

2015



Funding for Parent Engagement in Illinois: a Critical Component for School Success



**PARENT
MENTOR
PROGRAM**



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Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellowship

Logan Square Neighborhood Association

2/1/2015

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By Emily Duma

INTRODUCTION

Across all sectors of society, parent engagement is recognized as a critical component of school success. Teachers, principals, researchers, foundations, federal, state and local governments and community organizations point to over 50 years of steadily accumulating evidence and lived experience that shows that when families are engaged, children have stronger cognitive, social, and emotional development from birth through adolescence. In addition to these benefits seen at school, family engagement at its best can lead to increased parental success, leadership development, and stronger communities. **Although a clear case has been made for the need for effective, meaningful parent engagement, funding has been at best patchworked and inconsistent, and at worst, nonexistent.** The State of Illinois has made a unique investment in parent engagement through funding the nationally-recognized Illinois Statewide Parent Mentor Initiative. **However, to meet the needs of Illinois students and build Illinois' status as an innovator in this field, there are a number of steps that can and should be taken, including maintaining funding for this important program, developing long term investment strategies, and continuing to develop advisory structures for accountability and innovation.**

This paper begins by developing a shared definition of effective parent engagement, then details current sources of funding, reflects on Illinois' current commitment to parent engagement, explores other states' focuses, and concludes with a series of recommendations of how the state of Illinois can build on its record as a national leader in the field of parent engagement.

DEFINITION OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Effective parent engagement is deliberate, focused and intentional. It develops shared responsibility for the student's learning process between school, parent and student. In this process, it also builds capacity for parents and schools while supporting student success.

In order to discuss parent engagement, we must first define *effective* parent engagement. Definitions of meaningful parent engagement drawn from federal, state, community and research frameworks are compiled in Figure A below.



Parent Engagement

Everyone and their mother has a definition - what IS parent engagement?



United States Department of Education

Parent Engagement is the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring—

- that parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning;
- that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school;
- that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child.

Illinois State Board of Education

Meaningful family engagement is based on the premise that parents, educators, and community members share responsibility for the academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral development of youth. Family engagement is fostered through a deliberate process that is embraced throughout the school. It empowers adults to jointly support student growth, addresses any barriers to learning, and ensures college and career readiness. Foremost, effective family engagement systems, policies and practices are mindful of diverse school-communities that are rich in language, culture, and school experiences. They are responsive to student and family needs.

EquityMatters Report, Columbia University

Parent engagement is co-constructed, shared responsibility, because meaningful and effective involvement includes not just parents’ caregivers’ and teachers’ behaviors, practices, attitudes, and involvement with the institutions where children learn, but also these institutions’ expectations, outreach, partnerships, and interactions with families. Families, schools, and communities must together construct family involvement, actively taking part and sharing responsibility in building mutually respectful relationships and partnerships.

Parent Engagement Institute

- Real parent engagement means...
- Breaking down barriers between home and school.
 - Making schools centers of community, connected to the culture of the neighborhood
 - Building trust between parents and teachers
 - Offering a ladder of opportunity and opening doors for parents - especially women - into public life
 - Not only volunteering, but developing leaders to transform lives and schools

Figure A

Figure B1 – U.S. Department of Education’s Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships

