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Contact: Theresa McCutcheon
Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey
(732) 246-8060 x123 tmccutcheon@preventchildabusenj.org

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New Tool Assesses Parent Involvement in Local Schools

NJPIRC Releases Self-Evaluation Tool for Educational Community

Recognizing the demand for quality resources that strengthen parent involvement programs in local schools and improve student outcomes, the NJ State Parent Information and Resource Center (NJPIRC), in partnership with the NJ Department of Education, developed "Title I Parent Involvement; A Self Evaluation Tool for New Jersey Schools" to guide schools, especially those receiving Title I funds, in reaching compliance and implementing best practices in parent engagement.

This free guide can be downloaded at www.njpirc.org.

Experience and research consistently demonstrate that when families are engaged in a student's education, their children achieve higher test scores, maintain stronger classroom connections, and reach higher levels of literacy. Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, schools receiving Title I funds are actually required to meet certain criteria addressing parent involvement. The NJ Department of Education frequently conducts site visits to evaluate schools receiving federal funding. Schools determined to be out of compliance are expected to improve within a certain time frame.

Especially during this time of careful examination of effective and research-based practices in New Jersey schools, it is vital that local education communities reach beyond meeting the required practices and move toward implementing the highest standards.

The newly developed Self-Evaluation Tool outlines best practices and policies that allow schools to meet parent involvement requirements. This guidebook is especially helpful before, after, or despite a planned site visit. "Parent involvement programs that impact student achievement cannot be thrown together over night. Ample time and attention must be invested in implementing these practices so that they benefit local educational communities – the students, parents, and the educators – through an orchestrated effort," explained Milady Murillo, NJPIRC Director. "This tool is a comprehensive guide for any educational advocate looking to create or strengthen their parent engagement campaign."

The self-assessment was developed to be a guide for easy reference and utilized by persons with varied responsibilities and experiences, including parent advisory groups who want to get a better idea of what their school *must* do. The tool guides users through each federal statute relating to Title I Parent Involvement requirements and describes them through an original language and a "plain language" version. Each statute is followed by a checklist of evidence that must be documented for the related area. Schools that may be out of compliance in a specific area are given steps and strategies toward compliance. A special section called *Exceptional Practices Suggested by NJPIRC*, provides tips on how the school/district can move required actions up to a level that further enhances their relationship with families.



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The Self-Evaluation Tool is complemented by a special section that gives users helpful resources, including sample policies, letters, and documents that can be customized to a school's unique preference. The guidebook also includes the NJPIRC Family Friendly Walkthrough Checklist, which allows teams of school staff and parents to assess how their physical environment may be impacting their relationship with parents.

For more information about the New Jersey Parent Information and Resource Center or to download your free Title I Parent Involvement Guidebook, visit www.njpirc.org or call 1.800.children.

The New Jersey State Parent Information and Resource Center (NJPIRC) is a program of Prevent Child Abuse – New Jersey and has been funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. NJPIRC provides leadership and technical assistance to non-profit organizations and local educational agencies that put successful and effective parental involvement programs in place. These policies and activities lead to improvements in student academic achievement and stronger educational outcomes for New Jersey's children.

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