LEGISLATIVE REPORT

SUBJECT: Requesting the Board of Education (BOE) and Department of Education to collaborate with parent organizations to develop statewide policies for family engagement for Hawaii's public schools

REFERENCE: SCR 145 (2011)

ACTION REQUESTED: Report on findings and recommendations regarding subject matter

DOE REPORT: See attachment

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Update and align Board of Education Parent/Family Involvement Policy #2403 and Comprehensive Student Support Policy #2203 to reflect advancements in research and practice in regards to student support and family engagement.

2. Align and integrate school-family partnership policies and practices across the system with the Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) Strategic Plan, BOE policies, and state and federal statutory requirements.

3. Develop and maintain a robust system of two-way communication between families and the HIDOE at all levels, from schools to upper administration.

4. Develop a common set of general practices across the HIDOE to ensure that families and schools have consistent expectations by which to interact and communicate effectively.

5. Build system capacity by providing and coordinating resources and training for both families and schools to support effective family-school partnerships.

6. Establish a system of accountability, including the development of measurable indicators, by which families and schools can assess progress toward improving family-school engagement.

7. Identify schools and complexes that are effectively using family-school partnerships to support student achievement and disseminate effective practices system wide.

8. Continue to monitor the progress of implementing family-school partnerships with a follow-up report for 2012.
Executive Summary

Common sense tells us, and research bears out, that when families, schools and their communities work together, children succeed. Furthermore, aside from the students, families are the most heavily vested stakeholders of our educational system. It is with this in mind that the HIDOE seeks to increase its capacity to partner meaningfully with families in the education of our children.

Currently, the HIDOE partners with parent, family and community-based organizations, as well as individual families, toward the goal of increasing student success. These partnerships take place at local schools, at the complex level, and system-wide. The HIDOE and its family and community partners are committed to working together to improve how families, schools and communities can join forces for student success. The HIDOE met with family and community organizations to develop these recommendations that encourage effective family-school partnerships:

1. Update and align Board of Education Parent/Family Involvement Policy #2403 and Comprehensive Student Support Policy #2203 to reflect advancements in research and practice in regards to student support and family engagement.
2. Align and integrate school-family partnership policies and practices across the system with the HIDOE Strategic Plan, BOE policies, and state and federal statutory requirements.
3. Develop and maintain a robust system of two-way communication between families and the HIDOE at all levels, from schools to upper administration.
4. Develop a common set of general practices across the HIDOE to ensure that families and schools have consistent expectations by which to interact and communicate effectively.
5. Build system capacity by providing and coordinating resources and training for both families and schools to support effective family-school partnerships.
6. Establish a system of accountability, including the development of measurable indicators, by which families and schools can assess progress toward improving family-school engagement.
7. Identify schools and complexes that are effectively using family-school partnerships to support student achievement and disseminate effective practices system wide.
8. Continue to monitor the progress of implementing family-school partnerships with a follow-up report for 2012.

While the working group has not yet reached consensus on the necessity of legislative action, all are in agreement that establishing measurable institutional accountability is important. Ideally, the group seeks to develop a system of policies and supports that rely on shared values and beliefs, as well as agreed upon strategies, rather than on legislative mandate. The long-term goal is to increase success for all students. This can be accomplished by building a culture of family-school partnerships that is based on mutual respect and trust, and will be beneficial to families, educators, and most of all, the students.
SCR 145 Legislative Report

The HIDOE has partnered with parent and community-based organizations to examine the efficacy of family-school partnerships as they are practiced by the HIDOE and its family stakeholders. Recommendations for statewide policies to improve family-school engagement and partnerships have been developed based on an examination of research-based best practices and an analysis of current efforts in Hawaii.

I. Introduction: The case for family-school partnerships

Families, schools and communities working together give our students the best chance of succeeding. All families have dreams for their children and want to see them successful. Our schools' primary mission is to see students learn and achieve. Communities need children to do well in order for them to become productive, contributing citizens. Common sense tells us that if we all share the same goals, coordinated efforts will produce the best results. However, family engagement with schools can sometimes be characterized more by conflict than cooperation.

The Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) seeks to remedy this by increasing its engagement with families to create meaningful family-school partnerships that benefit our children. These partnerships go beyond families helping with fundraising, attending school events, and volunteering; they create a culture of shared responsibility in all aspects of a child's education. Aside from the students, families are the most heavily vested stakeholders in their children's success. They can be treated as underutilized resources or as powerful allies and advocates for public education.

The research is clear

Research shows that effective family-school engagement is related to a number of positive outcomes for students. These outcomes include higher achievement, improved school readiness for children entering the system, better social skills and behavior, and increased graduation rates. Strong evidence indicates that parental beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices, along with effective home-school communication, are linked to student success (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Key findings also show that children do best when families take an active role in their children's education, including helping at home, participating in school programs and activities, guiding and supporting their children through the educational system, and participating in educational decision making. Research suggests that these findings hold true across ages from birth through high school and across all socioeconomic environments. Studies found far more effective school improvement efforts when schools included families in the process and linked activities for families to what students were learning (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).
Making efforts to increase effective family-school partnerships even more compelling in these difficult economic times, research has demonstrated that investing in such partnerships can be economically advantageous, as gains in student achievement through family-school engagement can be achieved without nearly as great a cost as comparable interventions (Houtenville & Conway, 2008).

