Resource 3

Plan for Involving Families in Decision Making and Advocacy

Use the ideas on the following page to frame a plan to involve families in decision making and advocacy on behalf of their children.

List four benefits of involving parents in decision making and advocacy.

1.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
2.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
3.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
4.) ____________________________________________________________________________________

Identify four areas in which you can involve parents in decision making and advocacy for their children or the community.

1.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
2.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
3.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
4.) ____________________________________________________________________________________

Name four guidelines to follow which will involve parents in decision making and advocacy.

1.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
2.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
3.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
4.) ____________________________________________________________________________________

List resources that would support parent decision making about an issue that is relevant to them and to you.

1.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
2.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
3.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
4.) ____________________________________________________________________________________
Strategies for Teaming with Parents

Areas for Parental Decision Making and Advocacy for a Student
Parents should be involved in decisions that are made regarding whether a student:
- Needs more help than what is provided for in general education
- Is retained in a grade
- Attends public school
- Participates in extracurricular activities
- Enters an alternative school program
- Participates in a field trip or other activity away from school

Common Areas for Parental Decision Making and Advocacy for the School and its Programs
Parents should also be invited to serve on decision making committees such as:
- Site-based school advocacy management council
- Parent advisory committee for a program such as Head Start, a reading program, the bilingual program or the school library
- PTA/PTO or another parent organization
- Classroom committee
- Task force organized around an issue
- Search committee for a principal or program leader
- Planning committee for the school or one of its programs

Strategies That Promote Team Building with Families:
- Highly motivated individuals share a common interest.
- Ownership and responsibility for tasks are shared.
- Problems are solved effectively.
- Team members increase communication.
- Major areas of concern and community needs are identified.
- Resources to achieve goals are identified.

The Process for Building a Parent Committee:
- Establish a goal, identified by a needs assessment or a response to a request for funding. The committee should be made up of diverse stakeholders, including families and community members.
- Be ready to explain the criteria for membership and practice inclusiveness.
- Seek members from different technical, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and strike a balance between families, staff and representatives from the community.
- When the committee convenes, begin the meeting with icebreakers to help members become more comfortable. Ask the following questions: What are the specific goals and objectives of the team? Are results expected? Is the goal to stimulate discussion and dialogue?
- Establish a time frame to identify goals and make recommendations, as well as, a plan to implement those recommendations.
- Encourage members to agree on meeting rules. When disagreement takes place, see that ideas, not members, are the focus. Stress the values of openness, trust and mutual respect.
- Have a committee member record meeting minutes.
- Make decisions by consensus.