



# BRINGING PARENTS AND FAMILIES TO THE TABLE

## Family Engagement in Education

Family engagement has been at the heart of National PTA’s mission since the association’s founding in 1897. Through advocacy—most recently our successful campaign to include family engagement provisions such as the Statewide Family Engagement Centers program in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—as well as family and community education, National PTA has established programs and called for legislation that includes parents and families in every step of the decision-making process.

Parents and their children are the primary consumers of our nation’s public education system, and over 40 years of data shows that family engagement in schools has a drastic impact on student achievement and school improvement. However, many states and school districts need to make more investments in family engagement and ensure parents should have a seat at the table when decisions are made and work with parents and families as partners throughout the school year.

### THE DATA

According to a study conducted by Rice University, only **34%** of parents were currently satisfied with family and community engagement in public schools<sup>[1]</sup>

Each year parents took part in a family engagement program in Chicago, their child’s chances of completing high school increased by **16%**. When parents were involved for the whole six years of the program, more than **80%** of their children graduated from high school, compared with **38%** of students whose parents did not participate<sup>[2]</sup>

Students with engaged families attend school more regularly, earn better grades, enroll in advanced level programs and have higher graduation rates<sup>[3]</sup>

Schools would need to increase spending by more than **\$1,000** per student to gain the same results as effective family engagement<sup>[4]</sup>

### WE ADVOCATE TO



Ensure state and local education agencies and schools use federal funding to support evidence-based family engagement programs as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)



Ensure effective implementation of the Statewide Family Education Centers (SFECs) program on both the federal and state levels



Provide ongoing training and professional development on effective family engagement practices for educators and school-based personnel



Include evidence-based family engagement strategies throughout the entire education continuum from early childhood through postsecondary exploration and career opportunities



Support meaningful engagement of parents and families at the state, district and school level, on an ongoing basis, in the creation of education policies, especially those that directly impact students and families

## VOICE FROM THE FIELD

When Heather Losneck got the news that she was selected as a National PTA Family Engagement Fellow, she immediately contacted the Board of Education President in her school district in Berea, Ohio to push forward a family engagement agenda. Initially working in a small committee, **Losneck proposed that the Board of Education adopt a district-wide family engagement policy** to raise awareness about the power of family engagement and cultivate family engagement through specific programs and practices.

As a result of Losneck's decision to **take action**, the board created a Family Engagement Team comprised of parents, family members, teachers, school staff and administrators and board of education members. This team represents every school in the district, every grade level, and every city. The vision for this team is to create system-wide policies and practices that establish effective family-school partnerships to improve student achievement.

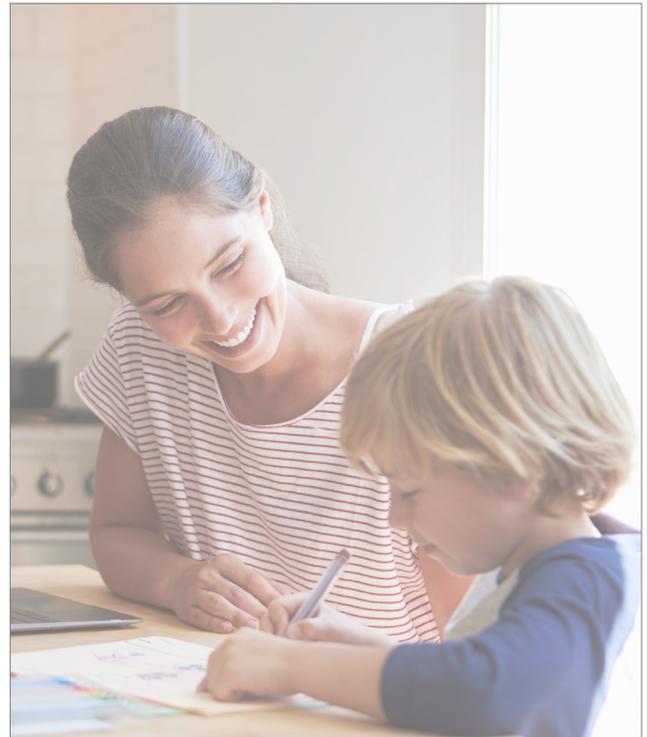
The team is also piloting a Parent Academy to empower parents and families to be strong advocates for public education and family engagement by learning more about the role of the school district and leadership, learning curriculums, assessments, school finances, funding and operations.



**Heather Losneck**  
Berea-Midpark Middle  
School PTA

## ABOUT STATEWIDE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT CENTERS

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law by President Obama in December 2015, includes the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) program. SFECs provide states and districts with the capacity to support effective family engagement policies and initiatives. They also provide training and guidance to help parents and families become equal partners with educators in improving their child's academic achievement. Recently, the program received \$10 million in funding, with eleven states receiving grants to start a Statewide Family Engagement Center. To learn more about SFEC program and recent grantees, visit <https://innovation.ed.gov/statewide-family-engagement-centers-program/>



<sup>[1]</sup> Rice University. (2017). [Rice U. study: Public schools lagging in family and community engagement](#). Houston, TX: Rice University

<sup>[2]</sup> National Education Association. (2008). [Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in Education](#). Washington, DC: National Education Association

<sup>[3]</sup> Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). [A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement](#). Annual Synthesis 2002. National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools.

<sup>[4]</sup> Houtenville, A. and K.S. Conway. (2008). [Parental Effort, School Resources, and Student Achievement](#). Journal of Human Resources, XLIII. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.