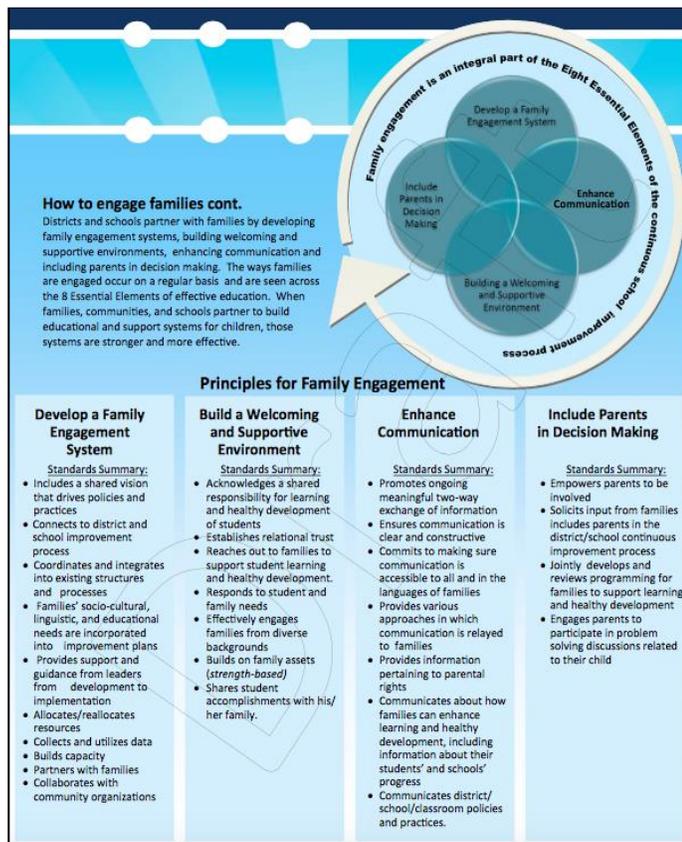
Both the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the U.S. Department of Education developed frameworks in 2013 and 2014 respectively, detailing their expectations for effective parent engagement. Images depicting these frameworks are included to the right in Figures B1 and B2. It is clear that parent engagement is increasingly a priority across several sectors of society.

Although each definition contains its own specifics, all point to the need for shared responsibility of the student’s learning process between school, parent and student. There needs to be deliberate focus and intention behind the engagement (it will not just happen on its own) and through this, increased capacity can be built for the parents and schools as well as the students.



Figure B2 –ISBE Principles for Family Engagement

Unfortunately, the parent engagement that currently exists in our schools often does not support this shared definition of effective parent engagement. As Soo Hong, author of *Cord of Three Strands: A New Approach to Parent Engagement in Schools*, writes, “As we place greater emphasis on academic success defined by increasing standardized test scores, schools focus singularly on the instructional practices inside classrooms that will produce the “right” results. If and when parents are consulted, it is often to educate them about the ways they can support a school’s agenda.”ⁱ She goes on to name the “greatest hits of parent engagement” which are widespread - the open house, parent teacher conferences, weekly newsletters - all of which, although important, do not



develop a two-way partnership between parent and school that builds the dual capacity central to the U.S. Department of Education Framework.

Developing and funding parent engagement initiatives that take into account the need for dual capacity building are critical.

In the report “Partners in Education” released in 2013 by the U.S. Department of Education and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, dual capacity building is defined as “developing capacity of both staff and families to engage in partnerships.” The report goes on to detail why a dual capacity model is critical. It points to the wrong assumption that underlies many parent engagement mandates: that educators and families charged with developing effective partnerships between home and school already possess the requisite skills, knowledge, confidence and belief systems to implement and sustain these important relationships. **“Principals and teachers receive little training for engaging families and report feeling under-prepared, despite valuing relationships with families. Parents, meanwhile—particularly low-income and limited-English parents—face multiple barriers to engagement, often lacking access to the social capital and understanding of the school system necessary to take effective action on behalf of their children. Without attention to training and capacity building, well-intentioned partnership efforts fall flat. Rather than promoting equal partnerships between parents and schools at a systemic level, these initiatives default to one-way communication and “random acts of engagement” such as poorly attended parent nights.”**ⁱⁱ

Another critical dimension of effective parent engagement is intentionality. In the definitions listed in Figure A, all mention some element of intentionality, whether it is shared decision making, deliberate process, co-construction or building trust. None of these things happen without focused attention. **School staff and parents have a wide variety of tasks demanding their attention - a convening force is necessary to bring people to the table.** A report released by the Chicago Appleseed Fund in 2007 on strategies for improving parent involvement in Illinois clearly states “Community groups, given their trustworthiness in the community and their keen understanding of community needs and challenges, are uniquely positioned to serve as a bridge between parents and schools as well as a resource for both training and advocacy.”ⁱⁱⁱ In this way, the unique strengths and challenges facing each community can be brought more fully into the work, and families and schools can work together to not only support students, but also develop as neighborhoods. Soo Hong writes, “community organizing focuses on the slow, patient and transformative work of relationship building. The building of relationships between teachers and parents, between district officials and organizers, and between different parents in a school can lead to greater trust and understanding and can pave the way for collaborative and collective action. Considering the broader benefits and opportunities from these relationships - a form of social capital - we can and should work intentionally to build relationships in schools.”^{iv}

In summary, although the need for effective parent engagement is clearly understood, the vast majority of engagement that currently exists does not meet the standards that have proven effective.

