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.

Ideas for Implementation

1. Create welcoming committees to provide new families to the school with important information and a support system. Place welcome to the "ABC" School Community signs in their yards, mail welcome packets with information from the school and greater community, or develop a parent to parent mentoring program that provides new families with an additional point of contact.

2. Enlist parent greeters to provide a smiling face before school, after school, as well as during other high-traffic times or school events when families and visitors are in the school. Set up a parent desk at the entrance of the school and staff it throughout the day with parent volunteers who greet those who enter and serve as an initial point of contact for school information.

3. Display a guestbook for visitor sign in and sign out and provide various badges indicating whether a person is a parent, volunteer or visitor for guests to wear while they are in the building. Label the badges Very Important Person (VIP) so that staff and students are aware of their presence when they are in the building.

4. Provide a school interpreter on site or someone who can be called upon, in person or over the phone, if a parent or family member needs assistance. Recruit some of your bi-lingual parents to volunteer their time to assist with interpreting.

5. Ensure that all aspects of the school community reflect, respect, and value the diversity of all your families. Provide many opportunities for them to volunteer by offering them ways to utilize their unique talents and by offering school activities that are free or low-cost.

6. Take time to honor parents who contribute to the school, classrooms and their child's education by listening to them and thanking them in various ways on a regular basis. Have students draw pictures or write cards, highlight their names and service at special events, or simply have a different school faculty or staff member personally thank them each month.

7. Develop an open door policy that allows parents and families to connect with the school or drop-in at any time. Provide guidance to parents on what to do when entering a classroom to observe so students are not distracted. Have a special chair dedicated to a parent or visitor in each room so they are seen as a valuable part of their child's education process.

8. Make it a goal to continuously look for ways to support and communicate with families as well as how to engage them in the student achievement process. Listen to your parents and learn about their interests, likes, and dislikes. This information will give you the input you need to develop creative ways to get them to participate in the planning and implementation of school goals and programs. Not only will they feel welcome, but they will also know that they are a valuable asset to the school.

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

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Standard 2:
Communicating Effectively

Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way *meaningful communication* about student learning.

Ideas for Implementation

1. Use all types of communication channels to connect with or inform parents. Scaffold communication approaches for various groups of targeted parents based on preferences and what works. Go beyond traditional means of communication by not just doing it one way, but every way! Place notes on the school marquee, create public service announcements, send emails or text messages, use the call system, hang posters, send personalized notes or invitations, and place phone calls. Make communications accessible by taping meetings and allowing parents to access a condensed version on the website or check out a DVD.

2. Ensure parents are considered partners by including a two – way communication mechanism on all home and school contacts. Incorporate a question and answer section in the school and classroom newsletter, or ask for parent feedback by using social media to display a question of the week and encourage parent responses through facebook, twitter, or the school website.

3. Provide and publicize the hours for when the principal, teachers, and staff are available for parent visits or phone calls. Develop procedures for school and parent contacts to ensure that both parties know the manner in which to initiate, respond, and follow up. It would be a good practice for teachers to log their communications with parents and set goals of reaching out to a certain amount of families each month.

4. Take time to engage in positive communications with families. For many parents, the only time they hear from the school is when something is wrong. Reach out at the beginning of the year to establish positive contact with every family at the school. Send positive notes, emails, or place phone calls home. Establish an easy system for teachers to regularly report student achievements.

5. Take time to be responsive to parent feedback. The two-way communication process is only meaningful to parents if they know their opinions or contributions matter. Make it a point to highlight solutions or improvements made based on parent feedback.

6. Ensure communications are understandable to all parents. Develop flyers, letters, emails, newsletters, and websites using family – friendly language. If legal language is required, attach a cheat sheet or flyer that breaks the message down into easy to understand information. When possible, provide communications in other languages representative of your school community.

7. Develop a communication plan that keeps parents informed of their child's academic progress and development beyond parent – teacher conferences and report cards. Send home notices about what students are learning each week or month. Make grades and teacher feedback easily available.

