



Information for Parent Members of School Teams

You've been invited to join or are considering joining a committee or decision-making team at your child's school. You may have questions about your role and expectations as a parent on the school team. This handout is designed to answer some of your questions. Be sure to ask your school principal or the team chair about any questions you have.

Why is it important for parents to serve on school teams?

Inviting parents to serve on a school team helps the team make better decisions about children's learning and how families can be involved. Your opinion is important. Parent members have a wonderful opportunity to tell other team members about the challenges, perceptions, and concerns parents have as they help children learn and grow. As a decision-maker on the team, you can help shape its activities, policies, or services. You will be in an excellent position to make school programs or activities be more useful and welcoming to families.

What is the Parent Role on a School Team?

Parents on the team

- Attend meetings
- Participate as an equal member of the school team
- Represent the perspective of families in the work of the team. Effective parent leaders share not only their own observations and experiences, but also those of other families in the school. They offer a perspective different from educators, and their voices are absolutely essential to the decision-making process
- Shape school efforts to involve families in student learning and student success
- Help the school develop and maintain active family-school-community partnerships using the "Six Types of Family-School-Community Partnerships"

What are some things parent team members might be expected to do?

Parents help school teams be more effective when they act as "the parent voice" in team deliberations. Parent team members should feel welcome to offer their views about why or why not an idea will "work" with families or about how to make something work better. For example, a team discussing the pros and cons of having a family reading night will want parents to share their views about times, activities, and incentives that will boost attendance at the event.

Parent team members may also be expected to:

- Attend team meetings. Some teams reserve a time at every meeting for parent members to speak with everyone listening. Other teams invite parent members to express their views in a more informal, ongoing manner.
- Share the general concerns and wishes of other families on child-centered topics.
- Attend team trainings. Some trainings may be located away from the school.
- Give ideas for designing and publicizing publications, surveys, and workshops for families.
- Tell other parents about opportunities to become involved in the school or community.
- Communicate with school parent groups about team plans and activities.

Some questions you may have about serving on the school team

Feel free to ask your school principal, the team chair, or the person inviting you to serve on the team these questions or any additional questions you have.

- What is the purpose or mission of this group?
- What exactly will my responsibilities be?
- How long will I be expected to serve?
- How often, when, and where does the team meet?
- If the team has been in existence for some time, how can I find out more about what it has done and what it is working on now?
- Does the school provide training for new members?
- Who are the other members and what groups or concerns do they represent?
- Are there travel requirements?
- Who does the group report to, and what authority does it have?

Make sure your ideas are heard

Some teams are required to include a parent member or two and may not realize the value of the parent member's role. To increase your comfort level on the team and let other team members know what you bring to the table, try to find out as much as you can about the team. Some teams assign an existing member to mentor new members by taking the time to explain the purpose and history of the group, as well as how the team fits into the school organization. Talk to other members of the team before and after meetings to find out what issues they think are important and how they think the team can best address them.

Your perspective as a parent is important to all families in the school. Make it a priority to talk to other parents in the school to find out how they feel about issues your team is dealing with. Ask parents for their ideas and opinions on planned activities or solutions. Take notes about what other parents tell you and bring those notes to team meetings to help guide your thoughts and remarks. The feedback from families that you present will be a rich and useful source of information for the team. Remember, your voice on the team representing parents needs to be heard and will benefit the learning of all children in the school.