A recent study from the Consortium on Chicago School Research identified effective family-school partnerships as one of five key elements in turning around low performing schools and accelerating their progress. They found all five elements contributed comparably to improvement and that chances for success declined precipitously with the loss of only one or two elements (Bryk et al., 2010). Engaging families in student learning is an important strategy for school improvement, and its impact can be as powerful as the impact of strong leadership and quality teaching. This confirms 30 years of research about the positive impact that engaging families can have on student outcomes (Harvard Family Research Project, 2010).

The evidence is positive and convincing: families and schools working together can have a major influence on children’s achievement. Families, schools and communities working together give our students the best chance of succeeding.

Shared responsibility...

As the HIDOE raises expectations that all students be college and career ready when they graduate, meeting those expectations will require a collective commitment and shared responsibility for student achievement. Neither educators nor families can afford to take the attitude that education happens only in school and is therefore exclusively the school’s responsibility. Schools must make an effort to go beyond engagement that only asks for support for school goals and priorities rather than creating an environment where there is mutual responsibility for student success. Families must not settle for a “hands off, not my job” approach that leaves education solely as the responsibility of the education “professionals.” Shared responsibility for student learning is foundational for the success of all students.

Schools alone cannot meet all student needs, and especially those of students who are most in need of support. These students, in particular need an array of school and non-school (both family and community) supports that create an integrated set of resources that support learning and development from birth to adulthood (Weiss, et al, 2009). Since schools are often viewed by families as those who are primarily responsible for the education of their children, educators need to reach out to families, invite them to participate in their children’s education and encourage the development of a culture of mutual respect and shared responsibility through family-school partnerships.

Families and schools must work together to communicate to students their high expectations and the importance of attaining a quality education. Research shows that high expectations for academic achievement can predict performance, the types of courses taken, college attendance, and career aspirations. When both families
and schools share high expectations for high school students, those students are more likely to attend college (Lippman, et al, 2008).

...complementary roles

While responsibility for student success needs to be shared, families and schools play different roles in supporting student learning. Families and schools have complementary responsibilities and strengths. Families have an awareness of their children as unique individuals—personalities and preferences, strengths and weaknesses, as well as control over their living environments, that schools may not have immediate access to. Schools have the educational expertise in how children learn and the curricular knowledge to provide the essentials of a high quality education. Working together, the resources that families and schools bring can be leveraged to produce outcomes far beyond those that could be attained independently.

These complementary roles should be mutually agreed upon so that both families and schools can support each other’s efforts. In each educational community, families and schools need to engage in a conversation about their complementary responsibilities and seek to reach consensus as to how best to carry them out. Families are not only consumers of public education, but can also be partners in providing for student learning, and advocates for both their own children and the educational system (Harvard Family Research Project, 2010).

II. Findings: Family-school partnerships in Hawaii public schools

The HIDOE partners with parent, family and community-based organizations, as well as individual families, toward the goal of increasing student success at all levels of the educational system. These partnerships are guided by Hawaii Board of Education Parent/Family Involvement Policy #2403 and takes place at local schools, at the complex, complex area and district levels, and system-wide. The HIDOE, its family and community partners are committed to working together to improve how families, schools and communities can join forces for student success. Below is a sampling of family-school partnerships.

Current family-school partnerships

i. School-level partnerships

Family-school partnerships occur at every school. Whether informally, as when families ensure that their children are on-time and have the supplies they need to learn, to the highest levels of shared decision-making, each school engages in some type of family-school partnership activities. These vary from school to school based on the capacity of both the school’s staff and its constituents. Below is a sampling of school-level partnerships.
1. **School Community Councils** – Established in response to mandates established by the State Legislature’s Reinventing Education Act 51 of 2004, School Community Councils (SCCs) were created as forums at all schools for exchanging ideas about how to improve student achievement among a school’s stakeholders: principals, teachers, school staff, parents, students, and community members.

SCCs are a major part of the leadership structure at each school. They are elected by their peers to advise the principal on matters that affect student achievement and school improvement. Their primary role is to ensure that the needs of all students are specifically addressed in the overall education plan for the school. This Academic and Financial Plan is a document that highlights the goals for the school, its programs, and the resources available to reach these goals. SCCs enable shared decision-making among principals, teachers, school staff, parents, students, and community members to improve student achievement.

While every school has an SCC, they are being implemented with varying degrees of fidelity and effectiveness. Some schools have robust and active SCCs that support school improvement efforts while others struggle to recruit sufficient participation to maintain a quorum and comply with the statutory requirement that the number of school personnel equal the number of non-school stakeholders.

2. **Parent Community Networking Centers** – Also established in response to the State Legislature’s Reinventing Education Act 51 of 2004, every school created a Parent Community Networking Center (PCNC) and employed at least one part-time parent facilitator. Categorical funding was used to hire these PCNC Facilitators, statewide support was provided, and the program grew in effectiveness. PCNC facilitators were in place at every school and served as liaisons between families and the school. They were generally recruited from within the local school community and were thus able to adapt their family engagement efforts to the specific needs of their community. Training, support, and accountability were provided by state and district level personnel, including District PCNC Coordinators, who were assigned, one per district.

