

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

June 24, 1997

FAMILY CONFERENCE

DATE: June 25, 1997  
LOCATION: Vanderbilt University  
Langford Auditorium  
EVENT TIME: 11:00 am - 12:45 pm  
FROM: Bruce Reed

I. PURPOSE

To highlight your commitment to improving education and to increasing family involvement in education. You will announce that the Department of Education will be releasing a handbook on how to create school compacts.

II. BACKGROUND

This is the third family conference you have attended, and the sixth family conference the Vice President has held. The conference is entitled "Family Re-Union 6: Families and Learning," and it will focus on family involvement in education. The Child and Family Policy Center at the Vanderbilt University for Public Policy Studies and the Children, Youth and Family Consortium at the University of Minnesota are co-sponsors of the event. The conference will be attended by approximately 1,000 invited participants and will be broadcast live via satellite throughout the country.

In your address, you will be announcing that the Department of Education will be releasing a publication entitled, A Compact for Learning: An Action Handbook for School-Family-Community Partnerships. School compacts are required for schools that participate in the Title I program to ensure strong parental involvement, but can be a powerful tool for all schools that seek to raise student achievement. The handbook provides step-by-step strategies, examples, and checklists on how to create an effective school compact, how to use a school compact, and how to strengthen and improve a school compact over time, based on results. The published version of the handbook will be available in late summer, and copies may be reserved by calling the Department of Education and will also be available on the Department's World Wide Web site.

You and the Vice President will be leading a discussion designed to highlight efforts to involve families in learning. You will be seated on stools on stage, and you will have the option of moving freely during the discussion as in a town hall setting. The first three

panelists will give vivid examples of local programs; the second three will discuss ways of expanding these strategies on a large scale; the following two panelists will describe strategies for communicating these ideas to the country; and the last four will talk about federal, state, and local policy that facilitates their efforts.

Prior to your arrival the Vice President will make a formal address and will announce the following:

- Findings from a parent survey sponsored by the Department of Education, the Family Involvement Partnership for Education, and GTE.
- Establishment of a new partnership to train teachers on parental involvement, with a kickoff teleconference on effective use of technology set for this fall.
- Creation of a privately financed school reform fund, headed by John Doerr, that would provide grants to "start-up," "speed-up," and "turnaround" public schools.
- Announcement of a new technology tool -- an "electronic dashboard" -- that parents could use to get important information about their child's school (school standards, events, homework assignments, etc.) and their child's performance, and to communicate with other parents and teachers.

Also, prior to your arrival, a short film of t.v. and movie clips on the subject of families and learning will be shown. Jeff Cole from UCLA provided this film, which is similar to his film that was shown at last year's conference. Following the film, the Vice President will lead an hour-long conversation with six individuals about family involvement in education. These participants include: James Comer, Yale Child Study Center; Hodding Carter, Publisher and former Assistant Secretary of State; a father and son from inner city Baltimore who have worked to involve poor urban families in their children's education, Gayle Ross, a Cherokee story teller; and Phon Malaikham, a young Laotian refugee who is now a teacher in Tennessee. Following this panel, the audience will be shown a documentary produced by the Boston University Film School with children of differing ages discussing their family's involvement or lack of involvement in their schools.

### III. PARTICIPANTS

#### **The Vice President**

**Secretary Richard Riley**

**Susan Genrich-Cameron**, Principal, Cason Lane Academy, Murfreesboro, TN

**Yvonne Chan**, Principal, Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, San Fernando, CA

**Robert Altman**, Bank Street College Faculty and Liaison to Midtown West Public School, NY

**Warlene Gary**, former teacher now serving as the Manager of the Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education. \*She is representing Bob Chase, President of the NEA at this event.

**Anne O'Neill McGintis**, Parent, School and Community Involvement Coordinator, Hamilton Schools, Chattanooga, TN

Diana Lam (DEE-AH-NA LOM), Superintendent, San Antonio School District  
John Doerr, Partner, Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield & Byers, Menlo Park, CA  
Patty Burness, Executive Director, George Lucas Foundation, San Rafael, CA  
Betty Webb, Executive Director, Family and Community Educational Services,  
Minneapolis, MN  
Bill Purcell, Director, Child and Family Policy Center, Vanderbilt University, and  
Former House Majority Leader of the Tennessee General Assembly  
State Senator Ember Reichgott Junge (YOUNG), State Senator, St. Paul, Minnesota

#### IV. PRESS PLAN

Open Press.

#### V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- Mrs. Gore will announce you and the Vice President onto the stage.
- You and the Vice President will take your seats.
- The Vice President will make brief opening remarks.
- You will make brief opening remarks.
- The Vice President will lead the discussion by introducing each participant individually.
- You will have the option of asking follow up questions to each participant.
- After each participant has spoken, the Vice President will make a closing statement.
- You will proceed to the podium to deliver your prepared remarks.
- You will then work a ropeline and then depart.