8. Show respect through your communications with parents. First impressions are everything so be mindful that your conversation with a parent will set the tone for the entire school year. Be respectful and think about the little things. For example, if you call yourself Mrs. Smith, then address your student's parent in the same manner and not just by their first name. Remember to speak in family – friendly terms.

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

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Standard 3:
Supporting Student Success

Families and school staff continuously *collaborate* to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Ideas for Implementation

1. Involve families in school projects and student homework assignments. Find ways to incorporate parent input or support through student research papers, math assignments, physical education activities. It would be a good practice for teachers to facilitate this type of parent and student interaction at least once a month and track parent participation through logs or parent feedback.

2. Explain the implementation of the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. Use parents' ideas to discuss new ways on how to inform other families about student data and what can be done to raise expectations and achievement for all students. Learn ways to communicate the standards to families so they are familiar with and involved in the student learning process.

3. Ensure student success by involving families in the creation of education plans for all students. Take time to discuss their student's strengths and areas of need as well as their learning style and learning goals for the year, for the next three years, or their graduation plan. Help parents identify discrete ways they can be a part of the plan to assist their child in reaching their goals at school and at home.

4. Hold student led parent – teacher conferences to ensure ongoing communication between the child and their parent about their growth, development, and academic success. Use the time to discuss key strategies for success and ways families can support the learning process at home.

5. Establish a method for parents to review and support their child's work on a regular basis. Send student work home each week, inform parents of the learning standards to be covered in class with questions they can use to ask their children about what they are learning, display student work throughout the school with the corresponding standard and feedback, provide tip sheets for parents on how to monitor their child's progress, or develop a way to measure parent participation at home through logs or frequent feedback.

6. Collaborate with parents by incorporating their talents and skills into classroom curriculum. Poll parents at the beginning of the year about their occupations, hobbies, and skills. Then integrate their talents into lesson plans. Have a parent artist help students with a class mural, have another parent skilled in building apply a real world lesson in math, or a parent who is a skilled seamstress discuss the science behind sewing. Work together with the parents to develop the lesson.

7. Link all school programs and activities to academic learning. Explain what students are learning about science before the science fair competition begins, have a brief demonstration of how math and logic are incorporated into a basketball playbook during half time at a game, or discuss which music curriculum standards are being addressed before the beginning of the school choir concert.

8. Connect with your school's after-school programs to be sure they are making an effort to remain consistent with the instruction that's being completed in the classroom. Encourage after-school programs to share and reinforce the school curriculum with families.

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

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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. 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. You can suggest that the Parent Involvement Coordinator target families who need assistance in knowing how to access resources inside and outside of the school community.

2. 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.

3. Recommend certain parent representatives for school committees or promote their participation in certain groups you are aware of in the community. It would also be a good idea to encourage parents to further their knowledge of the 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.

4. 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.

5. Request that the Parent Involvement Coordinator include a segment at the end of each meeting or workshop for parents to discuss issues that are of importance for all children in the school. These issues can be documented and given to the administrators so these concerns can be addressed one by one. Arrangements can also be made for parent networking conversations to link families who are experiencing issues with families who were able to find a resolution to that same problem. This can empower parents to be advocates for change by assisting them in the change process.

6. Assist parents with their own professional and personal development. Help 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.

7. 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. 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.

8. 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. Give parents school projects to complete, have book studies, and allow parents to teach a lesson or read to the class as a model 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

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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.

Ideas for Implementation

1. Provide parents with the knowledge and resources they need to become leaders and advocates for their children's education. This means educating them about test score interpretation, understanding the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), and Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). You can then build parent capacity by using your new parent leaders to recruit and train other parent leaders based on what they've learned from you.

2. Ensure parents understand that they are wanted and needed to be a part of all school committees and councils (not just the ones that are designated or designed for parents). Give them concrete, meaningful tasks to complete as part of the group. Seek to have parent representatives that are reflective of the school community and work to address family involvement barriers related to diversity, race, income and culture.

3. Create opportunities for parents to dialogue with you and provide their input without apprehension. The school could create an online option that's an extension of the school's website that allows parents to provide feedback and suggestions to the school. The postings could remain confidential instead of having a public viewing or discussion forum. This would prevent the possibility of inappropriate material being displayed. This resource would give parents another avenue to express themselves and have input, thus empowering them.