In 2007, state HIDOE funding for PCNC facilitators became a part of Weighted Student Formula funding. Funding for a PCNC facilitator at each school became a school level decision. With the advent of more austere economic conditions, more and more schools have opted not to employ a PCNC facilitator. Currently, about 60% of schools have PCNC facilitators. In addition, several districts have eliminated their District PCNC Coordinators, leaving schools that still maintain PCNC facilitators without much support.
Individual School Activities – As stated above, all schools engage in family-school partnerships. These partnerships are guided by Hawaii Board of Education Parent/Family Involvement Policy #2403, which names six components of effective parent/family involvement based on research-based national standards that were adopted by the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). These components include 1) communication between home and school, 2) encouraging responsible parenting, 3) assisting student learning, 4) volunteering (where parents are welcome and their support is sought), 5) shared decision-making, and 6) accessing community resources.

Individual schools implement different strategies and activities based on a number of factors, including leadership attitudes toward family-school partnerships, capacity of the school and families to carry out activities, appropriateness to the cultures present within the school community, and available resources. A sampling of activities being implemented at different schools is listed:

Communicating: classroom and school newsletters, school communication logs, parent coffee hours with the principal, open houses, new parent orientations, Kindergarten parent-child activities, school tours

Parenting: general parenting classes, parenting classes for challenging youth (e.g., Parent Project classes, Loving Solution classes), School Lunch With Your Child, specialized topical parent workshops (e.g., ADHD, bullying, cyber-safety), parent academies

Assisting Student Learning: curriculum nights, reading nights, math nights, Read Across America programs, homework assistance workshops, specialized topical parent workshops (e.g., Understanding Your Child’s Report Card, parent academies

Volunteering: parent-teacher organizations (PTA, PTSA, Ohanas), campus beautification, fund raising, classroom parents programs, chaperoning, read aloud programs, holiday and seasonal activities, movie nights, fun fairs, guest speakers

Shared Decision-making: participation on school committees, participation in school professional development activities, participation on school inspection teams

Community Resources: hula classes, community health fairs, community school opening events, community brunches, community service and service learning activities
ii. Complex, Complex Area, and District Activities

Family-school partnerships at different complexes, complex areas, and districts vary greatly. Some intentionally seek out family and community engagement opportunities by creating institutional structures to facilitate partnerships. Some work with community-based organizations to help build the capacity of families to partner with schools in advocacy or decision-making. Others target specific populations that may be underrepresented or underserved. Below are examples:

1. Castle Complex – The Castle Complex Parent Leader Group (PLG) is facilitated by the Kaneohe Community Family Center (KCFC), a program of the private, non-profit organization, Parents and Children Together (PACT), which has a long-standing relationship with the Castle Complex and is located on the King Intermediate School campus. The PLG brings together school parent organization board members, SCC parent and community representatives, administrators, and the Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) to network and share resources and ideas, in order to support parent and community engagement and build the capacity of parent leaders at each school. Updates on budgets and what is happening in the HIDOE and Castle Complex is shared by the CAS at each bimonthly meeting.

The PLG sponsored six Education Summits to address one of the barriers that prevent parents from becoming leaders in schools, understanding the HIDOE education structure. Topics included: Navigating the Department of Education and Getting to Know the Board of Education, Education Policy and the State Legislature, Understanding and Using Education Data, and Leadership and Advocacy.

The Castle Complex Community Council (C4) was created as a result of the summits to provide an ongoing forum for the review of data and to continue the dialogue to elevate student achievement and school improvement. The C4 is an advisory group at the Complex level that works closely with the SCCs and CAS to make changes that will impact student achievement and school improvement. They are currently providing input into a redesign project for Castle High School and King Intermediate.

2. Farrington Complex – Faith Action for Community Equity (FACE), a Gamaliel Foundation affiliate, is a faith-based grassroots organization partnering with the complex by hosting a Parent Leadership Institute. This two-day leadership training empowers parents/guardians of students attending schools in the Farrington Complex with the knowledge, tools and resources they need to be more involved in their children's education and the state's public school system. Underserved populations such as the growing Micronesian communities were targeted for participation. Parents and community members from other schools were also invited if they agreed to volunteer in the Farrington Complex.
3. Kailua-Kalaheo Complex Area – The complex is working with Hawaii Education Matters (HEM), a grassroots private non-profit organization, on two active programs, both aimed at enhancing student learning through parent engagement: The Kailua/Kalaheo Complex Parent Academy and Healthy Families, Healthy Schools. HEM is collaborating with the Kailua/Kalaheo Complex Area Superintendent, principals, teachers, and families to develop a sustainable way to engage parents and families in the education process, so that families deepen their understanding of education issues and become effective partners in improving their local schools.

HEM is currently holding talk story sessions with various stakeholders (principals, teachers and families) in developing the Parent Academy as an open and inclusive process. They believe that it is important that principals, teachers and families are involved in every step of the program development process. Parent and family input and ownership will be key to the success of the Parent Academy. From these sessions, they hope to find parent leaders who will work to develop content for the Academy, which will then be piloted in four schools in the Kailua/Kalaheo complex.

Healthy Families, Healthy Schools is a program that aims to help parents understand the link between a healthy lifestyle and student success. Using the five pillars of the First Lady’s Let’s Move! Initiative, HEM provides resources to families to support them in their endeavor to eat healthy and be active. Support from Kaiser Permanente Hawaii has made possible the launch of the first program of the Healthy Schools, Healthy Families Initiative, Zamzee. In partnership with Hope Lab, HEM will pilot this project to increase physical activity among ‘tweens (teens 11-14 years old) through the use of Zamzee, a technology that monitors, quantifies, and rewards physical activity in an engaging way. It is an innovative way to leverage the power and appeal of technology to encourage healthier lifestyles, showing the emerging role of technology in the promotion of physical activity among youth.