As funding for parent engagement is sustained and developed, a priority should be placed on developing and funding initiatives that are intentionally convened, based in community, and work to build capacity to move beyond the “greatest hits” to truly transformative engagement.

CURRENT SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Although Illinois has taken some positive steps in supporting effective parent engagements statewide, by and large funding has been inconsistent and inadequate. Parent engagement is named at many points in federal and state law, but is rarely backed with minimum funding requirements or meaningful allocations.

Funding for parent engagement exists at federal, state and local levels. The primary focus of this report is how Illinois as a state is investing in parent engagement, so this report will focus on state-level funding and federal block grant funding disbursed by the state. Although there are some positive examples of districts taking initiative around the state to support parent engagement, more research is needed to understand these models and ways they could be made replicable on a broad scale. Below is a breakdown of the significant funding provisions that currently affect public schools in Illinois.

FEDERAL FUNDING

Although parent engagement is mentioned and prioritized often in federal funding legislation, the only mandated federal funding for parent engagement in Illinois is \$9.3 million from Title I. \$8.835 million of this must go directly to schools to facilitate their parent engagement work. Although this seems like a significant amount of funding, with approximately 1,057,225 low income students in the State of Illinois, this equates to \$8.36 of Title I funding for parent engagement for each low income student.

Federal funding comes to Illinois in the form of block grants, to be disbursed by the state. As such, Illinois has some control over how these funds are allocated. However, there are certain requirements set in stone by federal policy. Although parent engagement is mentioned at several points in the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act^v (also known as the No Child Left Behind Act), the only section that has funding requirements for parent engagement is Title I, Section 1118. Title I provides funding to districts with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Specifically, in regards to parent engagement, it mandates:

Although the \$8.835 million of Title I funding for parent engagement seems significant, it equates to approximately \$8.36 for each low income student in Illinois

- Parent’s ability to participate in policy development at all levels
 - A district receiving Title I funds must develop a district-level parent involvement policy and as well as a school parent involvement policy for each Title I school. The policy must explain how the district and/or the school will involve parents in the development and implementation of the parent policies, included in plans for at least one annual meeting for Title 1 parents, offer a flexible number of meetings to review the policy, and the opportunity for parents to be involved in an ongoing manner in the planning, review and improvement of the Title 1 programs.
- Within these parent involvement policies must be a plan for giving parents “information and notices in a uniform and understandable format, and to the extent practicable, in a language that the parents can understand.”
- Each school must develop a school-parent compact that outlines the responsibilities of each party for improved student academic achievement. This compact will address, in particular:
 - The school’s plan to provide high quality curriculum and instruction in order to meet state academic standards
 - Ways that parents will be responsible for their child’s learning, including monitoring attendance, homework completion, volunteering in child’s classroom, and extracurricular time.
 - Parent-Teacher communication, specifically around parent teacher conferences, progress reports, and opportunities for parents to participate in the classroom.

In order to do all of this, for districts receiving more than \$500,000 annually in federal Title 1 funds, a mandatory 1% of all Title 1 funds received must be used specifically for parent engagement, and 95% of that 1% must be given directly to the schools.

Illinois received \$930 million in Title 1 funds from the federal government in 2015. This means \$9.3 million was required to go towards parent engagement, with \$8.835 million going directly towards schools. **The federal government should be commended for making this commitment to parent engagement, and mandating funding for this important work. However, often this funding is just the tip of the iceberg for what is needed for meaningful engagement in our schools.**

For example, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) expects to receive \$260.6 million in Title I funds in FY 2015. This means that \$2.6 million is required to go towards parent engagement, with a little under \$2.5 million going directly to schools. Approximately 85% of CPS schools qualify for Title I discretionary funding. There are 400,525 students in 522 CPS schools - 444 of these schools receive Title I funds. **Although the amount of funding each school receives is dependent on a number of factors, if the total grant were broken down evenly, each qualifying school would receive \$5,630.** Portions of this money must go to the development and ongoing review of the parent involvement policy, the annual meeting, and to the dispersal of information and notices to parents. In CPS, the remainder goes to Parental Advisory Committees, which are responsible for developing the opportunities for actual engagement and participation of parents in the school. **One can deduce that this funding, although useful, is likely not enough to create meaningful, dual capacity building engagement for parents.**^{vi}

Although parent engagement receives mention in many other parts of ESEA, there are no other minimum funding requirements for parent engagement, and it can be assumed that no significant funding is being utilized for this purpose. Illinois has been grappling with inadequate funding for education for many years, and as such, many services not made mandatory do not happen.

