Parent Engagement Program
PIC 101 Training Minutes
September 6, 2012

I. Welcome

Michelle Sandrock, Parent Engagement Program Manager, opened the meeting by welcoming all in attendance and introducing the Department of Education staff, Dr. Barbara Lunsford, Associate Superintendent for School Improvement, Craig Geers, Director of Outreach Programs and Lakeita Servance, Parent Engagement Specialist. Dr. Barbara Lunsford gave a warm welcome to the new Parent Involvement Coordinators (PIC's) and provided an overview of the support the state offers for parent engagement. Craig Geers also extended a warm welcome to all in attendance and talked about how valuable their work is across the state and how it impacts many communities.

II. Parent Engagement Program Overview

Michelle Sandrock began this segment by explaining the purpose of the parent engagement program. She stated that the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) provides the Parent Engagement Program to assist and ensure that Title I, Part A Parent Involvement regulations are met with meaningful and strategic actions to build parent capacity in schools and school districts under 1118(e) and told participants that they would learn more about this segment of the law later this afternoon. She informed participants that effective July 1, the compliance and engagement programs at the Georgia Department of Education merged to build a more cohesive alliance and that Title I, Part A is a federally funded program under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. It is designed to support state and local school reform efforts tied to challenging state academic standards in order to reinforce and amplify efforts to improve teaching and learning for students furthest from meeting state standards. She emphasized that the goal of the Parent Engagement Program is to increase student achievement by engaging and empowering parents, as well as other stakeholders, to become actively involved in their children's education across all grade levels. She defined what parent engagement is and explained that the definition was created by the network of Parent Involvement Coordinators across the state. A detail explanation of the four components of the Parent Engagement program were reviewed which included communication, external partnerships, professional development, and GaDOE programs. She also introduced participants to the host of information and resources that are available to them by means of the Parent

Engagement Program such as the website, brochure, make and take workshops, modules, resolution and statement. Much of the information shared was found in the Title I Parental Involvement Handbook that each person in attendance received. The Parent Involvement Handbook as well as the many other resources shared can be found on the website at: http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/Parent-Engagement-Program.aspx Each participant also received a copy of the Parent Engagement brochure found on pg. 69 of the handbook which summarized this overview.

III. Parent Engagement 101 Strategies for Implementation

Lakeita Servance, Parent Engagement Specialist, welcomed all of the new PICs and congratulated them on "getting the job", then proceeded to give participants a general overview of parent engagement and what Parent Involvement Coordinators can expect to experience in their new role. Participants were given several examples of who could be considered a parent and discussed what makes parent engagement necessary. After talking about the benefits of having parents involved, the audience was also informed about the research-based reasons behind the importance of parent engagement. Afterwards, participants engaged in an exercise called "How Do You See Me?" They were tasked to identify the stereotypes, biases and myths that parents have about professional and identify the stereotypes, biases and myths that professionals have about parents. Participants were encouraged to be honest and respond according to the group they were assigned to, not according to the role they preferred.

Their responses were as follows:

Parents:

- Parents don't care
- School babysitting service
- Parents are uneducated
- Parents are trouble and disruptive
- Parents are not supportive
- Parents are undermining

Professionals:

- Know it ALL
- Just a job

- We are the personal assistant
- We are to raise their child
- "You don't understand my child"
- Should have unlimited resources
- We don't live in the real world
- Available 24/7
- You teach-not me-during homework
- Don't understand the challenges parents face
- Only care about smart or well behaved children
- How can you help me
- We are treated better up north

This exercise allowed participants to look at what they are up against. It identified the elephant in the room that everyone tries to ignore. Lakeita explained that you can't begin to change the culture of your school, parents and community until you recognize what you are up against. Participants followed along as Lakeita reviewed some strategies for implementation. Please see attached handbook, pg. 81 for details. Participants also learned about their roles and responsibilities as a Parent Involvement Coordinator with a review of the Job Description Guidance. Please see attached handbook, pg. 74 for details. It was stressed that this document provides a framework of the job and that each of their roles would vary according to the needs of their school and district. It was also emphasized that this document has been provided to set the standard for parent engagement throughout the state. Participants engaged in another exercise called "A day in the life of a Parent" which gave them an opportunity to see the challenges one could face as they try to "get involved" in their child's academics while still trying to balance work and circumstances that are beyond their control. At the end of the exercise, participants had a renewed outlook of the reality most of our parents are living. Finally, a handout of Parent Involvement DO's and DON'TS was briefly reviewed and key points were highlighted to draw attention to some practices that should be avoided in their role as a PIC.

