



Parent Engagement Program PIC 101 Training Minutes September 8, 2010

I. Welcome

Michelle Tarbuton, Parent Engagement Program Manager opened the meeting by welcoming all in attendance and introducing the Department of Education staff, Brenda Williams, Education Program Specialist and Lakeita Servance, Parent Engagement Specialist. Dr. Barbara Lunsford, Associate Superintendent for Education Support, gave a warm welcome to the new PIC's and provided an overview of the support the state offers for parent engagement.

II. Parent to PIC Spotlight

Tara Terell, District PIC from Lanier County Schools, talked about her journey from a parent to becoming a Parent Involvement Coordinator (PIC). She spoke about how as a parent she was chosen to serve on the 2010 State Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council and that she did not realize the importance of the role was until people from her county started congratulating her and an announcement was posted in the local newspaper. She has always been an involved and dedicated parent, but did not know how big of a difference she could make. After her time on the Parent Advisory Council she was so motivated to see change that she approached her school system about being a Parent Involvement Coordinator and they allowed her to take on this role. She has had the opportunity to develop her first parent newsletter which is going to be distributed district-wide. She has also developed a program called F.A.C.E.S (Families and Communities Empowering Students) which is highlighted on bulletin boards at each school displaying an array of pictures of students, families, community members, businesses, and churches. The bulletin boards will be used solely to recognize all the families and communities that work together to empower the students of Lanier County. She shared a PowerPoint presentation with the group that provided an overview of the journey, new programs she is implementing, and encouraged the new PIC's to stay positive throughout their career.

III. Title I Parent Involvement Policy and Compliance

Brenda Williams, Education Program Specialist, completed the compliance segment and started by defining Title I. Title I is designed to help disadvantaged children

meet high academic standards by providing supplementary educational/instructional services. She provided an overview of the compliance requirements as required under Parent Involvement, Section 1118. The review entailed parent policies/plans, a review of compacts and Title I as it relates to parents' right to know, parent communication and the annual Title I meeting. Information on highly-qualified teachers (HQ), Supplemental Education Services (SES), and public school choice was also mentioned. She placed an emphasis on parents as leaders, parent stakeholders, and parent and community involvement. She also spoke about the difference between Title I School-Wide vs. TA (Targeted –Assistance) schools. Monitoring documents were also discussed and she ended by reviewing what the law requires in parent involvement policies. For more details about her presentation, please refer to the corresponding PowerPoint and handouts. Brenda Williams can be contacted for compliance questions at brwilliams@doe.k12.ga.us or 404-463-1956.

IV. Lunch

Attendees were asked to identify a barrier that they've encountered as a new Parent Involvement Coordinator and write it down on the brown paper bag that was in the back of their folder. These were collected and used later for an exercise called "Breaking Down Barriers."

V. PIC Spotlight

Regina Bacon and Grace Davis, District PICs from Catoosa County shared their perspectives as veteran PICS as well as highlighted some of the wonderful things they are doing in their county with family engagement. Grace Davis talked about the importance of using parent –friendly language in school letters and flyers so that all parents can understand the request or message you are sending. She also mentioned that a number of workshops are provided to parents in their area. She mentioned the struggles they had earlier on, but how the workshops have grown and since then and they are pleased that more parents are actively engaged and supporting the workshops. She also talked about ways the PIC's can take a personal interest in the families they serve. If they notice that their child's shoes are worn or that the family's home is for sale, maybe they can offer some supportive services to these families. Finally, she passed around a compliance calendar for parent involvement that they have shared with each of their school principals to ensure they are meeting the parent involvement requirements. Regina Bacon shared an engagement story about one school that was able to build up the parent capacity and increase student achievement overtime. She mentioned that in 1990-1991, there was a small school with approximately 200 students. It was the most impoverished school in the county and the students were not performing well. One day a teacher said she wanted to make a change. They started having meetings and inviting parents to attend. There were barriers to getting parents involved because many of the parents had bad school experiences and/or low literacy levels. After much persistence, people started coming, the school gradually improved and students were making gains. Unfortunately, the school closed and merged with another school; however, that did

not take away what had been achieved. She shared her story to show the importance of the PIC's work and the difference that each of can make each day.

