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## ***thrive report***

Vol. 1, Number 7, September 2007

### **September Issue: Family Involvement**

Core Issue: Family  
Involvement - A Key to  
Student Success

Fresh from the Field

### **thrive by the numbers**

**100** Percentage of RI  
District Wellness  
subcommittees that  
require parents to be  
members.

**30** Number of years of  
research confirming that  
family involvement is a  
powerful influence on  
children's achievement in  
school.

**54** Percentage of  
parents with children in  
RI public *elementary*  
*schools* that participated  
in the 2006-2007 SALT  
Survey.

### ***September's Focus: Family Involvement***

Let's welcome in the 2007-2008 school year with the September edition of the ***thrive report*** that focuses on family involvement. Family involvement makes an enormous impact on student attitude, attendance, and academic achievement. According to the U.S. Department of Education, research confirms that, regardless of the economic, racial, or cultural background of the family, when parents are partners in their children's education, the results are improved student achievement, better school attendance, reduced dropout rates, and decreased delinquency.

As a component of coordinated school health, family and community involvement fosters partnerships among schools, families, community groups and individuals. These partnerships result in sharing successes, maximizing resources, helping children and youth develop healthy behaviors and promoting healthy families.

Current information on family and community involvement from the School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) surveys is detailed in the [InformationWorks 2007](#) report on public education in Rhode Island. Schools can use this data to inform strategies for strengthening partnerships with families and creating greater community support for schools. The [Engaging Families and Communities summaries](#) are a great way to gauge parent involvement in your communities. More importantly, it shows how other schools are doing on the same indicator. Ideally schools can become resources for each other regarding successful strategies.

Additional family involvement information and resources are available on the [thrive](#) and [ParentLinkRI](#) websites.

### ***The Core Issue: Family Involvement - A Key to Student Success***

The beginning of the school year offers great opportunities to build

**32** Percentage of parents with children in RI public middle schools that participated in the 2006-2007 SALT survey.

**12** Percentage of parents with children in RI public high schools that participated in the 2006-2007 SALT survey.

**10** Percentage increase in parental involvement in schools nationally between 1999 and 2003.

**25** Percentage of parents of RI middle school students who said that their school does not help them talk with their children about health related issues.

**3902** Number of hits to the [ParentLinkRI](#) website July through August 2007.

Sources: [U.S. Department of Education](#), [U.S. Department of Education](#), [2006-2007 RI SALT Survey](#)

## Family Involvement Links

[National Parent Teacher Association](#)

[Family Involvement Network of Educators \(FINE\)](#)

[Can We Talk?](#)

Rhode Island Department of  
Elementary and Secondary  
Education

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Donald L. Carcieri Governor

Peter McWalters,

and strengthen parent involvement in your school. As children first enter formal schooling, they not only begin to spend more time away from their families but they are also spending more time with other children. This time away from family and broader social interactions increases throughout adolescence and into adulthood. It is a critical and necessary part of healthy growth and development for both children and adolescents. It is also an important function of education to promote safe healthy and nurturing environments to support social and emotional development.

Education reform efforts at local, state and federal levels emphasize the importance of family involvement in student success. Research has demonstrated that parent involvement in education transcends all other barriers to learning. Parent involvement encompasses a wide variety of initiatives including ensuring children come to school well-nourished and with a good night's rest to participate in school decision-making forums.

The [National Center for Health Education](#) further provides information on the importance of family involvement in education:

Although some working and single parents may be unable to contribute to schools because of work commitments and time constraints, educators are discovering many additional ways that parents can help students and their schools. Some of these ways are dependent upon the school's desire to involve parents. To effect change, parents must find time to participate in their children's education while schools must provide the supports necessary for them to be involved.

The Harvard Family Research Project recently published [research briefs](#) outlining specific parent engagement strategies that have the greatest impact on student achievement. Three major areas of focus are relevant in elementary, middle and high school parent involvement including parenting, home/school relationships and responsibility for learning outcomes. According to the brief, parenting attitudes, values and practices are key. Home/school relationships include both formal and informal ways that families and school staff interrelate. Responsibility for learning emphasizes the value and related activities that children are exposed to that promote learning skills development.

Research summarized on the thrive website demonstrates that when parents are involved in education, children are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores
- Complete homework more consistently
- Attend school more regularly
- Have better social skills
- Showed improved behavior
- Adapt well to school
- Have higher self-esteem

Commissioner Department of  
Education

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© thrive report  
Annie Marie Silvia, Editor

The *thrive report* can be found at  
[www.thriveri.org/report.html](http://www.thriveri.org/report.html)

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- Have better relationships with their parents
- Graduate and go on to college

Together these efforts will connect families and schools to help children succeed in school and in their future. It is the unifying goal and the foundation of successful family-school partnerships.

## ***Fresh from the Field***

*Submitted by Christine Arouth, Director, Sullivan School Family Center and Newport COZ*

When we think of parent engagement, what often comes to mind is chaperoning field trips, making baked goods, and joining the PTO to raise money for the school. Schools have started asking parents to join school improvement teams and other district level parent leadership committees, but have often felt unsure how to best utilize them once they are at the table. Parents sometimes feel uncomfortable and unsure of their role, while schools struggle to speak in language parents understand.

At the Family Center, we have learned that we need to recognize that there are a variety of ways in which parents can and do participate in their children's education. Just because parents may not attend a PTO or school committee meeting, does not mean they are not involved in their children's education.

We have tried many types of programs to engage parents in school. We recognize that school is not always a place where parents feel comfortable, so we ask them to participate in fun, non-threatening family activities, alongside faculty, staff, and the principal. Here are some examples of our successful parent engagement strategies:

- **Gallery** - Each year, we create a "gallery" in the gym during fall Parent/Teacher Conferences. The gym is decorated with student work from all grade levels. Every student has something on display. We have a reading corner, sometimes with guest readers, we have a math activity center, an arts and crafts area, and the PTO sells refreshments. Parents are encouraged to come in and mingle and look at the work. Parents can leave children in the gym with staff, which has helped parents stay longer to see all of their children's teachers.
- **Yoga Classes and Men's Basketball** - Throughout the year, we host yoga classes and a men's basketball program. Parents, faculty, and staff members, as well as community members exercise side by side in these programs. These activities help open lines of communication and increase comfort levels.
- **Mother-daughter book clubs and Parenting Workshops** - Promote literacy and provide a forum to discuss topics related to child-rearing and educational success.
- **Pancakes with the Principal** - Provide parents a regular, monthly opportunity to talk with the principal

and help them feel connected.

- **Have Fun with you Kids** - Invited parents to join their child in physical education class during one week in the spring. Many parents came and had fun jumping rope with their children at school.

With a creative and energetic faculty and staff, we are working hard to engage parents in ways that are meaningful and yield positive results for children in Newport.

*To share your first-person success stories in "Fresh from the Field," please email [Annemarie.Silvia@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Annemarie.Silvia@ride.ri.gov).*

As always, we welcome and encourage your feedback about **thrive**, Rhode Island's Coordinated School Health model. Please email us at [rosemary.reilly-chammat@health.ri.gov](mailto:rosemary.reilly-chammat@health.ri.gov) or [midge.sabatini@ride.ri.gov](mailto:midge.sabatini@ride.ri.gov).

Sincerely,

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