IV. Break

V. 360-Degrees of Family Engagement Crosswalk

Michelle Sandrock opened this segment by stating that it is common for them to experience challenges as a new PIC, and one of the main challenges is being able to

effectively understand where their families are to ensure the right types of engagement initiatives are put into action. She introduced the 360-Degrees of Family Engagement process and explained that this is a tool that is being used to effectively track and measure parent and family engagement. She emphasized that this process is not a Title I requirement, but is considered a best practice to assist schools in strengthening and coordinating their family engagement programs. Priority Schools that are not Race to the Top or SIG 1003(G) are being asked to embed part of the 360 process into their school improvement plans. It is not mandatory for these priority schools to implement the 360 model, however, they must either implement 360 or a similar family and community engagement plan that meets particular guidelines. She stated that today they wouldn't be focusing on the entire 360 process, as they were going to use only a part of the process as a tool to help them in their work with understanding families.

She then talked about the importance of meeting families where they are and a good place to start is by examining research based theories and approaches. Participants were then divided into groups and told to review the theories they were given, which included Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, PTA Standards for Family – School Partnerships, Headstart Family and Community Engagement Framework, and Strengthening Families Protective Factors. Each group was challenged to come up with a phrase or one word to summarize the approach.

Their responses were:

- Motivation (Maslow)
  Maslow shows us the motivation levels of people and why they act as they do. Family circumstances and motivation levels directly impact the degree of engagement a family may have in their child's education.

- Partnership (Headstart)
  Headstart outcomes show what families need in order to be ready to focus on engaging with their community and school.

- Together We Stand, Communication and Building Relationships (PTA)
  PTA standards show strategies to promote and support the families at their motivation levels.
  It is a framework of effective engagement strategies that meet families where they are.

- Functional Families as Opposed to Dysfunctional Families (Strengthening Families)
  Protective Factors shows us what should already be in place to ensure effectiveness of parent engagement strategies..

She then shared the 360 Degrees of Family Engagement crosswalk and explained that this crosswalk acknowledges that the school's approach to family engagement requires collaboration and an understanding of how widely families' needs can vary. There is a science behind how families react to schools. We can't throw up our hands and wonder why parents aren't showing up to workshops if we are not doing what we can to address related issues that heavily impact their ability, interest, or understanding of how important parents' roles are. In creating plans, we must be mindful of where families are and what you can do to help whether through district or community resources.

She then warned that particular circumstances may affect a family's ability to become involved and engaged in their school and community and that these are noted within the Crosswalk. It is important to remember that just as family circumstances vary, the way that families respond to stressors will vary, as well. The Crosswalk assists educators in understanding *where families are* in the school engagement equation, but caution should also be exercised to ensure that family circumstances are considered on an individual basis, as well. Research shows that schools that engage families "where they are" rather than where schools "think they should be" are more successful in gaining family participation from groups that are traditionally considered reluctant to engage.

She ended by encouraging schools to use the Crosswalk to learn how family engagement fits into the larger picture of student achievement and to understand the benefit of coordinating all family engagement work from Pre-K to postsecondary. It is important to think about the unique circumstances of targeted families and use the research on the chart to gain a better understanding of possible factors affecting the families' willingness and capability to be engaged in their children's education as they work to engage parents throughout the school year.

VI. 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."

VII. Title I Parent Involvement Policy and Compliance

Michelle Sandrock completed the Title I Parent Involvement Policy and Compliance segment and started by defining parental involvement as outlined in section 1118. Please see attached handbook, pg. 15 for details. She also explained that Title I is

designed to help disadvantaged children meet high academic standards by providing supplemental educational and instructional services. She provided an overview of the compliance requirements as required under Parent Involvement, Section 1118. Please see attached handbook, pg. 260 for details. The review included building capacity, including parents in parent policies/plans, budget matters, school-parent compacts and other Title I activities as it relates to parents' right to know, parent communication and the annual Title I meeting. Please see attached handbook, pg. 22, 27, 28 for details. The information focused on both the needs and requirements that are mandated for LEA's and schools. She placed an emphasis on promoting parents as leaders, including all parents not just parent stakeholders, and increasing parent and community involvement/engagement. She stressed the importance of documentation and effective communication. Examples were provided to assist LEA's and schools with their documentation practices. She also spoke about the difference between Title I School-Wide vs. TA (Targeted –Assistance) schools. A summary was provided at the end to review the main points that should have been captured from the overview. The Title I handbook was provided as a resource for compliance and engagement templates to help PICs become more effective in their jobs. For more details about this presentation, please refer to the corresponding PowerPoint. Participants were admonished to engage in Q&A after the presentation of which Ms. Sandrock provided detailed explanations for each question asked.