VI. Parent Engagement Sanity and Strategies

Michelle Tarbutton opened this segment by stating that there will be challenges as new PICs, and one of the main challenges is being able to effectively measure parent engagement. She introduced the 360-Degrees of Family Engagement component and explained that this is a new technique that's being used to effectively track and measure parent and family engagement. She reviewed the strategic goals set for the state and identified that parent engagement falls under Goal 1. This goal is to increase high school graduation rate, decrease drop-out rate, and increase post-secondary enrollment rate. Everyone was placed in groups according to the number on the front of their folder, and then told to discuss the barrier they identified prior to lunch with other group members. Once opened up for discussion, some of these barriers included:

- Parent perception
- Lack of parent leadership
- Time/scheduling conflicts with community activities
- Communicating with parents
- Getting parents there
- Communicating with teachers
- Parents fear school
- Negative staff impression of parents
- Lack of resources
- Lack of parent and school accountability

Some of the solutions they gathered for these barriers are:

- Making positive phone calls and sending post cards home
- Make sure you greet everyone
- Have Parent to Parent Mentors
- Combine two or three events in one night
- Add a chorus performance to the end of a meeting or workshop
- Be involved with SST meetings
- Get students excited so they can tell their parents about school events
- Provide a neighborhood tour for faculty
- Utilize surveys in "Beyond the Bake Sale"

Michelle commended all for their valuable input and explained that these techniques are going to help them effectively break down those barriers as we continued to work throughout the day. She highlighted the fact that 360-Degrees of Family Engagement was developed by her, Patti Solomon, Family Engagement Specialist at the Georgia Department of Education for Special Education and Lori Smith, School Transition

Coordinator at Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning in an effort to effectively wrap home, school, and community initiatives from Pre-K to Post Secondary. The Title I PICs were also encouraged to work closely with their Special Education Parent Mentors and Pre-K School Transition Coaches to ensure that there is a seamless plan. If the district or school does not have these positions they were encouraged to reach out to another staff person who serves in that capacity. Wrae Croom talked about the transition and improvements that Gwinnett County has made since they have employed the 360-Series. She explained that there is no extra money being spent to employ it, great things are happening with engagement, and it's allowing parents to get more comfortable with the school.

As the work of a PIC is not always easy To help the new PICs with this year, Michelle mentioned that each new PIC had been assigned to a mentor who will be available to help them solve parent engagement issues and serve as a contact for learning new strategies they can implement. She also referred to the regional map in their folder and explained that the state regional meetings are held within the five regions identified. A registration form for the Fall PIC meeting was provided for their region and they were encouraged to attend if possible. Michelle continued with the presentation introducing the cross walk for parent programs which consisted of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the PTA National Standards for Family – School Partnership standards, and the Strengthening Families Protective Factors. When used together, all three provide a helpful picture of parent and family engagement. Each group was then asked to think about family engagement and explain what that means to them, how can they promote engagement, what are some successful strategies for family engagement, how can they build capacity for educators and staff, how can they create a responsive school culture, how can they maintain respect and dignity for families, how can they create a welcoming environment and how can they get the community involved. There was not enough time for everyone to report back, but some of the responses were:

- Family engagement means parents putting in time and work in the school and with the child at home.
- Family engagement at the school means partnership between home and school to build awareness on both ends.
- Family engagement to the family means feeling important, valued, your opinion counts and you have a right to be involved.
- The needs of families can be met through surveys, drop box, parent advisory meetings, talking with teachers, and recruiting volunteers.
- Activities that could create a culture that supports family engagement are family fun nights, having parents for lunch, and conducting fast guided conversations between parents and children.
- Cultural respect and dignity for families can be promoted by providing a welcoming environment, inviting parents to share their values with teachers so they can better understand, offer Ruby Payne training for staff about poverty, and provide tips on how parents/guardians can be involved at home.