Other parts of the ESEA that emphasize parent engagement are:

- Title 1, Part C, the Migrant Education Program, which requires that schools involve parents in their child’s education, just as in Section 1118. There were 1,709 migrant children in Illinois in SY2011.^{vii}
- Title III, Section 3302(e) addresses parent involvement in regards to the participation of parents of English Language Learners (ELLs) in relation to language instruction programs and language acquisition. In particular, it mandates effective outreach and clear communication with parents. There were 193,609 ELL students in Illinois in SY 2011.
- Title IV, Part B provides funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which focus on academic enrichment designed to help students (particularly those in high-poverty areas or who attend low-performing schools) meet state and local academic standards. Centers provide additional services such as youth development activities, technology education programs, counseling programs, art, music, etc, as well as offerings to families of students specifically related to literacy or educational development. Grantees in Illinois are required when applying to “indicate how 21st CCLC programs will promote parent involvement, family literacy, and related educational development activities” and “describe the collaborative community efforts (e.g., partnering with social service agencies, colleges or universities) that will be employed to serve parents.” **However, according to ISBE’s own evaluation of the program, effective parent engagement was a challenge for many groups, with 86% of elementary, 84% of middle school and 91% of high school sub-grantees indicating poor parent involvement.**^{viii} There were 288 Community Learning Centers funded in Illinois in FY15.
- Title X (the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act) mandates that schools provide education and training to parents/guardians of homeless children. This training should include information about parents and students’ rights and about educational opportunities, and provide parents assistance in navigating the education system. It also requires that parents are provided meaningful ways to engage with their children’s education. There were 59,112 students experiencing homelessness in Illinois in SY13.
- Title VI, which provides funding for rural districts with limited resources, also allows funding to be used for parent involvement.

**It should be noted that the ESEA is up for reauthorization in 2015, and the language and funding behind each of these initiatives may change.

It makes sense that parent engagement is frequently mentioned as the federal government has made clear that effective parent engagement is critical for student/school success. However, **there are no funding requirements for parent engagement named in any of these sections.**

FEDERAL FUNDING

for parent engagement in Illinois

Although the federal government mentions parent engagement many times in federal legislation, it often is in name only. The only mandatory federal funding comes through Title 1 - all other times it is mentioned it is only advisory. Learn more about all federal legislation relating to parent engagement and get a sense of how these policies affect Illinois by reading below!

MANDATORY FEDERAL FUNDING FOR PARENT ENGAGEMENT

**\$930 million total
in IL, \$8.835
million to schools
directly for parent
engagement***

Title I Section 1118 - \$\$ for districts with high percentages of students from low income families

Mandates that 95% of 1% of funding must go to:
1) creating a district level parent involvement plan that parents can develop and provide input on 2) giving parents notice in a uniform and understandable format and 3) each school that receives funding must develop a student/parent compact.

NO MANDATORY FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Title I - Part C - Migrant Education Program

Requires that schools involve the parents of migrant children in their education. No mandatory funding for parent engagement.

There were 1,709 migrant children age 3-21 in IL between 2011-2012*

NO MANDATORY FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

There were 193,609 ELL students in Illinois in SY2011*

Title III, Section 3302(e) - English Language Learners

Addresses parent involvement around participation of parents of English Language Learners in regards to language instruction programs and language acquisition. Mandates effective outreach and clear communication. Grantees can spend up to 5% of funding on parent engagement, no minimum spending required.

