

## 2023 PTA LEGISLATIVE ASK: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

*Because effective family-school partnerships lead to student success!*

### PTA urges the 118th Congress to pass legislation that:

- ✓ Provides funding to incentivize and support family engagement initiatives in schools and communities across the country, including increasing funding for the federal Statewide Family Engagement Centers program.
- ✓ Expands research, technical assistance and training on transformative family engagement strategies. Increases awareness of effective family engagement strategies, including expanding research, technical assistance and training for school personnel.
- ✓ Encourages greater transparency with families about decisions impacting their children. This includes proactive, timely and two-way communication in an understandable and accessible format and in a language families can understand.

### Issue Overview

Decades of research shows that family engagement matters for student success—students whose families are engaged are more likely to attend school, avoid discipline problems, achieve at higher levels and graduate. Family engagement also helps schools—research suggests it is equally as important as school leadership and a rigorous curriculum in predicting school improvement. Parents, guardians and other caregivers are key partners in their children’s educational success and provide important perspectives on decisions impacting their children and schools.

- ✓ In a 2022 national survey of families commissioned by National PTA, more than 7 in 10 parents believe that more training for teachers on how to communicate with families would be very or extremely helpful, although only 2 in 10 parents report that this training is currently being provided in their school. Further, only 3 in 10 families reported that their school was excellent at a variety of different family engagement strategies.
- ✓ Schools and programs that invest in engaging families lead to students attending school more regularly, earning better grades, enrolling in advanced courses and having higher graduation rates. For example, a 2018 study by EveryDay Labs found that sending attendance letters home showing comparative data reduced absenteeism 10% among chronically absent students.
- ✓ Schools would need to increase spending by more than \$1,000 per student to gain the same results as effective family engagement.
- ✓ The federal Statewide Family Engagement Centers Program provides technical assistance and training on family engagement across 18 states. More states could be served if additional funding was allocated to the program in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 24).

### PTA’s Recommendations

Parents and families play an important role in education by acting as key partners in their children’s educational success and providing important perspectives on decisions impacting their children and schools. However, far too often when policy is considered and legislation is crafted, family engagement is not directly called out as a critical strategy in achieving desired student outcomes.

Policymakers can and should support schools in their efforts to meaningfully share power with parents, welcome and communicate effectively with all families and collaborate with families and the community to support student success. PTA supports efforts to meaningfully embed family engagement

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throughout education policy and calls on Congress and the Administration to prioritize family engagement at the outset of all policy discussions.

### PTA urges members of Congress to:

- ✓ Introduce legislation focused on family engagement for student success that fosters more meaningful partnerships and communication between parents and schools.
- ✓ Reintroduce and co-sponsor the Teachers and Parents At the Table Act
- ✓ Introduce legislation creating a permanent Office of Family & Community Engagement under the U.S. Department of Education.
- ✓ Introduce legislation requiring school districts to reserve at least 5% of their ESEA Title I funds, 5% of ESEA Title III funds and 5% of their IDEA funds towards meaningful family engagement efforts.

**Legislation focused on family engagement for student success** would require elementary and secondary schools to provide information at the start of the first term of each school year about the rights of students, educators and families, including the right of parents and caregivers to be meaningfully involved in the elementary or secondary school's decision-making process.



**Teachers and Parents At the Table Act** would establish a Parents and Families Advisory Committee and a Teacher Advisory Committee under the U.S. Department of Education to monitor the implementation and impact of the Every Student Succeeds Act on children and families and review and analyze the implementation of the law's family engagement requirements.

**Office of Family & Community Engagement** would serve as a support system for state and local education agencies on the implementation of evidence-based, transformative engagement practices and policies to promote child development, student achievement and school improvement. The office would provide helpful guidance, solicit feedback from families and increase public awareness of existing family-related rights and responsibilities under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

*Questions?*

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