Review key pages in handbook for resources to support what was covered:

- LEA Checklist for Parent Involvement Policy: Page 223/231
- District Wide Parental Involvement Policy Template: Page 237
- Sample District PI Policy Template: Page 243
- School Level PI Policy Checklist: Page 272/280
- Sample PI Policy (ES): 293 (MS): 296/300 (HS): 304
- School-Parent Compact Checklist: Page 316
- School-Parent Compact Sample: Page 317/319
- Sample PI Surveys: Page 380/387
- Sample LEA PI Meeting Agenda: Page 389
- Sample Title I Parent Meeting Agenda: Page 390/402
- Title I Checklist with timeline: Page 403

VIII. Breaking Down Barriers in Parent Engagement

Both, Michelle Sandrock and Lakeita Servance facilitated this segment of the agenda. Lakeita begun by reviewing some of the identified barriers that were notated by participants before the left for lunch and talked about what could be done to overcome some of those barriers. Next, Michelle asked participants to get into small groups based on the color on the front of their folders. They engaged in small group work and were asked to 1) Discuss two barriers their group faces in engaging parents 2) Review their assigned parent engagement standard, discuss what the standard

means and why it is important to their school's success in parent engagement 3) Think about their school improvement goals, list innovative strategies/activities that they would like to use this year to engage parents based on the standards that were assigned. This exercise was based on developing strategies for involving parents based on the National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships. Each small group was given an opportunity to report back to large group and share their strategies.

Strategies for Involving Parents based on the National PTA Standards:

Standard 1*: WELCOMING ALL FAMILIES INTO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY:* Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

- Barriers: language, transportation, childcare, sense of belonging is not there

- Solutions: assign a greeter to welcome parents, provide welcome packets to parents, cultivate an open door policy, share information with parents about getting students ready for assessments, have community volunteer translate when possible, develop a buddy system

Standard 2*: COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY:* Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

- Barriers: mode of communication, lack of relationship building and budget constraints, lack of access to technology, and translator for language interpretation

- Solutions: meet parents at drop-off and pick-up, work or partner with PTA to build relationships, work with school groups (BETA, Hospitality, etc.), community fair, world language day

- Additional note: lack of effective communication impedes school success

Standard 3: *SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS:* Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and health development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

- Barriers: education issues

- Solutions: inform parents of the meeting times and purpose in advance, help parents have accessibility by hosting meetings in the community where they live, encourage use of the parent resource center, provide transportation when possible

Standard 4: *SPEAKING UP FOR EVERY CHILD:* Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly & have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

- Barriers: participation and communication

- Solutions: build relationships and form bonds, administer professional development to staff, make it more enticing for parents to come out and support events, strive to meet families needs, provide technology classes to show parents how to do certain things, model a reading session, conduct student lead conferences

Standard 5: *SHARING POWER:* Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

- Barriers: lack of parental interest and motivation; resentment

- Solutions: stress that everyone has input that is valued, they are equal partners in the process, survey parents, invite parents to community stakeholders meetings by using multiple forms of communication

Standard 6: *COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY:* Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

- Solutions: partnership with school and community, fostering understanding with school and community, create awareness of resources, invite monthly speakers to talk about careers and host a summer fair

In conclusion, Michelle referred participants to the National PTA strategy handout and reviewed some of the strategies that were listed, but in the essence of time, she was not able to review all of them. Please see attached Standards Handout. She encouraged participants to add their strategies to this handout. Finally, she 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 down. The PIC's understood the message in that they too can break down the barriers they will encounter with parents and family engagement.

X. Closing

Michelle closed the meeting by commending the new Parent Involvement Coordinators for taking on this very important role. Fall PIC meeting registrations

were shared and certificates were distributed to all in attendance for this training. PICs were also encouraged to contact the Department any time with questions. Michelle can be reached at msandrock@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.