on an outreach program to increase partnerships between Native American families with a child with a disability and the professionals serving their children can be found at <http://www.nativefamilynetwork.com/index.htm>

All vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs currently serving American Indians with disabilities can be found at <http://www.nau.edu/ihd/CANAR/map.html>. It includes only those VR programs that have received funds under the Rehabilitation Act and continue to conduct a VR program. Some may be funded from other sources including tribal and or state funding.

A listing of all the state vocational rehabilitation offices can be found at <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/SBSES/VOCREHAB.HTM>. By contacting your local vocational rehabilitation office, you will tap into a wealth of resources related to employment options for people with disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation, a state-supported division of services, assists individuals with disabilities who are pursuing meaningful careers. VR assists those individuals to secure gainful employment in comparison with their abilities and capabilities through local job searches and awareness of self-employment and telecommuting opportunities.



**ADA Technical Assistance Program:** <http://www.adata.org>

**Assistive Technology Funding and Systems Change Project:**

<http://www.ucpa.org/html/innovative/atfsc/index.html>

**Office of Rehabilitation Services High School Liaisons:**

<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/spec-ed/PDF/ORSliaisons.pdf>

**National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials:**

[http://www.nchrtn.okstate.edu/index\\_3.html](http://www.nchrtn.okstate.edu/index_3.html)

**National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities:**

<http://www.nichcy.org>

**National Transition Alliance:** [http://www.dssc.org/nta/html/index\\_2.htm](http://www.dssc.org/nta/html/index_2.htm)

**National Transition Institute:** <http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/sped/tri/institute.html>

**National Transition Network:** <http://www.ici.coled.umn.edu/ntn/>

**Office of Special Education Programs:**

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/index.html>

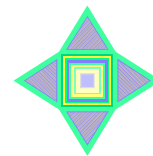
**Office of Special Education Rehabilitative Services:**

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS>

**Project Tech Link - Linking Educators and Parents to Transition Best Practices through Computer Technology:** <http://www.vcu.edu/rrtcweb/techlink/index>

**Rehabilitation Services Administration:** <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/RSA>

**School-to-Work Outreach Project:** <http://www.ici.coled.umn.edu/schooltowork>



**Serving Youth with Disabilities within School-to-Work Systems (fact sheet):**

**<http://www.stw.ed.gov/factsht/bull0696.htm>**

**TATRA (Technical Assistance about Transition and Rehabilitation Act) Project:**

**<http://www.pacer.org/tatra/tatra.htm>**

**Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers: <http://www.taalliance.org/>**

**Chronicle of Higher Education: <http://www.chronicle.com>**

**The Council for Exceptional Children: <http://www.cec.sped.org>**

**Federal Resource Center for Special Education Network: <http://dssc.org/frc>**

**List servers on topics in Special/Gifted Education:**

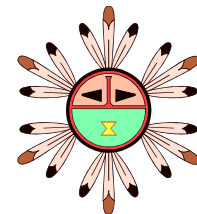
**[http://www.cec.sped.org/spotlight/mailling\\_lists/index.html](http://www.cec.sped.org/spotlight/mailling_lists/index.html)**

**The Policy Partnership for Implementing IDEA (PMP) at NASDSE:**

**<http://ideapolicy.org/pmp.htm>**

**NASDSE (National Association of State Directors of Education:**

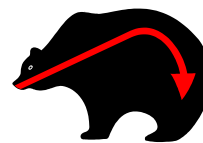
**<http://www.nasdse.org/discussions.htm>**



## STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS

Parent-teacher conferences should be held regularly during the school year in the parents' native language so parents and students are informed of the student's progress. These progress reports are also an important form of communication between schools and parents. The report should be clear, accurate, and to the point, and provide a basis of understanding among teachers, parents, and students for the benefit of the individual student.

Upon request and in an effort to promote effective communications with individuals with disabilities, the school should provide progress reports in an alternative format out of consideration for the person with a disability. Primary consideration should be given to the requests of the person with a disability in the selection of appropriate aids and services.



## HIGH SCHOOL OBJECTIVES

It is never too early to be thinking about high school and college. In middle school, it is important that your child's counselor knows your child wants to be successful in school. Your child needs to take the strongest courses he/she can handle in order to be as prepared as possible. Following is a sample of high school courses needed in preparation for college or technical vocational school. Your child needs a strong foundation to increase the chance for academic success.

### Sample High School Student Course Checklist

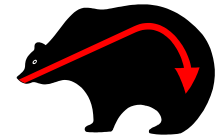
- 1 year biology
- 1 year chemistry
- 1 year physics
- 1 year advanced science
- 4 years mathematics
- 4 years English
- 3 years foreign language
- 1 semester speech
- 1 semester psychology/sociology
- 1 semester computer studies

### **Professional Development**

- Volunteer or work in an area of interest.
- Volunteer for community service.

### **Develop Professional Attributes/Maturity**

- Commitment to integrity
- Commitment to excellence
- Commitment to respecting yourself
- Commitment to respecting others who are different from yourself

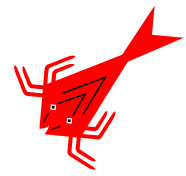


### **Investigate College and Universities**

- Request college and university catalogs.
- Visit colleges and universities.

### **Apply to Colleges/Universities But Consider:**

- What can you afford (there are many scholarships available to Native American students);
- Where you feel at-home;
- Your academic major (there is testing available to help students decide on what they would like to study).



## EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND PREPARATION

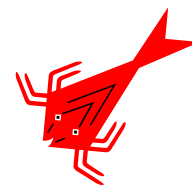
Resources are available to help students plan their high school and college/technical vocational education in a step-by-step format to help them stay on track for completing their education. Achievement is a building process starting with a firm foundation and then layer-by-layer working towards your goal.

For example, let's look at an **outline** for a sample career plan for a civil engineer. Civil engineers design, plan, and supervise the construction of buildings, highways, and rapid transit systems. **Current skills, interests, and experiences:**

- Summer employment with a construction company
- High school mathematics courses (geometry, trigonometry, advanced math, calculus)
- High school science courses (physics, chemistry)
- Experience working with a team (summer employment, school organizations, course projects)
- High school writing course (four years of English, technical writing)
- Natural creative ability and organizational skills

### **Short-term, specific goals to make your dream a reality:**

- Graduate in top 10% of high school class
- Achieve good test scores
- Be accepted to a university with a good engineering program
- Keep grades up to meet requirements for School of Engineering
- Continue work experience with internship or part-time/summer employment
- Participate in campus organizations for engineering students
- Earn a bachelor's degree



- Consider graduate school
- Improve presentation and writing skills by taking classes in those subject areas
- Research license requirements

**Long-range, general abilities and requirements:**

- At least a bachelor's degree in engineering
- The ability to work as part of a team
- Creativity
- Analytical thinking skills
- Understanding detail work
- Presentation skills
- Writing skills
- Knowledge of mathematics and physical sciences (chemistry, physics)
- Accreditation by licensing board

These points can be broken down further for a semester-by-semester checklist to reach your goal.

You can make it happen!

Consult your state education office to see if there is scholarship money available for your state's residents. For example, New Mexico offers the Lottery Success Scholarship for New Mexico residents only.