

WEBINAR SERIES
Achieving Excellence and Innovation in
Family, School, and Community Engagement

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**Harvard Family
Research Project**

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Achieving Excellence and Innovation in
Family, School, and Community Engagement

Webinar 2:

***A New Day: Family, School, and Community
Engagement in Education Reform***

Presenters:

- **Anna Hinton**, *Director, Parental Options and Information, Office of Innovation and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education*
- **Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana**, *Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education*
- **Mishaela Durán**, *Director of Government Affairs, PTA National Office of Programs and Public Policy*
- **Barbara Scherr**, *Family Involvement Coordinator, Maryland State Department of Education*
- **Susan Shaffer**, *Director, Maryland State Parental Information and Resource Center*
- **Michele P. Brooks**, *Assistant Superintendent of Family and Student Engagement, Boston Public Schools*

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Welcome and Introduction



Anna Hinton

Director, Parental Options and Information

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U.S. Department of Education

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Opening Remarks



Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana

*Assistant Secretary for
Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education*

**Partnerships that Work:
Maryland State Parental Information and Resource
Center (PIRC)
and
Maryland State Department of Education, Program
Improvement and Family Support Branch**

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Presentation Objectives

- Understand the importance of partnership and collaboration between SEA and PIRC as a shared responsibility for meaningful family engagement.
- Discover innovative ways for SEA, PIRC, and other state leaders to work in partnership to improve family engagement and meet the Title I requirements.
- Learn about family engagement training models to support Title I schools that can be replicated and implemented in any state.

Sharing a Common Mission

- To share the responsibility of fostering meaningful engagement of Maryland's families in the education of their children
- To strengthen family-school partnerships as a means to improve family engagement and student achievement
- To build capacity to meet the needs of low-income, culturally diverse families in Maryland

Building and Nurturing State-Level Partnerships

- Building respectful, mutually beneficial relationships
- Maintaining ongoing communication
 1. SEA ↔ PIRC
 2. SEA ↔ Local School Systems
 3. PIRC ↔ Local School Systems
- Developing well-defined roles
- Collaborating with state and local Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs)
 - Maryland Alliance for Family Involvement in Education (MAFIE)

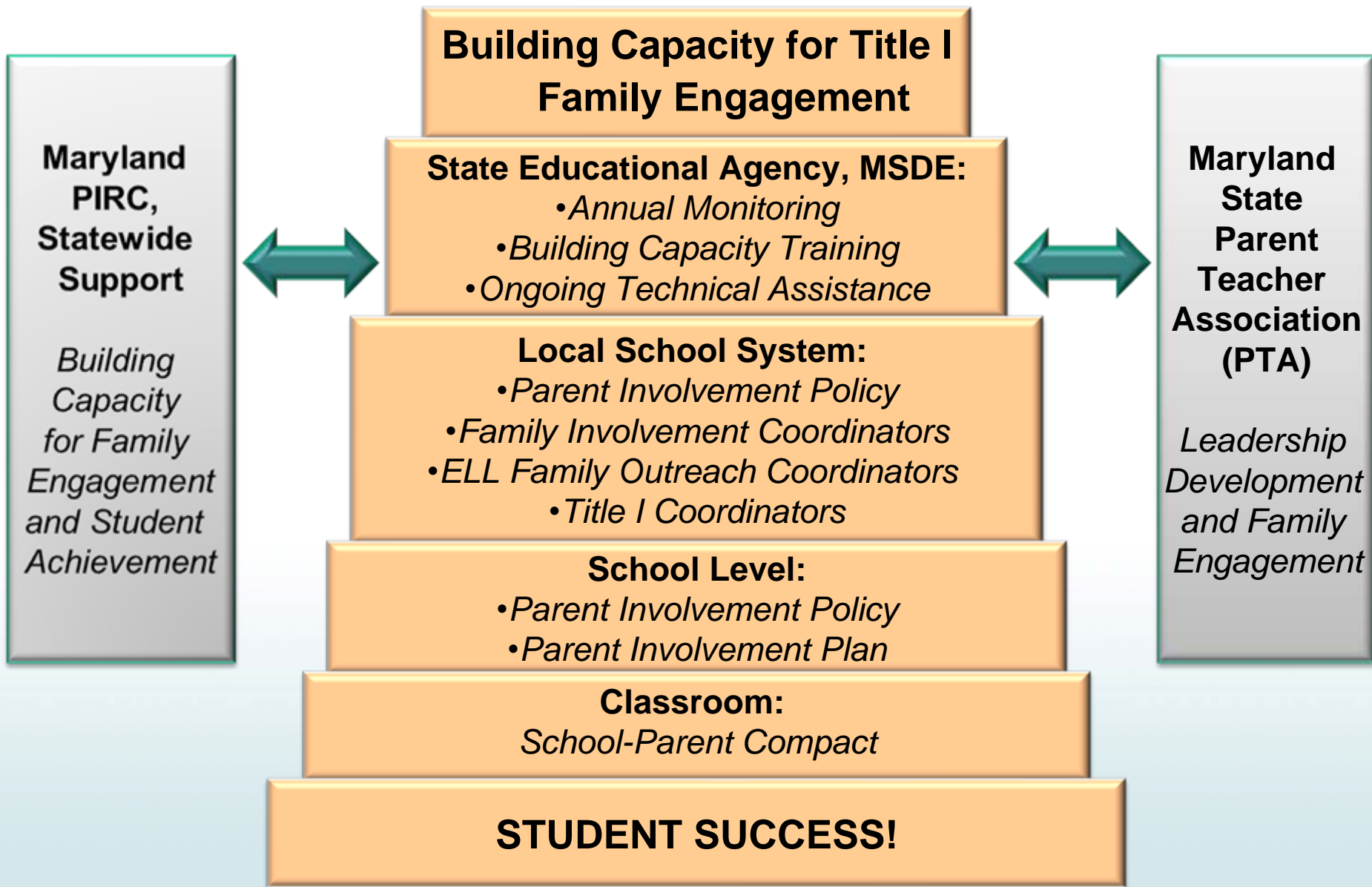
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Maryland State Department of Education Infrastructure

