One Dozen Parental Involvement Ideas
That Really Work

Welcome environment

1. Know the secret to getting parents to attend meetings at school—make sure they know they're genuinely invited.
2. Focus on the strengths of families – they know their children better than anyone else. Find ways to get that information to teachers, other school staff.
3. Involve parents in goal-setting for their children. It promotes working as a team.
4. Provide training and lots of school information for parent volunteers. They are powerful goodwill ambassadors.

Communication

5. Provide a brief parent newsletter. One sheet of paper is best.
6. Remember "30-3-30" in writing school newsletters. Eighty percent of people will spend just 30 seconds reading it. Nineteen percent will spend three minutes. One percent will spend 30 minutes (your mother).
7. Remember the dollar bill rule for newsletters. A dollar bill placed anywhere, at any angle, on any page should touch some element of graphic interest -- headline, box, screen, bullets, bold type, picture—or it's too dull for most people to read.
8. Write for parents at 4th to 6th grade level. Use a computer to check the reading level.

Inspiring Parent Involvement

10. Know why parents say they are not involved: 1) Don't have time, 2) Don't know what to do, 3) Don't know it is important, 4) Don't speak English.
11. Take heart from the "one-third rule." Research says if you can get one-third of a school's parents involved, you can begin to make significant improvement in student achievement.
12. Don't make judgments about parents' lack of interest in their children's education. You'll probably be wrong. "Walk a mile in their shoes" and understand that what looks like apathy may be exhaustion.

—This information was prepared by Dr. John H. Wherry, President, The Parent Institute, "Education's #1 Source for Family Involvement Information," P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474, 1-800-756-5525. The Parent Institute publishes a wide range of parent involvement materials for schools to distribute to parents, including newsletters, booklets, pamphlets and videotapes as well as an automatic service providing daily-updated parent involvement information to parents through schools' own websites. For details, visit The Parent Institute website at www.parent-institute.com.