4. Kau-Keaau-Pahoa (KKP) Complex Area – The KKP Complex Area, one of the HIDOE Zones of Innovation identified in its Race To The Top grant proposal, is partnering with the PACT Family Center Program, which has had great success in building parent/family engagement, especially with the educationally lowest performing students within the HIDOE – the Chuukese and Marshallese communities. This has been accomplished not by imposing change upon the communities, but by discovering the uniquely successful students and their families from those communities that are hidden within the poor statistical outcomes, and growing the behaviors that make them successful against the odds. This “inside-out” approach to family engagement is applicable to many groups and can be sustained over time with little or no outside resources, since the resources come from within the community. This effort, named the Sundays Project (http://www.hawaiipirc.org/sundays/about-sundays-project.html), has shown impressive student outcomes through family engagement in education.
5. **Nanakuli-Waianae Complex Area** – The Nanakuli-Waianae Complex Area is the other HIDOE Zone of Innovation identified in its Race to the Top efforts. They are working with The Institute for Native Pacific Education (INPEACE) to establish effective family-school partnerships for their communities. INPEACE has been providing parent and family engagement programs in those communities for over 17 years. The concept of `ohana (family) is at the core of all their strategies, including long term vision and program development. Along with the Complex, they understand that in order to build community capacity they must strengthen the family, especially in Native Hawaiian communities. Keiki Steps, INPEACE’s largest program, is a holistic model of education building up the entire family by teaching parents and caregivers that they are their child’s first and best teacher. By doing this, they empower families with child development knowledge and effective teaching strategies which allow them to be more effective in supporting their child’s success in school and lifelong learning. Data from Keiki Steps children who entered the HIDOE system show statistically significant gains in standardized testing. Their success is attributed mostly to the strong parent engagement component developed and established in the children’s early years. NPEACE has just begun a partnership with the Nanakuli-Waianae Complex Area to expand its efforts to engage families and the community in developing effective family-school partnerships.

6. **Honolulu District** – Parents for Public School Hawaii (PPSHI) is a newly formed chapter of the national non-profit Parents for Public Schools organization. They are working with several middle schools in the Honolulu District to conduct tours at the schools. These tours seek to inform parents and families about the public education opportunities available to them. PPSHI observed that many parents choose to send their children to private schools when they complete their elementary education in the public schools, often based on inaccurate or outdated information about public middle schools. They are working with several middle schools in the district to conduct tours at those schools in the Honolulu area. They seek to provide information to parents who may be on the fence about where to send their children once they complete elementary school. PPSHI is working with these middle schools to connect with parents and families in order to showcase the schools’ programs and accomplishments, share the vision of each school’s principal, and advocate for the benefits of continuing in public education.

iii. **Statewide initiatives**

There are several family-school partnership initiatives being implemented at the state level, either having long established records of accomplishment or having been newly created as a result of current efforts to more effectively engage families and the community.
1. **Community Children's Councils** – The Community Children's Councils (CCCs) are a partnership of parents, school personnel, private providers and other community members who are concerned with the delivery of services and support to special needs children and families in the local community. In response to the Felix Consent Decree, CCCs were created in the Felix Implementation Plan as one of the key partnerships to develop a full array of services for special needs children and their families. Full participation of families is a high priority for the CCCs.

There are 17 CCCs throughout the state (eight on Oahu, four on Maui, four on Hawaii Island, one on Kauai). Each CCC is co-chaired by a volunteer parent and a professional. CCC membership includes representation from public and private child serving agencies, private providers, and community members such as recreational services, businesses, churches and others. CCCs meet monthly. Parent support groups, workshops, and informational meetings on pertinent topics are local common activities. Conferences and special events are also offered throughout the year.

2. **Joint Venture Education Forum** – The Joint Venture Education Forum (JVEF) is a partnership between the HIDOE and Hawaii's military stakeholders as a venue to develop relationships to promote educational opportunities for Hawaii's children. JVEF has had positive impact on schools, supports military families, and promotes community between these families and the schools their children attend. As part of the effort to provide support and engage military families, a HIDOE Military Liaison serves as the point of contact for all military families transitioning to and from Hawaii's schools.

3. **Family Focus Forum** – Formerly known as the Family Focus Group, the Forum brings together representatives from HIDOE programs that have family engagement components or requirements together with partners from other state departments, family and community organizations, UH Center on the Family, military liaisons, and others involved in promoting family-school partnerships. The Forum was formed to build relationships and support the network of practitioners who are involved in implementing family-school partnership activities in Hawaii’s public schools.

4. **Comprehensive Student Support System Workgroup** – This workgroup was convened to obtain family and community input for the current Comprehensive Student Support System (CSSS) redesign, a component of the Race to the Top Continuum of Proactive Student Supports Project. Those representing family and community perspectives are viewed as valuable resources in helping to design the CSSS in a way that is responsive not only to system needs, but to the needs of families as well.
5. **Family-School Partnership Project** – This non-Race to the Top state-level project is charged with developing models for implementation of effective family-school partnerships. The project team is comprised of HIDOE staff and representatives of family and community organizations. The project seeks to take a systemic approach to family-school partnerships across schools at the complex level. The complex was identified as the smallest unit for comprehensive change in a school community, since families at elementary, middle and high school levels all belong to the same community.