**A Shared Responsibility: Recommendations for Increasing
Family and Community Involvement in Schools**
(Maryland Parent Advisory Council (M-PAC) 2005)

- Communication
- Training
- Leadership
- Partnership
- Accountability

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Building Capacity

Title I Parent Involvement School Team Training

➤ District-Level Policy/Plan

- Decision Making
- Building Capacity
- Annual Evaluation/Review
- PIRC

➤ School-Level Plans

- Decision Making
- Building Capacity
- Accessibility
- PIRC

➤ School-Parent Compact

Getting Started

- Have full support from State Title I Director
- Coordinate through local Title I Coordinator(s)
- Partner with Maryland PIRC to support LSS trainings
- Build capacity for state office staff
- **Require** school teams to include administrator, teacher, and parent **at minimum**
- Advertise training
- Review school-level plans and compacts prior to training and provide feedback at training

What is Maryland's Title I Parent Involvement Training?

- **Level 1: Full-Day Training**
 - Research on family engagement
 - Overview of Title I requirements
 - Focus on school-level plan and compact
- **Level 2: Half-Day Training**
 - Focus on building capacity
 - Focus on school-parent compact

Tools Created by Maryland State Department of Education for the Training:

- Checklists
- District Parent Involvement Policy/Plan
- School-level parent involvement policy/plan
- School-parent compact

Where we are today...

School Team Training

- 21/24 LSS
- Total of 49 trainings (in 2 yrs)
- Over 500 participants

FAR FEWER FINDINGS!

- 67 findings in SY 2008–09
- 11 findings in SY 2009–10

Lessons Learned...

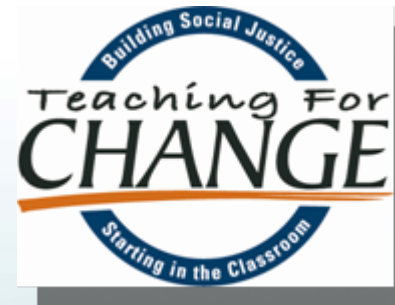
- Participants' knowledge of the Title I requirements vary greatly.
- Buy-in from administrators (esp. principal) is a MUST.
- Buy-in from Title I Coordinators is a MUST.
- Support from PIRC is necessary.
- School teamwork does not come naturally.
- Participants may feel intimidated at first.
- Time allotted for school teamwork on the school-level parent involvement plan and the compact is important/necessary.
- Maintaining documentation (i.e., handouts, evaluations, and sign-in sheets) is critical.

Engaging Families in Low-Performing, Title I Schools

MD PIRC and SEA have partnered to pilot an innovative program designed to build schools' capacity to meet the needs of low-income, culturally diverse families in Maryland.

MD PIRC Tellin' Stories Project...

Using the power of story to connect
parents and schools for quality
education for all students.