\*SEQUENCE OF SPEAKERS PARTICIPATING IN THE ROUND TABLE  
DISCUSSION ATTACHED.

#### VI. REMARKS

To be provided by speech writing.

#### VII. ATTACHMENTS

- Sequence of Events.
- A Compact for Learning: An Action Handbook for School-Family-Community Partnerships.

**Forum Participants and Suggested Questions**

(IN SPEAKING ORDER -- THE VICE PRESIDENT WILL INTRODUCE PARTICIPANTS, PARTICIPANTS WILL SPEAK. THE PRESIDENT HAS THE OPTION TO ASK FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS.)

**The Vice President** - makes opening remarks.

**The President** - makes opening remarks.

**Susan Genrich-Cameron** - Principal of Cason Lane Academy in Murfreesboro, TN. Susan is the head of a school that combines family centered decision making and the creative use of learning technology.

*SUGGESTED QUESTION: Susan, how did parents influence the creation of this wonderful school?*

**Yvonne Chan** - Co-founder and Principal of Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Los Angeles, CA. Yvonne, with other neighborhood families, has transformed a failing elementary school into a strong charter school that is the core of a new community.

*SUGGESTED QUESTION: Hillary visited this wonderful school when she was in Los Angeles a few months ago. She was struck by the change you have created in the families, the school and the community, and the pride that the children are taking in their success. How did you accomplish that?*

**Roberta Altman** - Bank Street College Faculty and Liaison with Mid-Town West, a New York City public school. She teaches graduate classes in education.

*SUGGESTED QUESTION: This seems like a model partnership that would be beneficial to other schools. Roberta, what role do families play in forming partnerships like this?*

**Warlene Gary** - Manager of the Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education. Warlene is representing NEA President Bob Chase. She has taught disabled and disadvantaged children in D.C., and has worked at the NEA to implement nationwide parental involvement initiatives.

*SUGGESTED QUESTION: Warlene, you're a former teacher and you lead an effort to revitalize urban schools. How can we do a better job forming partnerships between families and teachers in our cities?*

**Anne O'Neill McGintis** - Coordinator of the 'Parent Resource Center' program, which works with PTAs to form Parent Resource Centers in 80 schools in Chattanooga and the surrounding area.

*SUGGESTED QUESTION: Anne, how do you mobilize so many families, communities and schools in this process?*

**Diana Lam** (DEEAHNA LOM) - Superintendent of San Antonio School District. Diana has reorganized her entire school district by focusing on student achievement and parent involvement.

***SUGGESTED QUESTION: I know you've used some of the successful models demonstrated by New American Schools. How has this process improved the quality of learning and given families good choices in their public school systems?***

**John Doerr** - Partner, Kleiner Perkins, Caufield & Byers, Menlo Park, CA. Leader of a new technology tool -- an "electronic dashboard" -- that will help American families and schools. The dashboard is currently being developed by a group of high tech companies in California. Doerr recently led a group of high tech CEOs in calling for national education standards.

***SUGGESTED QUESTION: John, would you explain how this prototype could facilitate home and school communication, and surround children, families and teachers with vital information?***

**Patty Burness** - Executive Director of the George Lucas Foundation. Patty will discuss a film the George Lucas Foundation has created to help parents understand what the best schools of the 21st century should look like, and how to help make needed changes a reality.

***SUGGESTED QUESTION: Patty, how can film be used to help teachers, families and communities?***

**Betty Webb** - Executive Director, Family and Community Educational Services, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Betty is responsible for the process that led the Minneapolis public school system to be the first in the country to benchmark family involvement.

***SUGGESTED QUESTION: Betty, can you tell us what effect your efforts are having on teaching and learning?***

**Bill Purcell** - Director of the Child and Family Policy Center at Vanderbilt University, and former Majority Leader of the Tennessee General Assembly and former Chair of the Select Committee on Children and Youth. As an elected official, Bill helped pass legislation that made Anne McGintis' work in Chattanooga possible.

***SUGGESTED QUESTION: What was the change that you proposed, and how can other states facilitate family involvement?***

**State Senator Ember Reichsgott Junge (YOUNG)** - Minnesota State Senator. State Senator Junge was instrumental in passing legislation that has given families much greater choice in their public schools.

***SUGGESTED QUESTION: How has that worked, and what can other states learn from your experience?***

Secretary Riley - will make remarks.

The Vice President - will make closing remarks and introduce the President to make a formal address from the podium.

The President - will make prepared remarks.

# conference agenda

June 25, 1997 | Vanderbilt University | Nashville, Tennessee

A conference sponsored by The University of Minnesota Children, Youth and Family Consortium and The Child and Family Policy Center at the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies, and hosted by the Select Committee on Children and Youth of the Tennessee General Assembly.