4. Seek out parent ideas routinely on current and prospective school programs that effect students and their families. Inform parents about how they can support the school improvement plan, involve parents in focus groups or community cafes around your district's Comprehensive LEA Implementation Plan (CLIP).

5. Involve parents in action research. Do not limit your efforts to asking parents their opinions, but give them a chance to actually be a key part of the process. Allow them to observe classes to provide first-hand feedback on a new curriculum initiative, examine various textbooks that are up for adoption, or allow them to visit a school in another district to learn about new programs for implementation.

6. Hold group trainings for all members of the school's councils and committees inclusive of the parent representatives. Cover topics such as facilitation skills, brain-storming, and ways to communicate effectively. Explain how the school, parent, and community representatives all are partners in this important work and allow time to ensure the parents feel comfortable and understand their role.

7. Ensure transparency of information to all parents. Discuss the school's scores on state tests, regardless of the outcomes, and describe ways in which the school plans to improve (with seeking parent input of course!) Make sure parents are aware of the good and not so good information the school has to share. Then, do not be afraid to ask for parents to help! Make them part of the solution.

8. Allow parents to speak at various meetings, functions, and events within and outside of the school. Have parents share their stories of engagement at a community philanthropic event, share an inspiration at a school board meeting, or give opening remarks at a school assembly.

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

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Standard 6:
Collaborating with the Community

Families and school staff collaborate with community members to *connect* students, families, and staff to expand learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Ideas for Implementation

1. Develop a school public relations campaign to rally the community around innovative and successful school programs. Pick a topic such as parent engagement, attendance, or the importance of graduating high school. Partner with local radio and television stations, faith-based and community-based organizations, health clinics, supermarkets, restaurants, and other neighborhood businesses. Ask them to use empty store front space to communicate the initiative and actively contribute their time to the greater cause.

2. Ask and seek out community members to sit on school committees. Share your school data and use their expertise to assist and develop programs to support student success. Get to know them as a resource and connection to the greater school community.

3. Host school and community resource fairs that connect families to all types of free resources and services. Develop a community resource directory or partner with a local non-profit organization to create one. Work with local partners to help communicate the various services offered, especially ones that many of your parents could really benefit from but they may be apprehensive about seeking them out on their own.

4. Bring community members into the school community by creating various opportunities for them to share their skills or participate in events. It would be a good practice to reach out to local business and community partners at the beginning of each school year by sending a personal note from the school extending the invitation to work together. You can use community partners in different ways such as opening car doors in the morning car pool lane, joining the school volunteer program, reading to a class once a month, or conducting workshops for students and families on various topics.

5. Build trust and understanding with your community partners. Know their contributions and limitations. Make sure your partnerships are strategic and mutually beneficial. Think about what you can contribute to the partnership. Is it physical school space? Is it expertise? Is it giving back by holding a community clean-up day that allows the school to share its appreciation to local partners? The stronger the relationship is with your partners, the better outcomes for your students and families.

6. Make your school the hub of the community. Extend the hours of the school media center, computer lab, or gym to allow families and community members access to these resources and facilities. Offer homework and mentoring sessions for family and community members to interact with students. Offer the use of the school auditorium or cafeteria for town hall meetings and other community events. Allow the community recreation center to hold exercise classes, inclusive of nutrition guidance, in the school gym. The possibilities are endless.

7. Ensure all community partnership activities link to learning. Utilize traditional and non-traditional partnerships. For example, you can have knowledge sharing activities where students interview senior citizens at a local assisted living facility about events in history, or have younger students create books or notes for them that share information about the current curriculum they are learning. Think outside the box.

8. Develop a shared vision for success by reaching out to a broad base of community partners. Make education everyone's business by holding quarterly community forums for partners to come to the school and learn about current initiatives. Allow them to share ideas for collaboration and then work together to make those ideas become a reality. Map out all your community resources and do not leave anyone out.

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

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