

Archived Information

Objective 1.5: Families and communities are fully involved with schools and school improvement efforts.

National Need

National Concerns. Family involvement in their children's learning is a greater predictor of academic achievement than socioeconomic status or parents' educational level. Getting families and community members involved in children's learning can be a powerful force for school improvement efforts. Thirty years of research have shown that when families are involved, chances for student academic success are increased.

Our Role. To help all children to achieve high standards and to improve schools, the Department of Education (ED) initiated a unique public-private partnership in 1994, known as the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. The public-private character of the Partnership has introduced the Department to an innovative way of doing business. Priorities throughout the Agency have been reshaped and staff from each of the program offices meet weekly to coordinate efforts for conducting research, developing publications, and hosting conferences.

The Partnership supports four nationwide activities that enhance the Department's objectives: (1) improving reading in the early grades through the America Reads Challenge and the Compact for Reading Initiative; (2) encouraging greater outreach to families as children go back to school; (3) helping middle and high school students and their families think about postsecondary school early; and (4) providing positive extended learning opportunities to children. At the grassroots level, the Partnership's members are linking local efforts to these national education priorities. Thus the Partnership serves as a model for local communities.

Partnership members belong to one of four sectors: Family/School Partners (major parent and education associations, schools, school districts, and postsecondary institutions); Employers for Learning (local and national businesses and business associations); Community Organizations (such as the Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts USA, and the National Urban League); and Religious Groups (including 33 national faith communities that represent 75 percent of religiously affiliated Americans). Partners come together for sector steering group meetings to discuss potential activities, meetings, conferences, and publications.

The Partnership and its more than 6,000 members focus on specific national activities—America Goes Back to School, the America Reads Challenge, Think College Early, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Partners receive publications issued by the Department on family involvement and participate in conferences and regional meetings cosponsored by the Partnership. In addition, parental and community involvement is promoted through ED's programs—Title I, Even Start, special education, bilingual education, migrant education, postsecondary education, and Goals 2000.

Our Performance

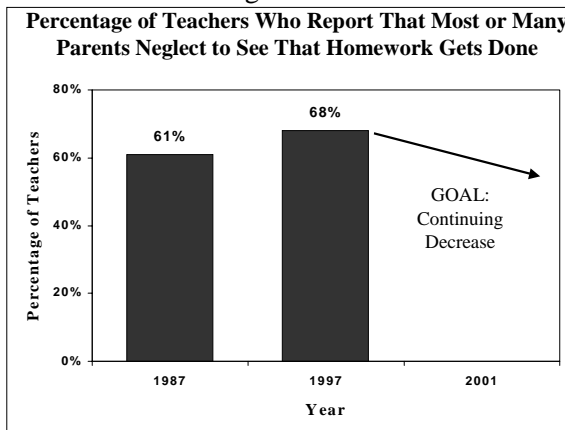
How We Measure. Performance indicators for Objective 1.5 focus on measuring family involvement in education from the vantage points of both the parent and child. Research has shown that parent involvement can make a positive difference in students' success in school when

parents and other family members get involved in key areas such as homework, attending school activities, getting involved in volunteer activities and committees, and after-school learning.

Indicator 1.5.a. The percentage of students who come to school ready to learn and with their homework completed, as rated by their teachers, will increase substantially during the next five years, especially among children from low-income families.

Assessment of Progress. Although 1999 data are unavailable, recent data suggest that the Nation is moving further from this goal rather than closer to it. Surveys show that across all households, most family members do not spend time on homework completion with their children. Even though many believe that with greater awareness of the key role of family involvement for children's academic success, more parents would be supervising their children's homework completion, the opposite is true. Both teachers and students report that the number of parents who do not guide homework completion has increased in the last decade. In 1997, 68 percent of teachers reported that most or many parents neglect to see that homework gets done. The American Teacher 1999 Metropolitan Life survey of students in grades 3-12 showed that in 1998, more than one in five students reported hardly spending any time at all talking with parents or guardians about school or homework, a slight increase from 1993 (19 percent).