NO MANDATORY FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

ISBE funded 288 Community Learning Centers in FY15*

Title IV, Part B - 21st Century Learning Centers

Focuses on academic enrichment for students in high poverty areas or low performing schools. Provides additional services such as youth development, technology education programs, counseling programs, music, art, etc, as well as offerings to families. Language in Title IV specifically states that funding can go to programs that "promote parental involvement and family literacy" but does not mandate any particular funding requirement.

NO MANDATORY FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Title VI - Funding for Rural Districts with limited resources

Title VI, which provides funding for rural districts with limited resources, also names parent involvement as a potential use of funding. Again, it is only recommended - no mandatory funding for parent engagement.



NO MANDATORY FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

There were 59,112 students experiencing homelessness in Illinois in SY 13**

Title X (McKinney-Vento Homeless Act)

Mandates that schools provide education and training to parents/guardians of homeless children. This training should include information about their rights, about educational opportunities, and also provide parents assistance in navigating the education system. Additionally, it requires that parents are provided meaningful ways to engage with their children's education. No mandatory funding for parent engagement.

**Info from Illinois State Board of Education

**Info from Chicago Coalition for the Homeless



Illinois has been grappling with inadequate funding for education for many years, and as such, many services not made mandatory do not happen. For example, although the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act clearly states the importance of parent engagement in the academic success of students experiencing homelessness, the \$5 million that Illinois receives every year in Title X funding only allows for \$84 of all services per homeless student (59,112 students statewide.) Although in one year (2009) the state allocated additional funding for education of homeless students, this funding is now at \$0. A report by the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless demonstrates that more than half of homeless students are not getting the services they require. Title X mandates that school districts not only remove all barriers to enrollment, attendance and success, they also must offer “free breakfast and lunch, basic waivers of all school fees, full participation in all school activities, and transportation assistance.”^{ix} It is clear that despite the best intentions, current levels of funding do not create opportunities for intentional work in parent engagement.

Another form of federal funding for parent engagement comes from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act^x. In Illinois, this funding is used to provide training for parents “in accordance with federal grant requirements” although there is no minimum spending requirement. Additionally, “annually-renewable grants will also be provided to each of the two federally-funded Illinois Parent Training and Information Centers.”

Additionally, in 2009, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Investing in Innovation Fund was created (and has since been sustained through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010). This federal grant is designed to fund projects that are providing innovative solutions to common education challenges. At certain points, this has included an emphasis on programs supporting meaningful parent engagement.^{xi}

STATE FUNDING

The only significant investment the State of Illinois makes in meaningful parent engagement is the Statewide Parent Mentor Initiative. Beyond that, only a few state-level programs acknowledge parent engagement, and most that do are directed at highly specific subsets of the student population. In a search for budget line items that address parent engagement, only two arise - the Autism Program of Illinois^{xii} specifically names the importance of engaging the families of children with autism, and the Philip Rock Center and School^{xiii}⁶ for students who are deaf-blind provides training to family of their students.

Parent Mentor Program

The only specific allocation that the State of Illinois makes towards parent engagement is the \$1.5 million that goes to the Parent Mentor Program. This nationally recognized parent engagement model builds deep and lasting relationships between students, teachers and parents. Run by the Parent Engagement Institute (comprised of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association and the Southwest Organizing Project, who have 31 years combined experience administering the

program), the Parent Mentor Program, via state, local, and private funding, operates in 70 schools across the state of Illinois and 6 states nationwide. Although the program is recognized and commended nationally, Illinois is the only state in the country making this unique investment in implementing the program statewide.

The Parent Engagement Institute (PEI) uses the state grant to fund Parent Mentor Programs through 16 community organizations, and to train and mentor those groups to replicate the program with best practices. Each organization then partners with their neighborhood schools to recruit 8-20 parents per school to assist teachers two hours every day. Before entering the classroom, parent mentors participate in a weeklong leadership training. Parents are then assigned to a classroom (not their own child's) where they are mentored by a teacher and work one-on-one in small groups with children. After reaching 100 volunteer hours, parent mentors receive a stipend. Since it began in 1995, the program has trained over 1300 parents to work in classrooms with teachers to support student learning.