6. **Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA)** – The HSTA has just begun work on a project to help build the capacity of its teachers to engage the families of students in their classrooms. Professional development activities are being developed to help teachers increase their ability to effectively work with families.

iv. **Federal mandates**

Federal requirements sometimes provide the HIDOE with guidance in its efforts to work with families. Federal funding often comes with obligations to involve families in school programs and in decision making about the use of those funds. The major programs that are impacted by family-school partnerships include the following:

1. **Title I** – Title I, Part A, provides funding to support students who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The Title I program requires parental involvement at every level of the program, including the development and implementation of state and local school improvement plans. It identifies critical points in the process of improving teaching and learning where parents and the community can intervene and assist. These provisions encourage families to participate in helping to educate their children, based on the belief that students do better when parents are actively involved in the education process, both at home and at school. Because communication is the foundation of effective parental involvement, information is required to be provided to parents of students participating in Title I, Part A programs in an understandable way, including notifying parents of the written parental involvement policy and providing information related to parent programs, meetings, and other activities.

2. **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)** – IDEA contains requirements to ensure that educators and parents have the necessary tools to improve educational results for children with disabilities. They stipulate that parents will be regularly informed of their child's progress toward annual goals, parents' concerns for enhancing their child's education will be considered in developing the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), and that the parents of children with disabilities are involved in the design, evaluation, and implementation of school-based improvement plans.
3. **English Language Learners** – In order to engage parents of students identified as English Language Learners (ELL), general school communications with families are required to be translated or interpreted, as appropriate. Information to be disseminated includes an orientation to school and community resources, an explanation of student expectations, and notification of services provided. In addition, schools conduct activities for limited-English speaking parents to enhance their participation and provide information in the appropriate language to support families’ efforts to help their children succeed academically.

**Identified areas of growth**

In its examination of current family-school partnership practices, the HIDOE, along with its working group of parent and community-based organization representatives, identified several areas of growth. If addressed, improvement in these areas has the potential to positively impact student achievement through improved family-school partnership practices.

i. **There is a lack of consistency among schools in implementing family-school partnership efforts.**

While several excellent examples of family-school partnerships were identified, both the quantity and quality of family-school partnerships varied greatly among schools. Some schools welcomed the participation of parents and families in meaningful ways. They encouraged families to be involved in all aspects of their children’s education, from providing timely information on children’s academic and extracurricular progress to creating opportunities for families to give input in making major school decisions. Some schools had low expectations for their families’ participation and therefore gave little effort to creating opportunities for involving them. Other schools seemed to keep families at arm’s length in decision making and lacked a vision for the shared responsibility of schools and families to educate children. This lack of consistency implies a lack of clearly communicated vision at the system level for the role of families in educating their children. While a Board of Education Parent/Family Involvement Policy exists, its implementation has been uneven at best.

In addition, there is a lack of system-wide policies, procedures and protocol that encourage family-school partnerships across schools. This makes participating with schools more challenging for families who are new to the system, transferring schools, or moving from elementary to middle to high school.

ii. **Board of Education (BOE) Parent/Family Involvement Policy #2403 and Comprehensive Student Support System Policy #2303 are in need of updates.** (see Appendix 1)
Although comprehensive, the BOE Parent/Family Involvement Policy is in need of updating. There has been much advancement in the field since its adoption and there is now a broader view of family-school partnerships as one of engagement rather than involvement, and as something that families and schools do together, rather than as something the schools do to families. Currently, there are varying views within our schools about the role families should play, which ranges from seeing them as equal partners to seeing them strictly as consumers.

In addition, while the BOE Comprehensive Student Support System Policy lists “Involvement of families and community stakeholders as partners in the education process,” as a part of the HIDOE’s comprehensive student support system framework, it gives little guidance as to how such a construct would be operationalized.

iii. There is a lack of coordination and community input in regard to use of resources.

Several entities contribute to the pool of resources that provides for family-school partnerships to happen in schools. State funds, federal funds, private grants, donations (including personal contributions by teachers and other school staff), and the families themselves all invest in making family-school partnerships happen. However, there is often a lack of coordination for the use of these resources in ensuring their most effective use. Different programs often plan activities independent of others that also have family engagement obligations. Further, the school often dictates what activities are implemented with little or no input from families. School parent involvement committees often include no parents in their membership.

iv. There is a need to develop a means to ensure accountability in measuring progress toward effective family-school partnerships.

The HIDOE does not currently track parent involvement or family engagement activities or outcomes that occur in the schools or complexes. Sharing of information and best practices often does not occur across the system. This lends itself to pockets of effective family-school partnership programs, but hinders the system from improving as a whole. There is infrastructure in place to gather data through the eCSSS database system, but schools do not devote the resources necessary to input the data.