Figure 1.5.a.1

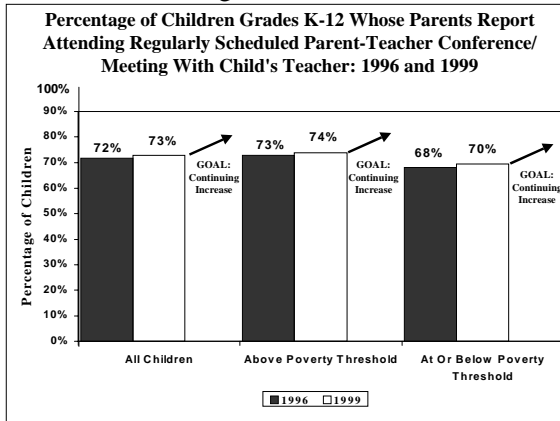


Source: The American Teacher 1998, Metropolitan Life. **Frequency:** The topics for these annual surveys are determined by its sponsor, and no future date for asking similar questions is known. **Next Update:** N/A. **Validation procedure:** The Metropolitan Life survey was conducted by Louis Harris and Associates by telephone with a National sample of teachers in grades 6-12. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** This is an assessment of parents obtained from a survey of teachers.

Indicator 1.5.b. The percentage of parents who meet with teachers about their children's learning will show improvement, and the gap in participation in parent-teacher conferences between high- and low-poverty schools will close.

Assessment of Progress. There was no significant change in the percent of parents attending parent-teacher conferences across income levels. Nearly 70 percent of members of families at or below the poverty threshold reported attending parent-teacher conferences in 1999.

Figure 1.5.b.1

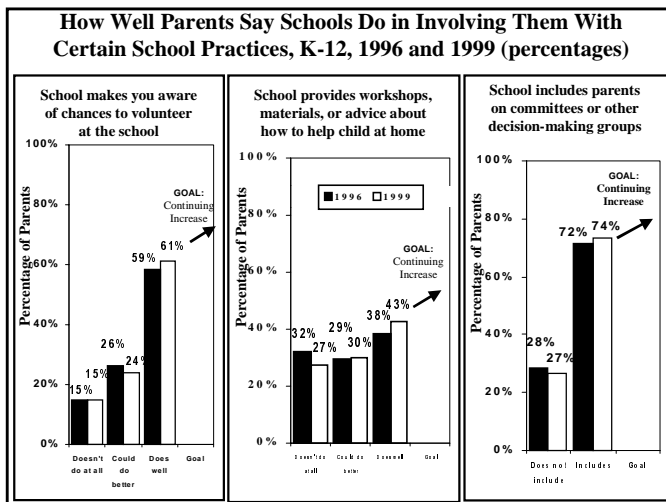


Source: U.S Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Surveys, 1996 and 1999. *Frequency:* Every 4 years. *Next Update:* 2003. **Validation procedure:** Data validated by NCES review procedures and NCES Statistical Standards. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** No known limitations.

Indicator 1.5.c. The percentage of parents who say that the school actively encourages and facilitates family involvement will increase.

Assessment of Progress. There was essentially no change in the percentage of parents reporting that schools actively encourage family involvement. In 1999, 61 percent of parents said that the school made them aware of chances to volunteer. In 1996, 38 percent of parents reported that their school provides workshops, materials, or advice about how to help children at home; and in 1999, the figure increased slightly to 43 percent. In 1999, 73 percent of parents said their school included parents on committees or other decision-making groups. Other measures of parental involvement remain unchanged.

Figure 1.5.c.1

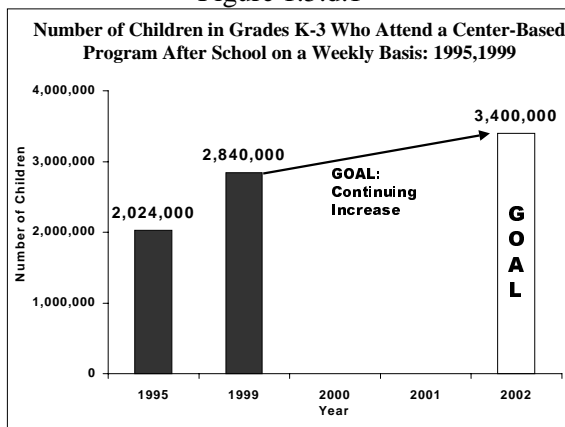


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, National Household Education Survey, spring 1996 and spring 1999. *Frequency:* Every 4 years. *Next Update:* 2003. **Validation procedure:** Data verified by NCES, according to NCES Statistical Standards. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** No major limitations.

Indicator 1.5.d. By 2002, the number of children participating in after-school programs will double, from 1.7 million to 3.4 million children.

