



**C.A.F.É**

**“Circles of Adults Focusing  
On Education”**

Dialogues Leading To Improved Achievement  
An initiative by the GA State Personnel Development Grant

**A research piece used to write Georgia SPDG Family Engagement Dropout  
Prevention Dialogue Questions  
For two Pilots in Bibb and Meriwether counties**

**National Dropout Prevention Center/Network**

The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N) was begun in 1986 to serve as a clearinghouse on issues related to dropout prevention and to offer strategies designed to increase the graduation rate in America's schools. Over the years, the NDPC/N has become a well-established national resource for sharing solutions for student success. It does so through its clearinghouse function, active research projects, publications, and through a variety of professional development activities. In addition, the NDPC/N conducts a variety of third party evaluations and Program Assessment and Reviews (PAR). Use the links below to learn more about what makes us special. **The following is part of the NDPC/N Strategy research on family engagement.**

**Family Engagement, Overview**

A synthesis of research by Henderson and Mapp (2002) concluded that there is a positive relationship between family engagement and improved academic achievement. This is true across socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and educational background for students of all ages (Mapp, 2004). Today's call for families to become more involved in their children's education both at home and at school is not new. For decades, federal programs such as Head Start, Follow Through, Chapter One/Title One, and Special Education have mandated that parents/family be closely involved. Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) has shown positive effects on student achievement at the middle school level. Unfortunately, in many cases there is no partnership between home and school.

**Family Engagement Is Needed**

Some schools and teachers, however, have not made significant progress in reaching out to families. While some parents are informed about some things some of the time by some teachers in some schools, some families still feel "lucky" to be



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informed about or asked to participate in activities with their children. In addition, some schools and communities do not fully understand the problems parents and families encounter and the importance of reaching out to them in order to build the kind of relationships that engage parents as true, active partners early in their children's education. Clark (1993) found that the way children spent their time at home was the strongest predictor of school success. Home learning activities such as homework, reading, and using the dictionary were common among high achievers.

Schools and school systems which are successfully involving families began by responding to the qualities, characteristics, and needs of the parents in order to overcome the barriers which interfere with communication. These barriers include parents' level of literacy; language preferred for reading, listening, speaking, and writing; daily commitments and responsibilities that may affect the time, energy, and attention available to devote to school; and parents' level of comfort in becoming involved in their children's education.

Henderson and Mapp (2002) suggest the following action steps to establish effective family engagement programs:

1. Recognize that all parents, regardless of income, education level, or cultural background are involved in their children's education and want their children to do well in school;
2. Link family and community engagement efforts to student learning;
3. Create initiatives that will support families to guide their children's learning, from preschool through high school;
4. Develop the capacity of school staff to work with families;
5. Focus efforts to engage families on developing trusting and respectful relationships; and



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6. Embrace a philosophy of partnership and be willing to share power with families. Make sure that parents and school staff understand that the responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise (Mapp, 2004).

**Expected Benefits**

The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) (1998) has identified the following benefits of family engagement in education:

- When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic/racial background, or the parents' education level;
- The more extensive the parent involvement, the higher the student achievement;
- When parents are involved in their students' education, those students have higher grades and test scores, better attendance, and complete homework more consistently;
- When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior;
- Students whose parents are involved in their lives have higher graduation rates and greater enrollment rates in postsecondary education. Different types of parent/family involvement produce different gains. To have long-lasting gains for students, parent involvement activities must be well planned, inclusive, and comprehensive;
- Educators hold higher expectations of students whose parents collaborate with the teacher. They also hold higher opinions of those parents
- In programs that are designed to involve parents in full partnerships, student achievement for disadvantaged children not only improves, it can reach levels that are standard for middle-class children. In addition, the children who are farthest behind make the greatest gains;



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- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals collaborate to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the learning institution;
- Student behaviors such as alcohol use, violence, and antisocial behavior decrease as parent involvement increases;
- Students are more likely to fall behind in academic performance if their parents do not participate in school events, develop a working relationship with their child's educators, or keep up with what is happening in their child's school;
- The benefits of involving parents are not confined to the early years—there are significant gains at all ages and grade levels;
- Junior and senior high school students whose parents remain involved make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, and develop realistic plans for their future;
- Students whose parents are not involved, on the other hand, are more likely to drop out of school; and
- The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to
  - a. create a home environment that encourages learning;
  - b. communicate high, yet reasonable, expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and
  - c. become involved in their children's education at school and in the community (Schargel and Smink, 2001, pp. 52-54).

**References**

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