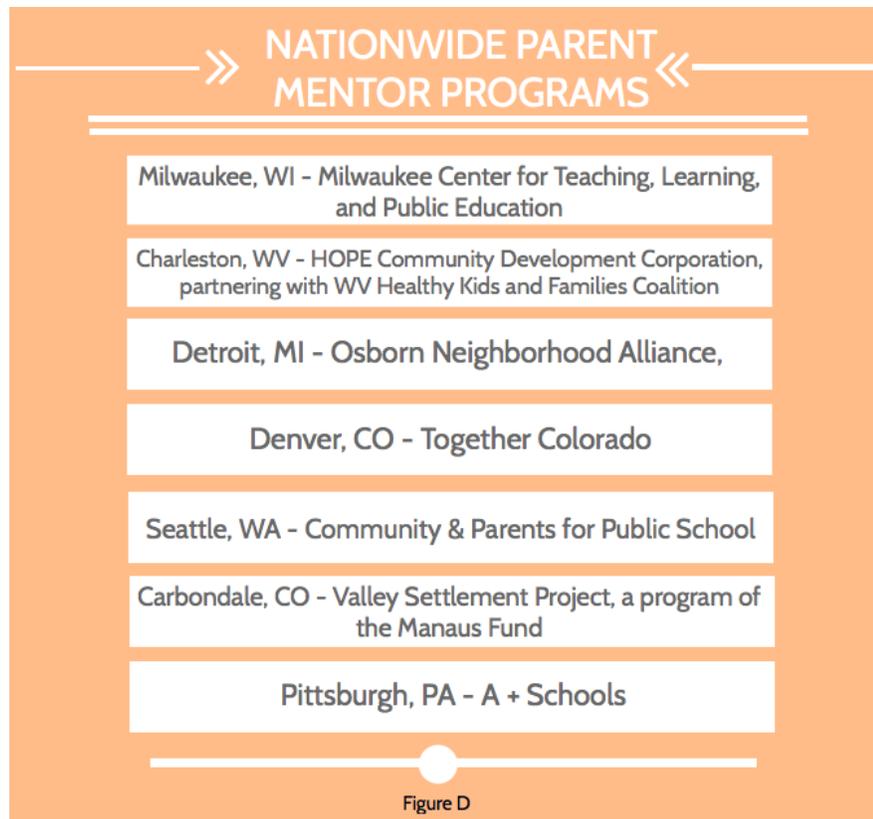
Featured in over 15 publications, on national television and profiled in 3 books, the program has been recognized over and over again for its effectiveness. Although the model is relatively simple, the benefits are deep and broad based. They include:

- 1) Building support for students in early grades, as parent mentors specifically address the needs of students in grades pre-K - 3 who need extra support.
- 2) Providing much needed support for teachers, who have an extra set of eyes, ears and hands in the classroom. Additionally, the program helps the teachers to better connect to the culture of the community.
- 3) Offering intensive training to parents who then have an insider understanding of the school system and strengthening skills they need to support their children throughout school. This operates as a ripple effect - parent mentors become community resources and share these skills with broader family and neighbors. The program can also offer a pathway to teaching and other careers.
- 4) Building strong relationships for school success between parents, teachers and administrators. These relationships can often form a platform for collaboration to improve schools.
- 5) Developing strong families and communities, as the program provides an opportunity for schools to draw on the strengths of families who otherwise might see the school as unfriendly. Schools become vibrant center of community as families begin to use the school as a place to access adult education and multiple services

As word has spread organizations in other parts of the country have asked the Parent Engagement Institute for training to replicate the program. Currently, the communities listed in Figure D are using the Parent Mentor Program to strengthen their schools and develop parent leadership.

The Parent Mentor Program clearly meets all the definitions above of effective parent engagement. It provides opportunities for regular, two-way, meaningful

communication between parents and schools, actively involves parents in the working and development of their schools, jointly supports student growth and addresses barriers to learning (both in the classroom and at home). Its focus on dual capacity building weaves a network that empowers staff, parents and communities to advocate for the development of our schools, and with sub-grants given to community organizations, the state grant supports the “convening force” named above that research has shown to be key to deeper engagement. By supporting the program for the past 3 years, Illinois has demonstrated its leadership in the field of parent engagement nation-wide.



By developing pathways for regular two-way communication between parents and teachers, involving parents in the day-to-day working of their school, addressing barriers to student learning and building a network of support between staff, parents and communities for continued school development, the Parent Mentor Program is a powerful example of effective parent engagement.