III. Recommendations

The HIDOE partnered with the following organizations to prepare this report: Autism Society of Hawaii, Community Children’s Councils, Hawaii Education Matters, Hui for Excellence In Education, Hawaii Special Education Advisory Council, Hawaii State Parent Teacher Student Association, The Learning Coalition, Parents for Public Schools Hawaii, and the Special Parent Information Network. (see Appendix 3 for descriptions)
The group has not yet reached consensus regarding the necessity of legislative action, but all agree that establishing institutional accountability is important. The group seeks to develop a system of policies and supports that rely on shared values and beliefs, as well as agreed upon strategies, rather than on legislative mandate. The shared goal is to create a culture of family-school partnership beneficial to families and educators that will result in increased success for all students.

In addition, the recommendations below support the BOE’s current Parent/Family Involvement Policy and the National PTA standards (see Appendix 2). The following are the recommendations of the group:

1. **Update and align Board of Education Parent/Family Involvement Policy #2403 and Comprehensive Student Support Policy #2203 to reflect advancements in research and practice in regards to student support and family engagement.**

   Board of Education policies concerning parent/family involvement and comprehensive student support were created independently in response to different needs and circumstances. In the current redesign of the Comprehensive Student Support Continuum (CSSC) it is important that efforts to improve family-school partnerships be aligned as one of its six critical elements. Ideally, family-school partnerships should be considered in all student support interventions as a component of the CSSC, imbedded in all aspects of the HIDOE’s efforts to serve its students. However, in order to highlight family-school partnership’s importance to student success, a separate policy is still recommended, lest it be lost in its larger context. Using common language that reflects current understanding of family engagement and involvement would help to ensure consistency between the two policies.

   **National PTA Standards supported:** Revision of BOE policies will align the HIDOE’s policy with all six PTA National Standards.

2. **Align and integrate school-family partnership policies and practices across the system with the HIDOE Strategic Plan, BOE policies, and state and federal statutory requirements.**

   While effective family-school partnerships are important, the goal is not to increase family-school partnerships for their own sake, but to increase student achievement and support student success. As such, it is important to shift the Department’s view of family-school partnerships from being an optional, add-on feature to being considered in all activities of the HIDOE as one of the elements in promoting student achievement. In addition to utilizing families, an important, but often underused resource, it also honors the place of the family as one of the educational system’s primary stakeholders. It is critical that the Department remember that parents (and/or those who play the role of a child’s primary caregiver) are a child’s first and most important
teachers. This does not change when children enter the school system, and should be incorporated into the HIDOE’s strategies for educating children.

National PTA Standards supported: Alignment of policies and practices to BOE policies will support all six PTA National Standards.

3. Develop and maintain an effective system of two-way communication between families and the HIDOE at all levels, from schools to upper administration.

Communication and relationship building are at the core of effective family-school partnerships. It is imperative that a spirit of trust and cooperation be engendered between families and the schools that serve them, in order to achieve the common goal of ensuring that all students are successful. It is important that the communication be two-way, timely, and mutually respectful. It is not enough for schools to disseminate information. Ample opportunities should be provided for families to give input, share in decision-making, and contribute to the schools’ educational program.

As importantly, families need to be communicated within ways that they will be able to understand and by means that they can easily access. Not being able to communicate in families’ primary languages can be a significant barrier to communication and could hinder the ability of these families to support their children’s educational progress. Providing communication in families’ native language is a challenge for schools that have a large number of non-native speakers, and especially for those that have a diverse non-English speaking population. In addition, illiteracy may be an issue for some when it comes to written material, and lack of access to technology may add to the problem for those who are without access to computers, the internet or a phone.

National PTA Standards supported: Primarily Standard 2: Communicating effectively. However, effective two-way communication will positively impact all of the standards.

4. Develop a common set of general practices across the HIDOE to ensure that families and schools have consistent expectations by which to interact and communicate effectively.

An advantage of having one unified school system in the state is that families and schools can establish a common set of expectations and protocols throughout the system, across both geographic areas and school levels (elementary, middle school and high school). However, the system has done little to institutionalize policies and practices in order to help families more easily access schools in a consistent way. Establishing common protocols for communication and engagement would go a long way to implementing a
system where both families and school personnel understand how to effectively communicate and work with each other.

**National PTA Standards supported:** Standard 1: Welcoming all families, Standard 2: Communicating effectively, Standard 4: Speaking up for every child, and Standard 5: Sharing power, would be most affected. When families and schools know how to interact appropriately, there will be less miscommunication and a greater opportunity to build trust.

5. **Build system capacity by providing and coordinating resources and training for both families and schools to support effective family-school partnerships.**

Resources for family-school partnerships are seldom coordinated to most effectively connect with families. Support for family-school partnership activities come from a variety of sources, including state and federal funds, private grants, contributions from community-based organizations, donations (including personal contributions by teachers and other school staff), and the families themselves. Coordination between those providing resources for family-school partnerships would maximize their effective use.

In addition, thought should be given to the role HIDOE funds play in encouraging family-school partnerships. Much of what is going on in implementing these partnerships is supported by resources external to the HIDOE. In order to address sustainability issues, consideration should be given to which functions of parent-school partnerships should be institutionalized through a commitment of HIDOE resources.

Families want to support school efforts to educate their children, but sometimes lack the capacity, means and/or opportunity to contribute in meaningful ways. Schools, the general community and the network of families within a school community can build capacity by working together to identify areas in which they can shift attitudes, change behaviors, and gain skills in order to support children’s learning. Providing training for families and the community in these identified areas will allow for more effective partnerships to be developed. School personnel at all levels can also increase their ability to partner with families and the community by participating in targeted professional development that helps them establish those partnerships. Providing joint training for families and school staff can create opportunities not only for encouraging common understanding and skill building, but also for developing trusting relationships and building community. These capacity building activities should be implemented by training teams that include school, family and community members to model the family-school partnership concept.