The Tellin' Stories Project

- Quilting series
- Training, coaching, and mentoring Parent Liaisons
- Professional development for teachers on family engagement and its link to student learning



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Building Community, Strengthening Schools

- The first community building activity is a 6-week Story Quilting series in which each participant shares a story from his/her history and culture on a felt square.
- This square tells the following story: “A prince and princess were walking and were thinking what to name the capital city of their country. They found a new flower on their way, and they named the capital city Addis Ababa, which means ‘new flower’.”



Weekly Evening Meetings

- The Tellin' Stories workshops begin every session with dinner for the families. This unstructured time together allows families from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to find common ground and break bread together, and provides an opportunity for family members to catch up on their day.



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Building Parent Leadership, Building Human Capacity for School Reform

- During the family workshop, parents/caregivers share the dreams they have for their children.
- By using this common point of reference, families begin to realize that they share similar goals for their children.
- The Tellin' Stories facilitator then uses these dreams and discussions as a means to highlight the important role that families play in student academic success.
- Consequently, parents identify areas where they need support and ways they can contribute back to the school.



Keys to Success

- **Leadership** – A principal who has a vision and commitment to parents as genuine partners in the education of their children
- **Parent Liaisons/Coordinators** – Full-time school staff who are part of the community and who design a parent program based on parents' needs and strengths
- **Teachers** – Teachers who believe in the value of family engagement, which is critical to increasing student achievement
- **Community Collaboration** – Partners in the community who provide resources and support to ensure success!

Goals Attained

- Increased parent engagement in children's studies
- Increased sense of community
- Increased parents' knowledge of how to advocate on behalf of their children

Tellin' Stories – Overall Progress (2007 – 2010)

- 18 Title I schools within 8 districts have been served by Tellin' Stories.
- 1,816 parents have participated.
- 108 parent leaders have been trained.

Tellin' Stories – Outcomes (2009 – 2010 School Year)

- 13 Title I schools in 6 districts were served by Tellin' Stories.
- 575 parents participated.
- 34 parents were trained as leaders in schoolwide systemic change as a result of this initiative.
- 97% of parents attending Tellin' Stories believe that they learned to become more involved at school.
- 98% of parents “agreed” that they are more comfortable becoming involved in their child's school because of their participation.
- The percent of students scoring “proficient” or better in reading or math on the Maryland State Assessment (MSA) in 10 Maryland schools increased in 2009.

Take-Home Messages for Effective Partnerships

- Be intentional about your work.
- Keep your eye on the prize.
- High levels of cooperation and coordination reduce duplication of efforts and increase efficiency and outreach capacity.
- Work smarter, not harder.
- Strong ties make each organization/agency better able to provide systemic capacity building and integrative services for families and students.

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Boston Public Schools

Defining, Organizing, and Facilitating Systemic Family Engagement

Michele P. Brooks

*Assistant Superintendent,
Office of Family & Student Engagement
Boston Public Schools*

Systemic Engagement

- Focused on improving educational outcomes for all children
- Directed toward improving the relationships between the teacher and the student in the presence of content
- Aligned and coherent with the overall goals of the organization
- Mobilizes many people in the school and community to contribute (shared responsibility)

Systemic Engagement

- Connects to the work across various settings and has the possibility of going to scale
- Attempts to change social structures and the culture in which these structures are embedded
 - For example, an initiative that enhances the social and political capital of families and shifts the balance of power between institutions and communities fits this criterion.

Boston Context: Structure

- Parent Activism/Organizing
 - Parent Support Services Team - 1995
 - BPS Family Engagement Policy - 1996
 - Office of Family & Student Engagement with Deputy Superintendent reporting directly to Superintendent - 2002
 - Establishment of Family Community Outreach Coordinator Pilot - 2004

Boston Context: Structure

- Current Structure
 - Office of Family & Student Engagement
 - Assistant Superintendent reports to Superintendent and works with Academic Superintendents who oversee schools
 - 31 Family & Community Outreach Coordinators
 - 13.5 Central Positions

Boston Context: Policy

- BPS Acceleration Agenda
 - Strategy #3 – Deepening partnerships with families, students and community.
- Title 1: Section 1118 Parental Involvement
- Seven Essentials of Whole School Improvement
 - Essential 6: Partner with families and community to support student learning and engagement.
- Dimensions of Effective Teaching and Principalship
 - Both include: Partnerships with Families and Community
- BPS Achievement Gap Policy
 - Partnerships in Family and Community Engagement

Defining the Work

If our goal is to impact student outcomes, who is primarily responsible and where do we need to focus the work?