Assessment of Progress. Progress toward target. The number of children increased from 2,024,000 in 1996 to 2,840,000 in 1999. Six million youngsters grades K–8 were active in center-based after-school programs in 1999. Thus, the number of young people involved in after-school programs has tripled since earlier data were collected in 1991, exceeding our goal. High-quality after-school programs with goal setting, low staff-student ratios, strong family involvement, and linkage with classroom instruction help ensure children’s continuous growth, development, and learning through the preadolescent and adolescent school years (Safe and Smart, 1998). While a number of communities are already developing such after-school programs, they are not widespread, particularly in the public schools. In 1998, there were 28 million school-aged children with parents in the workforce. But as recently as the 1993-94 school year, 70 percent of all public elementary schools did not have a before- or after-school program. In addition, the majority of extended-day programs were aimed at kindergarten and early elementary school students, and focus on supervised care rather than academic instruction. According to the 1996 National Household Education Survey (NHES), 13 percent of the Nation's primary school children (kindergarten through grade 3) attended center-based after-school programs on a weekly basis.

Figure 1.5.d.1



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Surveys, 1995 and 1999. *Frequency:* Every 4 years. *Next Update:* 2001. **Validation procedure:** The last major study of after-school programs used 1991 data. Data from the 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey were used by NCES to determine school-based after-school programs in 1996. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** The participation data from the 1995 National Household Education Surveys only cover children in grades K-3. This survey will be followed up in 2001.

How We Plan to Achieve Our Objective

How ED’s Activities Support the Achievement of this Objective. The Department meets national needs by providing funding, conducting research, and issuing materials relevant to education priorities. It builds awareness and encourages local capacity-building through its support for programs such as parent centers and education labs, and through its public-private efforts such as the Partnership. These activities can be grouped into four broad categories: financial support for Federal programs; the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education; expanded outreach, collaboration, and technical assistance; and research.

- **Financial support for Federal programs that support families to help their children learn.**

- Support the startup or expansion of 10,000 21st Century Community Learning Centers that would provide extended learning services to about 2.5 million students (\$1 billion in fiscal year 2001).
 - Expand state projects and local postsecondary school partnerships under GEAR UP (\$325 million).
 - Expand family literacy programs through Even Start (\$150 million).
 - Support Goals 2000 Parent Information Resource Centers that exist in every state and territory (\$33 million).
 - Increase support for IDEA parent information centers for families of children with disabilities (\$26 million).
- **Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (PFIE).**
- Involve local partners in PFIE's lead initiatives: 21st Century Community Learning Centers ("the after-school initiative"), the America Reads Challenge, America Goes Back to School, and GEAR UP.
 - Launch 50-state effort to involve families in reading with their children at home, linked to in-school activities, through the Compact for Reading initiative.
 - Continue to seek out new partners through outreach efforts that promote family-school-community partnerships.
 - Work with member organizations from education, business, community groups, and faith communities to build local coalitions and to further their own family involvement activities.
 - Hold religious and education summits across the Nation to promote family involvement activities.
 - Work with representatives from program offices across ED to leverage partners to increase participation in the lead initiatives, and use these initiatives to gain additional partners.
 - Promote greater student involvement in PFIE efforts.
 - Continue to work through a new public-private after-school partnership with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, that pledged \$83 million over five years to provide technical assistance, training, and public outreach to support high-quality extended learning opportunities.
 - Strengthen the Afterschool Alliance composed of the Department, the Mott Foundation, Creative Artists Agency, the Entertainment Industry Foundation, the Ad Council, *People* magazine, and J.C. Penney, which was formed to provide a public campaign on the need for creative after-school programs so that all children by 2010 will have access to programs.
 - Expand the number of partner organizations in the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, which has grown by more than 1,200 to total now more than 6,000 family, school, community, employer, and religious organizations.
 - Continue to measure customer satisfaction through a customer satisfaction survey of Partner organizations. More than 80 percent of respondents said that they had benefited from their participation in the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, and a majority reported that their level of activity had increased since they had joined.
 - Collaborate with major national business conferences, the Conference Board and *Working Mother* magazine's annual CEO Summit to highlight the efforts of employers who strengthen employee involvement in education and build business-education partnerships that support systemic reform in local schools.
 - Provide information, technical expertise, and other assistance to enable families and communities to become involved in children's learning through printed matter, civil rights technical assistance, and the Internet.

