

Dissemination

The Many Faces of Parent Involvement

During the 2003-2004 school year, Lawrence Family Development Charter School published a parental involvement best practices manual entitled, "The Many Faces of Parent Involvement." The focus of this 120-page publication is on successful parental involvement activities in use at six Massachusetts charter schools. We believe the strategies highlighted in this manual can be easily replicated at other schools looking for ways to have a positive impact on their parent involvement programs.

Parental involvement should be an important element of every school's efforts to improve their students' academic achievement levels because engaged parents impact their children's development and learning in a positive way. Our school and the others featured in this manual are constantly working to reach out to families; and we encourage all parents to participate with their children's schools in this effort. We hope the information contained in this manual will provide ideas and guidelines that can be used by all schools and parents interested in this topic.

On October 1, 2003, Lawrence Family Development Charter School facilitated a daylong statewide conference in Worcester, Massachusetts, open to all charter and traditional public school teachers, administrators, and parent volunteers. Approximately 100 people attended from both sectors of the public education community. The conference offered a series of breakout sessions conducted by the six charter schools featured in "The Many Faces of Parent Involvement" manual.

In addition to the breakout sessions, two distinguished guests spoke on the topic of parental involvement in general sessions:

Holly Kreider, Ed.D., from the Harvard Family Research Project, set the tone in her morning presentation "Reframing Parent Involvement." Through her research at the Harvard School of Education, she described the changes in concepts of parent involvement over the years. She concluded by discussing how parent involvement has now been reframed to focus on knowing families, listening to their histories, learning about cultures, and helping parents work with children in the home.

In the afternoon session, Anne Greenbaum, MSW, Director of Boston Excels, delivered an interactive and energizing presentation on the family support approach used under the Community Schools model. She highlighted the need for onsite social services, mental health services, community development, family literacy, staff development, and prevention programs aimed at addressing both academic and non-academic barriers to learning.

More information on these topics, including our best practices manual, may be found and downloaded at our website www.lfdcs.org.