**National PTA Standards supported:** Standard 2: Communicating effectively, and Standard 5: Sharing power, are most directly affected. Other
Standards may be supported depending on the nature of the capacity building activity.

6. **Establish a system of accountability, including the development of measurable indicators, by which families and schools can assess progress toward improving family-school engagement.**

In order for schools and families to evaluate the success of family-school partnerships, a system of accountability needs to be established. Ultimately, these indicators of progress should be related to student achievement and success, but may be tied more directly to intervening factors that contribute to student success, such as improved attendance or reduced behavioral problems. Selection of these indicators can be determined by both the needs of the community and the viability of data collection. Efforts should also be made to identify indicators of progress across the system.

**National PTA Standard supported:** Standard 5: Sharing power, would be improved through the development of agreed upon measures of success.

7. **Identify schools and complexes that are effectively using family-school partnerships to support student achievement and disseminate effective practices system wide.**

Effective family-school partnerships are already occurring within the HIDOE, either at individual schools, complexes, or complex areas. These partnerships need to be identified, encouraged, and highlighted, in order that best practices can be shared and implemented system wide. A process should be established in order for schools and complexes to have access to information on effective practices and provided support to initiate those practices in their own school communities.

**National PTA Standards supported:** Through the identification and dissemination of best practices, all standards should be supported.

8. **Continue to monitor the progress of implementing family-school partnerships with a follow-up report for 2012.**

Sustainability of these efforts is essential to seeing long-term system change. Further review will be important, both to assess progress and to ensure that the development of family-school partnerships continues to be a high priority.

**IV. Conclusion**

The HIDOE and its family and community partners understand the need for effective family-school partnerships in supporting efforts to increase student achievement and success. Research and best practices show that family-school partnerships which increase family-school engagement can have a significant impact on student achievement. There is also an understanding that while there
has been much progress made in establishing these partnerships in some areas, there has been little or no progress made in others. It is important to provide support for the good works being done to proliferate and be applied in broader usage, especially in school communities that share similar characteristics.

The HIDOE and its family and community partners remain committed to increasing the effectiveness and number of effective family-school partnerships being practiced in Hawaii’s public schools and their school communities. There is a strong commitment to seeing families, schools and their communities working together, children achieving, and our public education system succeeding in the education of our children.

The long-term goal is to achieve success for all students. This can be accomplished by building a culture of family-school partnerships that is based on mutual respect and trust, and is beneficial to families, educators, and most of all, to the students.
Appendix 1 – Board of Education Policy #2203 & #2403

BOE PARENT/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT POLICY #2403

The Board of Education recognizes that a child's education is a responsibility shared by the school and the family during the entire period the child spends in school. To support the goal of the Department of Education (Department) to educate all students effectively, schools and parents must work as knowledgeable partners.

Although parents are diverse in culture, language, and needs, they share the schools' commitment in the educational success of their children. The Department and its schools, in collaboration with parents, shall establish programs and practices that enhance parent involvement and reflect the specific needs of students and their families.

To this end, the Board of Education supports the Department in the development, implementation, and regular evaluation of parent involvement programs in each school. The implementation will involve parents at all grade levels in a variety of roles, including input in decision-making processes and practices. The parent involvement program will be comprehensive and coordinated in nature. It will include, but not be limited to, the following components of successful parent involvement programs:

- Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- Responsible parenting is promoted and supported.
- Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning, including successful achievement of the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards.
- Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- Parents are partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Community resources are made available to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning.

The Department shall implement administrative guidelines that support professional development opportunities for staff members to enhance understanding of effective parent involvement strategies. The Department recognizes the importance of administrative leadership in setting expectations and creating a climate conducive to parental participation.

Engaging parents is essential to improved student achievement and to realize the Vision of a Public School Graduate.

Approved: 05/03/01; Revised: 09/18/03
BOE COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEM POLICY #2203

The Board of Education (BOE) recognizes the importance of providing effective instruction in a caring and supportive learning environment. A comprehensive student support system will ensure that all students attain the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards (HCPS) and the General Learner Outcomes (GLOs), in order to become Public School Graduates prepared for post-secondary education and/or careers.

Therefore, the Department shall provide a comprehensive student support system framework to support the implementation, with fidelity, of:

1) Effective standards-based instruction for all students;

2) Appropriate student support through an array of services;

3) Involvement of families and community stakeholders as partners in the education process;

4) Management of decision-making driven by ongoing assessment of student progress; and

5) An effective single all-student database.

Approved: 05/14/09
Appendix 2 – National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Standards

PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

**Standard 1:** Welcoming all families into the school community—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

**Standard 2:** Communicating effectively—Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

**Standard 3:** Supporting student success—Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

**Standard 4:** Speaking up for every child—Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

**Standard 5:** Sharing power—Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

**Standard 6:** Collaborating with community—Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

From the National PTA website - [http://www.pta.org/1216.htm](http://www.pta.org/1216.htm)
Appendix 3 – Description of partner organizations contributing to this report

**Autism Society of Hawaii** was re-established in 1992 as a chapter affiliate of the Autism Society of America. The Society is composed of family members, individuals with autism spectrum disorders, professionals and community agencies and organizations. The Autism Society of Hawaii is committed to educating service providers and the community about autism spectrum disorders, as well as advocating for and supporting individuals with autism spectrum disorders and their families.