Michelle commended the groups for their input and directed their attention to the strategy sheet that was provided in their folders. There were 25 strategies provided to assist with breaking down the barriers they will encounter as they embark on their new roles. She then continued with the 360-Overview that will help the PICs develop a solid parent engagement plan linked to student achievement outcomes. The key components of a plan are the goal, objective, strategy, initiative, and outcome. In beginning the plan, the first step in creating the goal. The goal should be SMART meaning Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound. However, the good news is the goal has already been developed as the state goal is to increase the high school graduation rate, decrease the high school dropout rate, and increase the post secondary enrollment rate. She stated that the key risk factors predictive of school dropout are behavior problems coupled with academic difficulties, repeated use of exclusionary discipline practices, high absenteeism, and retention.

She then addressed the next step which was developing the objective. The objective is defined as a sub goal that identifies a short-term, measurable step within a designated period of time that is moving toward achieving a long-term goal. In this case the state has already developed this too as the state objective is to increase student achievement by engaging and empowering parents to be actively involved in their children's education across all grade levels because family disengagement is one of the multiple risk factors of dropout.

She then moved to strategies which are the broad plans of action that will aid in achieving a particular goal. The state has developed three main strategies that schools and systems are asked to use. They are: 1) Embed sustainable family, school, and community engagement initiatives in schools improvement work to increase student achievement, 2) Increase communication between home, school and community through training and collaborative activities, and 3) Build capacity and leadership by activating the National Standards for Family – School Partnerships. In addition, schools and districts were encouraged to add an additional local strategy if they would like.

The initiative and action plans were then discussed as the actual work being done to implement the strategies. An initiative is a program, project, or process that assists in implementing a particular strategy while the action plan is your list of activities that moves the team along to carry out the designated initiative. By looking at current activities, teams can develop an overall continual program, project or process that can lead the work in implementing a particular strategy or strategies to reach the goal. Before planning how to meet the initiative mapping was discussed as a tool to identify the nontraditional collaboration that is waiting for your students. It's important to reach beyond the school and link up with community partners. It's also important not to let roadblocks such as board policy, money, training availability, missing skills, personalities, and relationships get in the way of your success with this program.

Finally, the most important and hardest part of the planning process was discussed: outcomes. An Outcome is a measure that examines the effectiveness of a specific initiative and to reach the state goal, we must measure family engagement in

achievement. Traditional ways that schools and school districts have measured outcomes is by calculating sign-in sheets, surveys, evaluations, activity reports, newsletters, events, personal contact and parent conferences. However, these numbers while important do not really provide information on whether parent engagement is a strong link to student achievement. Therefore, we must target our outcomes on issues of student achievement such as attendance, discipline reports, on-time promotion, student grades, graduation, and student test scores. She then provided examples of what entire plans would look like from the state goal to the outcomes focusing particularly on the activities for action plans and the outcomes measured. Samples of quantitative and qualitative data and how they support outcomes were also discussed. Please refer to the PowerPoint for examples of these. She then encouraged all to start by building relationships, evaluating their community, developing a plan with reasonable expectations, collaborating, acquiring teacher and administrator buy-in, sharing updates and knowledge with their school/district staff, and linking parent engagement efforts to student achievement.

After explaining in detail how the 360-Degrees Plan will work to help them focus their efforts this year, Michelle referred attendees to the handout, and encouraged them to listen to all of the four recorder webinars in the series as listed on the 360-Handout. In conclusion, Michelle broke down the brick wall that was built with the barriers they identified earlier on the brown paper bags to signify that today is just a start but overtime the barriers will begin to break. The PIC's understood the message in that they too can break down the barriers they will encounter with parent and family engagement.

VII. Closing

Michelle closed the meeting by commending the new Parent Involvement Coordinators for taking on this very important role and reminded them to register for the Fall 2010 Regional PIC meeting. Certificates were distributed to all in attendance for this training. PICs were also encouraged to contact the Department or their assigned mentor at any time with questions. Michelle can be reached at mtarbutton@doe.k12.ga.us or at (404) 232-1148 and Lakeita can be reached at lservance@doe.k12.ga.us or at (404) 656-2633. Meeting adjourned.