- Evaluate Web site. Partnership outreach efforts have resulted in the significant redesign of the Partnership's Web site, which is supported by *USA Today* and linked to its main news site, which receives 75 million hits daily. *Community Update*, with information about Partnership activities, now circulates to more than 275,000 subscribers.
 - Develop guides. In an initiative launched by the President, materials and effective practices guides on the involvement of faith communities have been developed.
 - In support of the Vice President's initiative on strengthening fathers' involvement in children's lives, a collaborative effort has been undertaken with the Office of the Vice President and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) focusing on fathers' involvement in children's learning. A nationwide teleconference, "Fathers Matter!" was co-hosted by the Secretaries of Education and HHS and featured examples of effective practices from across the Nation. Products and materials—including an effective practices guide, a toolkit for practitioners, and a set of tips for dads in English and Spanish—are being developed.
 - Sign on more states. Four states have signed on to the Partnership through their governors and chief state school officers: Maryland, Delaware, Illinois, and North Carolina are building systemic efforts that support family involvement in education.
 - Hold Partnership meetings in collaboration with the Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCS), bringing Partners and PIRC staff from the same region(s) together.
- **Expanded outreach, collaboration, and technical assistance.**
- Coordinate Federal program assistance and training materials for family involvement in children's learning by connecting parent provisions in Title I and other programs for at-risk students, such as Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers, Parent Information, and Resource Centers currently authorized under Goals 2000, and Civil Rights outreach activities.
 - Support parents of children with disabilities through IDEA technical assistance and dissemination and parent information centers.
 - Increase use of Web site information dissemination by expanding resources on the PFIE Web page to include additional publications, training materials, evaluation templates, guides to effective practices, examples of model programs, and other resources that can strengthen Partners' networking capacities.
 - Increase outreach to Hispanic families through local summits and other activities at the regional and local levels, in collaboration with the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. This year more than 2,600 local family, community, education, employer, and religious leaders participated, which is twice as many as last year.
 - Hold regional conferences in collaboration with Secretary's Regional Representatives and local partners to build awareness and strengthen capacity building in support of family involvement in education.
 - Enhance special education outreach through Office for Civil Rights (OCR) partnering with advocacy organizations and through sharing information with minority parents of English language learners.
- **Research**
- Develop and implement a long-range applied research agenda to strengthen family involvement in children's learning.
 - Annually evaluate the performance of the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education.
 - Undertake recognition activities that identify and publicize effective Partnership activities.

- Provide evaluation guidance for family-school partnerships to help students learn in such areas as after-school programs and early postsecondary school awareness.

How We Coordinate with Other Federal Agencies

The Department undertakes coordination with other agencies as requested by the Administration. It participates in ongoing interagency meetings and activities that focus on education-related concerns that are shared among other agencies, such as the use of after-school time, getting on track for postsecondary study and workforce preparation, fathers' involvement, mentoring, computer literacy, and reading.

- **Fathers' Involvement in Children's Learning**
 - Work with the White House Cabinet Affairs office to successfully implement the Partnership's national initiative, America Goes Back to School, through participation of every Federal agency.
 - Participate in White House activities promoting the Strong Families, Strong Communities initiative in such areas as fatherhood, family involvement in education, and Family Reunions.
- **Cosponsor teleconference with other agencies to strengthen family involvement in education.** Collaborate in a teleconference that focuses on involving fathers in children's learning, with followup activities that include the release of an effective practices guide, tips for dads in both English and Spanish, and a CD-ROM toolkit for teachers and practitioners.
- **Collaborate with agencies across government to support after-school learning.** Work through the National Performance Review with the Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, the Departments of Agriculture and Justice, the Corporation for National Service, and many others to coordinate efforts that make the most of children's out-of-school time.
- **Work with the private sector to raise awareness and build capacity.** PFIE continues to obtain input and support from numerous public and private organizations, such as the National Middle Schools Association, the College Board, and the Boy Scouts of America (Learning for Life) in designing and implementing the Early Awareness Information program, the National Science Foundation (NSF) National mathematics public engagement campaign, and the GEAR UP program.

Challenges to Achieving Our Objective

Family involvement is ultimately determined by the actions of parents and their children in the home. The Department does not intervene in the lives of families, but it does work with schools and can encourage schools and other organizations that work with families to assist them in various ways. By raising awareness among local stakeholders through its research and public-private partnership efforts, the Department is able to share the latest findings on family involvement, which can be useful to local communities that are building their own programs and efforts to increase parent involvement in education.