

Engage, Commit to, and Sustain Family Involvement

This was written by Dr. June St. Clair Atkinson, North Carolina State Superintendent of Public Instruction in support of Family Involvement Month October 2010

Family Involvement is Critical to Student Success

In October, schools and districts across the state will engage in activities to recognize and celebrate Family Involvement Month. During this time, as well as throughout the year, it is important for us all to remember that students spend more than 70 percent of their time outside of the classroom. This means that parents serve as a student's first and most important teachers and play a crucial role in their children's academic success.

The level of parental support students receive as well as expectations set at home regarding education have a tremendous influence on a child's desire and ability to graduate and pursue opportunities beyond high school. For example, according to *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections*, published by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, students with involved family members, regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances or ethnicity, are more likely to:

- earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs;
- be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits;
- attend school regularly;
- have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school; and
- graduate and go on to post secondary education.

Other research has shown that regular family involvement increases student achievement at a rate equal to a \$1,000 increase in per-pupil spending. At a time when school district budgets are shrinking, it is smart for schools and districts to invest in efforts to encourage and increase family involvement.

This school year, I'm challenging every school district, every administrator, every educator, and every family and community member to work together in meaningful ways to increase student success. Perhaps parents can assist more with their children's homework or put in more volunteer time in a classroom while school leaders and teachers could work on finding more ways to involve families and community members in what is happening in our schools.

Schools cannot raise student achievement without support from families and communities. Parents need to assist in their children's learning at home, set high expectations, and work together with teachers and school leaders to make sure our students make the most of their education and remain on the path toward a bright future.