**Community Children’s Councils (CCCs)** are a partnership of parents, school personnel, private providers and other community members who are concerned with the delivery of services and support to special needs children and families in the local community. CCCs were created in the Felix Implementation Plan as one of the key partnerships to develop a full array of services for special needs children and their families. There are 17 CCCs throughout the state, each co-chaired by a volunteer parent and a professional. CCC membership includes representation from public and private child serving agencies, private providers, and community members such as recreational services, businesses, churches and others.

**Faith Action for Community Equity (FACE)**, a Gamaliel Foundation affiliate, is a faith-based grassroots organization in Hawaii founded in 1996. FACE grew out of a sponsoring committee established in the mid-1990s with the assistance of the Center for Community Change. In November 2008 FACE became a statewide organization when our Maui chapter was founded. FACE currently has a membership base of 27 institutions on Oahu, 24 on Maui, and one statewide institution. Combined on both islands, we are made up of 38 churches, a Buddhist temple, two Jewish congregations, ten community groups and non-profit organizations, and one labor union. FACE’s membership reflects the cultural and socio-economic diversity of our community.

**The Hawaii Athletic League of Scholars (HALOS)** is a youth athletic program that has successfully utilized tightly aligned interests and motivational factors to improve player academic performance and parent engagement, resulting in superior academic performance by participants, as well as a very high percentage of participants going on to attend college.

**Hawaii Education Matters (HEM)** is a private nonprofit, non-partisan parent group. HEM’s mission is to partner with the HIDOE and other community groups already working for change. HEM was started by a group of parents in response to the 2009 school furloughs. They believe everyone has to change the way they think about education. That it’s no longer a job for teachers alone, but rather the responsibility of all who care about the future of Hawaii’s children.

**Hawaii State Parent Teacher Student Association**: The Hawaii Congress of Parents, Teachers, and Students, also known as the Hawaii State PTSA, is a non-profit organization made up of volunteers dedicated to improving the lives of Hawaii’s keiki. Chartered in 1926, the Hawaii State PTSA is Hawaii’s oldest and largest child advocacy

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organization in Hawaii. They are a state charter of the National PTA, made up of local units throughout the State of Hawaii. Their goal is to improve the lives of children in Hawaii. The Hawaii State PTSA prides itself on being a powerful voice for children, a relevant resource for parents, and a strong advocate for public education.

**Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC)** has a mission to guide and assist the HIDOE in fulfilling its responsibility to meet the individual needs of children with disabilities in accordance with state and federal laws. The functions of the Council are: to advise the HIDOE of unmet needs and any other issues or concerns in the education of students with disabilities, to comment publicly on the rules or regulations proposed for issuance by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities, to advise the HIDOE in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the U.S. Department of Education and developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in the Federal monitoring reports. SEAC also advises the HIDOE in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities and monitors the implementation of activities and timetable pursuant to consent decrees or court orders regarding the education of children with disabilities.

**Hui for Excellence In Education (HE’E):** The HE’E Coalition promotes a child-centered and strength-based public education system in which families, communities and schools are valued and empowered to help every student succeed. HE’E works to bring diverse stakeholders together to harness collective energy, share resources, and identify opportunities for progressive action in education. Over 30 organizations, including members of community organizations, parent groups, HIDOE leaders, organized labor and policy makers, have participated in the strategic planning of the coalition.

**The Institute for Native Pacific Education (INPEACE)** has provided parent and family engagement programs in native Hawaiian communities for over 17 years. The concept of ohana (family) is at the core of their strategies, included in their long-term vision and program development. They understand that in order to build community capacity, the family must be strengthened.

**The Learning Coalition (TLC)** is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization with a single mission – to improve the quality of Hawaii’s public educational system by: encouraging the growth of successful ideas and small-scale initiatives already at work within Hawaii’s schools so their benefits can be enjoyed on a broader scale throughout the system, and actively informing the community and its citizen-voters about the importance of casting educated votes to select members of the BOE, the public school system’s policy-making body.

**Parents and Children Together’s (PACT) Family Centers** have had great success in building parent/family engagement, especially gearing their efforts on the educationally lowest performing students within the DOE – the Chuukese and Marshallese communities. This has been done by not trying to force change within the communities, but rather by discovering the uniquely successful students and their families hidden within the poor statistical outcomes, and growing the behaviors that are making them
successful against the odds.

Parents for Public School Hawaii (PPSHI): In the spirit of ohana, we are all parents to the children of Hawaii. The mission of PPS Hawaii is to engage parents, students, and community members across the State in supporting enriched and quality public education through (1) effective communication between families, community, and schools, (2) greater awareness of educational policies and practices, (3) community involvement in education and decision making that promotes school support, improvement, and student achievement, and (4) accurate media representation of public education.

Special Parent Information Network (SPIN) is a parent to parent organization in Hawaii that provides information, support and referral to parents of children and young adults with disabilities and the professionals who serve them. SPIN tries to make the journey of parenting a child with disabilities a little less puzzling by keeping families linked to important information. SPIN is sponsored by the Disability and Communication Access Board and the Department of Education.
References


