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 and have access to learning opportunities that will support their successes.

Ideas for Implementation

1. Teach parents and families how to navigate the school system. Provide guidance on how their local school and district operate, as well as where they need to go and who they need to talk to when questions or concerns arise. Think of innovative and informative ways to ensure parents understand their rights and responsibilities under the law. Have individual help desks set up during school programs and events where parents can stop by and ask particular questions or get information.

2. Empower parents with the tools necessary to support their own and other children's success in school. Provide direction on setting high expectations for student learning and success. Assist parents in designing plans that monitor their child's progress and goal development. Target families who need assistance in knowing how to access resources inside and outside of the school community. If the school is unable to help, link families with other service providers in the community who can assist.

3. Develop effective parent advocates by educating parents on the right questions to ask school and community leaders and teachers about education. Demonstrate the correct way to approach issues with school faculty and staff and how to facilitate conflict resolution. Teach communication skills and ways to foster a partnership with their child's teacher to promote increased student learning.

4. Designate parent representatives for all school committees and promote their participation in other community groups as well. Encourage parent participation to further their knowledge of education curriculum, school governance, and leadership. Use their perceptions to enhance school community outcomes and have them help spread the work and progress the school is making with other parents and the larger community.

5. Implement strong school transition programs to ease student anxiety and set new or continued expectations for parents. Make sure the transition program is more than just a onetime event – make it a yearlong process. Set standards for continued engagement, offer concrete things parents can do at home and at school to assist in their child's learning process, and provide opportunities for parents to contribute to their new school.

6. Provide opportunities for families to discuss issues that are of importance for all children in their school community. Set up Parent Cafes or other parent networking conversations to link families experiencing similar issues or to tackle tough issues in the school community. Empower parents to be advocates for change by assisting them in the change process.

7. Assist parents with their own professional and personal development in areas such as public speaking, task management, resume building, or financial literacy. Offer GED, English, or other educational classes. Build parent skills so they become confident in their own abilities and as a result are better able to pay attention to their child's academic development.

8. Engage parents in the development of the school's parent involvement policy. Invite parents to various meetings to discuss the policy. Break the large group into smaller groups to facilitate conversation around key topics. Explain the policy's importance and have parents work to keep the school accountable for fulfilling its requirements. Share it with the entire school community and refer to it on a regular basis during school programs and events, as well as in various communications.

9. Encourage parents to volunteer by providing concrete ways they can contribute. Survey your parents' talents at the beginning of the year and remember to look for traditional and non – traditional talents. Make it a point to utilize their contributions, no matter how big or small.

10. Develop parent leaders. Create opportunities for parents to develop leadership skills so they can become strong educational advocates for not only their child, but all children. Set up parent leadership academies or parent leadership classes. Give parents school projects to complete, have book studies, and allow parents to teach some classes to other parents.

Reference:

National Parent Teacher Association (PTA). (2009). *PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships: An Implementation Guide.* Retrieved from http://www.pta.org/2757.asp

Your Ideas for Implementation

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____