Schools & Classrooms

Defining the Work

- Capacity–building
 - Of schools to effectively engage families and students in ways that impact student learning and school improvement
 - Of families to actively support student learning, become effective advocates, and partner with schools for student success
 - Of students to actively engage in school and assume greater responsibility for their learning
 - Of the district to provide the supports and accountability systems that promote engagement as a key lever for student success

Organizing the Work

- A District Vision
 - Every school will welcome every family and every student, actively engaging them as partners in student learning and school improvement.
- Core Beliefs
 - Core beliefs are the values that the district holds that guide the implementation of the engagement work.
 - *Beyond the Bake Sale* has a process for development and a set of core values that BPS adopted.

Organizing the Work

- BPS Family & Student Engagement Standards
 - Adapted from National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships
 - Modified to fit Boston Context and include student engagement
 - Form the core of the capacity building work
- Engagement Facilitators
 - Analyze BPS and school data: performance data with specific focus on achievement gaps, school climate data
 - Develop recommendations and technical assistance focused on improving engagement levels and linking engagement to learning

Organizing the Work

- Family and Community Outreach Coordinators
 - Bridge the culture of home and the culture of school
 - Performance Agreements
 - Participation in PD for both FCOC and Principal
 - Family Engagement Action Teams
 - Parent University Participation
 - 5 Core Elements of Family Engagement

Facilitating the Work

- 5 Core Elements of Family Engagement
 - Home-School Compact (NCLB - Title I)
 - School Parent Council (BPS Policy)
 - School Site Council (MA Ed Reform, BPS/BTU Bargaining Agreement)
 - Whole School Improvement Plan (BPS Policy)
 - Family Engagement Plan (NCLB - Title I)

Facilitating the Work

- High Impact Strategies
 - Aligned with BPS Academic Targets
 - Developed to support WSIP requirement to link engagement to instructional strategies
- Parent University
 - Primary strategy for building the capacity of families to become partners for student success
 - Focus on family engagement from cradle to career

Facilitating the Work

- Family Learning Guides
 - Developed in conjunction with BPS Office of Curriculum & Instruction
 - Provides information for parents regarding what students should know and be able to do at each grade level, how to support learning at home, and tips for communication with teachers

Facilitating the Work

- **Measuring Progress**
 - Standards Implementation
 - District Climate Surveys
 - Administered by BPS Office of Research, Assessment and Evaluation
 - Surveys aligned to BPS Family & Student Engagement Standards
 - Parent University
 - Participation – school targets 10%
 - Identifying correlations between Parent U participation and student outcomes
 - Increases in parent efficacy

Facilitating the Work

- **Continuous Improvement**
 - Family Engagement Advisory Groups: Parent/Community Advisory, Principal Advisory, and Parent University Collaborative (Community Partners)
 - Ongoing Internal Data Review and Planning Process

Leadership Matters

- The message from the top of the organization sets the stage for implementation
- There must be non-negotiables that will allow the work to take root
- Accountability measures must be directly connected to outcomes/impact

Family Engagement Examples

Mishaela Durán

*Director of Government Affairs,
PTA National Office of Programs and
Public Policy*

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Arizona

Creating “Family Friendly” Title I Schools

- The Arizona PIRC collaborates with the SEA and state PTA to conduct “Family-Friendly Walkthroughs” in Title I schools.
- PIRC staff interviews parents, students, teachers, and administrators to assess and develop recommendations to improve the school’s environment and make it more welcoming for families.
- The assessment is based on PTA’s research-based Standards for Family-School Partnerships.
- Arizona SEA allocated ARRA dollars to improve family engagement in 180 Title I schools identified as In Need of Improvement.
- These schools will receive additional technical assistance from the PIRC and develop an action team with a chair trained in research-based models of effective family engagement.

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Indiana

Training Parent Leaders from Cradle to Career

- Indiana PIRC's Parent Leadership Academies train parent leaders on how to navigate the educational system, advocate for and engage in school improvement, and support student learning at home.
- Graduates of the Parent Leadership Academies become parent trainers and often take on leadership and parent outreach positions in their child's school.
- Parent Leadership Academies are facilitated by PTA leaders funded by Title I dollars to coordinate family engagement efforts in these schools. These leaders are engaged and begin their training as early as when their child is enrolled in the Head Start program.

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New Mexico

Engaging Fathers and Male Role Models in the School Community

- At Dolores Gonzales, a Title I elementary school in New Mexico, father involvement is a priority.
- Each year, the school works with the local and state PTA to conduct the “Embracing Fatherhood” program.
- Through “Embracing Fatherhood,” the schools hosts a male involvement summit for fathers to collaborate and provide recommendations about how to engage more males in school. The summit is also supplemented by creative communication and outreach methods, including bilingual videos and phone trees, to reach the community’s diverse population.
- After the first year of the program, father engagement at the school doubled.