

# Introduction

In many schools, parents are welcomed as equal partners in their child's education. Educators at such institutions believe that working in concert with families to provide quality education to students is a necessity, not an option. The partnerships of school and home range from having parents check their children's homework to actively involving parents as key decision makers in the governance of the schools and the district. Four decades of research on student achievement validates the importance of involving parents as educational partners. Research clearly shows that parents directly impact their children's academic achievement through the discussions they have with, and the expectations they set for their children.

Extensive research has found that the level of parent involvement is directly related to the practices schools and teachers have set in place and does not depend on race, ethnicity, size of the family, marital status, or the education of the parents. Clearly, schools need to proactively develop both policies and practices to ensure that parents are involved in educating their children both at home and at school.

It is important to note, however, that even if the opportunity is not offered, many parents will seek the right to be meaningfully involved. Across both the United States and Canada, the role of the parent in the education system has been legitimized by major reforms, which in turn have defined parents' rights. Specifically, recent legislation in many jurisdictions has given parents an increased voice in the governance of the school system at both the school and district levels, established an appeal process for the redress of parent and student grievances, and

provided access to records for parents. Increasingly, parents see themselves as active participants in education and are exercising their rights to be involved at every level.

While the relationship between parents and schools may pose new challenges to all involved, the benefits of parent involvement have been proven. They include enhanced student self-esteem, increased academic achievement, and improved communication. Schools strengthen what they do by working collaboratively with parents.

*201 Ways to Involve Parents: Practical Strategies for Partnering With Families* is a hands-on guide for those who recognize the need and benefit of involving parents. It is presented in four parts.

**Part 1: *Making It Happen*** focuses on ways to convey that by meaningfully involving parents, student learning is strengthened, parents become advocates instead of adversaries, and all partners have a sense of ownership of public education. It provides ideas on how to work with both the students and their families to involve each in the life of their school.

**Part 2: *Creating the Climate*** contains well-thought-out and practical methods of promoting and supporting communication and change. This section frames a plan for ensuring that the school is inviting to the public. Readers are encouraged to laud their school's successes and programs by marketing education to the community it serves.

**Part 3: *Sustaining the Involvement*** discusses how to effectively engage parents and the business community in shared ownership of the educational system. Ideas to enrich the quality of school life through encouraging, expecting, and supporting parent and business involvement are offered. Underlying these ideas is the belief that providing education to students is a shared responsibility and all partners must have a role in its delivery.

**Part 4: *Venturing Beyond the Bake Sale*** provides ample evidence that it is imperative that schools allow for meaningful

parent involvement beyond their accepted and traditional role as fundraisers. Strategies for bringing about shared governance at the school and district levels are offered, and the concept of shared ownership of educating children is reinforced.

Each part provides research related to the particular topic being addressed. This introduction reinforces the indisputable case for a partnership with parents. Several “Ideas to Use” are offered for each topic and include practical methods to involve families in the education of their children.

The third edition of *201 Ways to Involve Parents: Practical Strategies for Partnering With Families* has been reorganized for greater clarity and increased usability. It presents expanded and updated references to the research base that support the strategies. In addition, many strategies have been revised or expanded, and numerous suggestions for incorporating technology have been included. Twenty-six new strategies have been included in various sections of the book.

Many of the new ideas relate to technology. It is abundantly clear that we live in a digital society, and as such technology is an integral part of our education system that must be embedded and embraced. However, to simply call technology a tool to enhance communication and involvement with parents and the school community is to shortchange its impact on education. The digital opportunities are extensive and must be treated as part of all teaching and learning strategies, as they move us even further into a global community.

Since this book was first published, what is most gratifying is the continued depth of the research and practice that is pervasive throughout both Canada and the United States. The necessity for all of us to be partners in our children’s learning has taken on greater dimensions, and this partnership will continue to enrich education.

I hope you find these strategies enhance your relationships within the school community.