In order to maintain this standing, it is imperative that Illinois continue to fund the Parent Mentor Program. Maintaining current levels of funding in FY16 is essential for continued effectiveness of the project.

CASE STUDIES

As Illinois continues to develop its support for effective parent engagement, it is useful to look at models from other states to see what can be learned. Although no state has yet funded comprehensive, effective parent engagement for all students, several have been taking initiative around this key issue, and the strategies utilized by a few are described in detail below.

CONNECTICUT

The State of Connecticut offers a variety of programs focused on parent engagement statewide. Programs include:

- 1) **The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PTLI)**
This 20-week training uses an asset-based community development and social policy change framework to help parents become the leaders for their children and families, develop skills, become more engaged in education process and policy decisions and promote child academic development.
- 2) **Parents Supporting Educational Excellence (Parents SEE)**
Parents SEE is a 12 week course that provides family members strategies for working with other parents, educators, and community leaders to examine education policies and practices. The goal of the course is to teach parents how to partner with their schools to engage civic leaders around education issues, to better advocate for improved schools across the state.
- 3) **The Parent Trust Fund**
The Parent Trust Fund was established by the Connecticut General Assembly in 2001. A community foundation seeded the trust with \$250,000, and since, other foundations as well as the state have continued to contribute. The State Department of Education administers the fund, which has supported the PLTI, PSEE, People Empowering People Program through the University of Connecticut, parent leadership training in 19 communities, AFCAMP Parent Leadership Training, and ASPIRA Parents for Excellence.^{xiv}
- 4) **Parent Universities**
Parent Universities are free learning experiences where parents can gain and share information through twice annual day long conferences as well as regular workshops and engagement opportunities. This opportunity to network and learn about resources and information helps parents navigate the education process and community opportunities.
- 5) **Two Generational Workgroup**
The Two-Generational Policy Workgroup was created by the 2014 budget of Connecticut to “establish a two-generational school readiness plan to promote long-term learning and economic success for low-income families by addressing the intergenerational barrier to school readiness and workforce readiness through high-quality preschool, intensified workforce training and targeted education, coupled with related support services.”

COLORADO

In 2009, the Colorado Legislature established the State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE). The council “reviews best practices and recommends to policy makers educators strategies to increase parent involvement in public education, thereby helping improve the quality of public education and raise the level of students’ academic achievement throughout the state.”^{xv} SACPIE’s members include parents, representatives from school and district accountability committees, equity and education focused nonprofit organizations, statewide organizations serving parents, teachers, and school counselors; and representatives from the Colorado Department of Education. In 2013, the role of SACPIE was expanded to develop new training on strategies for increasing parent engagement and using best practices for school personnel and accountability committees. In addition, the council prepares an annual report on parent engagement data collected from school districts in Colorado.

Although Illinois has an education advisory council in P-20, parent engagement is just one of its many focuses. SACPIE has a sole focus on parent engagement, and has been charged with producing a number of tangible outcomes for the State of Colorado, including:

- Yearly Annual Reports
- The creation of *Family and School Partnership in Education Month* in Oct, 2014
- The call for submission and compilation of “Promising Partnership Practices” from classrooms, schools, and districts for students in K-post-secondary education.
- Family Engagement Promising Practices Trainings now being offered for free to all interested participants wanting to learn more strategies to implement family partnership initiatives for student successes (these trainings are offered in person, and materials are also made available online.)

WASHINGTON

In Washington State, similar to Illinois, there is interplay between public and private funding for parent engagement. In recent years, a number of independent organizations have received funding from private foundations to implement and advocate for family engagement programming, including the Washington State Community and Family Engagement Trust^{xvi}, OneAmerica^{xvii} (an immigrant justice advocacy organization), and the Roadmap Project^{xviii} (a civic initiative focused on improving education results in low income communities around Seattle). Funded by foundations such as the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation^{xix}. Although most of these grants are in the early stages, there is the possibility that new programming and ideas may emerge from this concentration of private dollars.

