

# **Twelve Truths That We Know About Parental Involvement**

1. School-based leadership – especially principals – makes a tremendous difference in effectively carrying out parental involvement strategies.
2. Parental involvement is a tougher job in middle or high school than in elementary schools.
3. Measuring the success of parent involvement programs can be difficult. Effective programs do not always lend themselves to a “numbers and graphs” assessment. Yet, parents, schools and districts know a winning program when they see one.
4. There is no cookie-cutter solution. Each community must assess its needs and craft strategies that will work in its particular circumstance.
5. Inspiring people with busy lives to dedicate their limited time and energy to helping schools can be challenging; but if asked and led and valued, they will do it.
6. The simple power and importance of parental involvement has been lost in the fray of testing and accountability. Parental involvement must move to the center of strategies to improve student academic performance.
7. Even parents who are not actively involved with school still care about their child’s academic and social progress. There may be barriers of time, money, transportation or other reasons that prohibit them from making the ideal connection.
8. Not all parents want to attend meetings or be part of a group. Some want simply to find out what meaningful activities they can engage in at school and stop there.
9. Working parents often rely on the quality of after-school care – particularly those programs based at the school site – to help their child continue with homework and learning while they finish their jobs. By connecting with after-care providers and social service agencies, parents come to view schools as a seamless support service focused on removing barriers to student achievement.
10. Solid parental involvement programs are not personality driven. Dynamic, outgoing principals are a plus, but anyone can learn to construct a school excellence plan that involves parents in meaningful ways.
11. Parents need to have a positive tone when approaching school officials to suggest improvements or offer help. Teachers and other educators sometimes whisper about “toxic parents” who are confrontational, suspicious and seek to micromanage in an arena that is not their expertise.
12. Teachers are the face of the school for parents, so their dexterity in handling parent involvement – both the giving of information and engaging parents in school activities – becomes absolutely pivotal.