On a state level, Washington has also been pushing forward new policy. In 2013, the Washington State Board of Education approved \$12 million for parent engagement coordinators at every school, and in the governor’s proposed budget for the 2015-2017 cycle, this amount is being increased to \$20 million. Parent engagement is also featured prominently in Washington’s Initiative 1351, which

passed in November, 2014. Based on 2010 Quality Education Council (QEC) recommendations, this bill is designed to reduce class sizes, and is designed to help close the achievement gap. This initiative contains large funding increases for parent involvement coordinators as well, and mandates at least one parent involvement coordinator in each elementary, middle and high school by 2019.^{xx} A combination of public and private funding can help create a network of effective parent engagement programs statewide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Illinois has established itself as a leader in parent engagement. However, an analysis of what truly effective parent engagement means, combined with an overview of what currently exist in Illinois shows us that there is still room to grow. A list of recommendations have been compiled below that show clear ways that Illinois can continue to develop strong parent engagement across the state.

- 1) At minimum, it is critical that the Parent Mentor Program is again reauthorized at \$1.5 million in FY16. This funding should be steadily increased to meet the needs of community organizations across the state who would like to utilize the program.
- 2) Consider vehicles for multi-year funding for effective parent engagement programming. The model of the Parent Trust Fund, which combines private and public funding in a multi-year commitment to parent engagement programming warrants further research.
- 3) Expand the role currently held by the P-20 Council's Family and Youth Engagement Committee to have more required, tangible outputs that support parent engagement statewide.

CONCLUSION

Through its strong support of the innovative Parent Mentor Program, Illinois has made a bold commitment to effective parent engagement that builds capacity for students, parents, schools and communities. However, in order to truly build the parent network and provide support that will promote the academic and community outcomes desired, Illinois needs to continue to develop and expand its commitment to meaningful family engagement. By maintaining funding for the Parent Mentor Program and following other recommendations above, Illinois can continue to demonstrate its commitment to this key element of school success.

NOTES

- ⁱ This report can be accessed at <http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/reframing-family-involvement-in-education-supporting-families-to-support-educational-equity>
- ⁱⁱ This report can be accessed at <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ This report can be accessed at http://chicagoappleseed.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/improving_parental_involvement1.pdf
- ^{iv} Cord of three strands, page 21.
- ^v More about the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (No Child Left Behind) can be found on the US Department of Education's website, with the full law detailed here - <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>
- ^{vi} More information on CPS enrollment and school numbers can be found at http://cps.edu/About_CPS/At-a-glance/Pages/Stats_and_facts.aspx, and more information on the CPS FY15 budget can be found at <http://cps.edu/fy15budget/Pages/schoolsandnetworks.aspx>
- ^{vii} Data from SY2011 was the most recent data available
- ^{viii} See more of the Illinois State Plan for 21st Century Community Learning Centers at http://www.isbe.net/21cclc/PDF/21stCCCLC_state_plan0711.pdf
- ^{ix} More information can be found in the report "Gaps in Educational Support for IL Homeless Students" developed by the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless in Feb 2014.
- ^x More on the Individual with Disabilities Education Act can be found on the US Department of Education's website - <http://idea.ed.gov>
- ^{xi} To learn more about the Investing in Innovation Fund, go to <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/innovation/index.html>
- ^{xii} More information on the Autism Project of Illinois can be found here - <http://theautismprogram.org/about-us/>
- ^{xiii} More information on the Philip Rock Center and School can be found on their website at <http://www.philiprockcenter.org/philip-j-rock-center-and-school>
- ^{xiv} More information on both of these Connecticut-based programs can be found here - <http://www.afcamp.org/calendar>, <http://aspira.org/book/aspira-parents-excellence-apex>
- ^{xv} To learn more about SACPIE, go to <http://www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie>
- ^{xvi} To learn more about the Washington State Community and Family Engagement Trust, go to <http://www.wafamilyengagement.org>
- ^{xvii} To learn more about OneAmerica, go to <https://www.weareoneamerica.org>
- ^{xviii} To learn more about parent engagement at the Roadmap Project, go to http://www.roadmapproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Final-Report_Engaged-Parents-Successful-Students-Report-9-12-12.pdf
- ^{xix} To learn more about the Gates Foundation's specific focus on Washington State, go to <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/What-We-Do/US-Program/Washington-State>
- ^{xx} To learn more about Washington State's Initiative 1351, go to <http://sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2014/Sept/13Initiative1351.pdf>