## OPENING SESSION | LANGFORD AUDITORIUM

8:30 - 8:40 a.m.

### Welcome

Joe Wyatt, Chancellor of  
Vanderbilt University

Martha Farrell Erickson, Director of the  
Children, Youth & Family Consortium,  
University of Minnesota and co-sponsor of  
Family Re-Union 6

Bill Purcell, Director of the Child & Family  
Policy Center, Vanderbilt University Institute  
for Public Policy Studies and co-sponsor of  
Family Re-Union 6

8:40 - 8:50 a.m.

### "I'll Tell You the Rest Tomorrow"

UCLA School of Communication Film  
Introduction by Vice President Al Gore

A video collage containing images of family  
involvement in learning from TV and films.  
assembled by Jeffrey Cole, Director, UCLA  
Center for Communication Policy.

8:50 - 9:50 a.m.

### Forum: "Storytellers"

The Vice President leads a forum discussion  
of compelling stories of intergenerational  
learning. Six participants discuss how their  
lives were shaped by their family  
experiences.

- 9:50 - 10:30 a.m. **Vice President's Address**  
and demonstration of new technology
- 10:30 - 10:55 a.m. **"Lessons from the Ones We Love"**  
A Boston University Film. Introduction by Tipper Gore
- Interviews are conducted with individual children discussing their families' roles in their learning process.
- 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. **Forum Discussion with President Clinton and Vice President Gore**  
The discussion will address the following question: What are some of the strategies used to actively involve families in children's learning?
- 12 - 12:30 p.m. **The President's Address**
- 12:50 - 1:50 p.m. **LUNCH | PEABODY CAMPUS — MAGNOLIA LAWN**  
Remarks by Tipper Gore

## **SECOND SESSION | PEABODY COLLEGE CAMPUS**

- 2 - 3:15 p.m. **Vice President's Conversation with Remote Sites**  
(Rotunda, Social Religious Bldg. — Peabody Campus)  
The Vice President, with an audience of policy leaders, hosts a discussion with four live interactive remote sites. These sites are examples of creative involvement of families in early childhood learning, using technology to link families and schools, training and involvement of parents and teachers, services linking to schooling, and new approaches to teaching and learning. Remote sites are in Boston, Chula Vista, Calif., Minneapolis, MN and Union City, N.J.
- 2 - 3:15 p.m. **Workshops**  
Audience attends workshops in four clusters. These workshops are concurrent with the Policy Session in the Rotunda led by the Vice President.
1. **How Very Young Children Learn: Helping Children Reach Their Full Potential**  
Location: MRL Bldg., Room 241  
Session Leader: Dr. Stanley Greenspan, George Washington Medical School  
Program: Migrant Head Start
  2. **Family Literacy and Preparation for Early Learning**  
Location: Social Religious Bldg., Room 122  
Session Leader: Terry Peterson, U.S. Department of Education  
Programs: Partnership for Family Involvement

3. **Preparing Children for School and Parents for Work**  
 Location: Social Religious Bldg., Room 121  
 Session Leader: Myron Ogglesby-Pitts, Hull-Jackson Magnet School  
 Programs: Caldwell Early Learning Center, Atlanta Head Start
4. **Reaching Out to Parents from the Start**  
 Location: Social Religious Bldg., Lobby  
 Session Leader: Dr. Martha Farrell Erickson, University of Minnesota  
 Programs: Maternal Infant Outreach Worker's Project and Minnesota's  
 Early Childhood Initiative
5. **Schools Working with Families**  
 Location: Hill Bldg., Room 75  
 Session Leader: Don Davis, Center for Responsive Education  
 Programs: California's Vaughn New Century Learning Center,  
 Tennessee's Family Resource Centers, Baltimore's Parent Academy
6. **Extended Day Learning and One-Stop Services for Families**  
 Location: Mayborn Bldg., Room 205  
 Session Leader: Bill Milliken, Communities in Schools  
 Programs: Cason Lane Academy, Tennessee; Schools for Extended Learning,  
 Minneapolis, MN; Washington Heights, NY
7. **The Workplace Supporting School/ Family Partnerships**  
 Location: Mayborn Bldg., Room 204  
 Session Leader: Faith Wohl, Office of Workplace Initiatives, U.S. General Services  
 Administration  
 Companies: John Hancock, Mattel, Hemmings Motor News, Work Family Directions
8. **Creating Active School, Family and Community Partnerships**  
 Location: Payne Bldg., Room 110  
 Session Leader: Joyce Milliken, Johns Hopkins University  
 Programs: National Network Partnership 2000 and O'Hearn School, Boston
9. **The DASHBOARD: A New Gateway and Navigator for Families**  
 Location: Social Religious Bldg., Room 201  
 John Doerr, Kleiner, Perkins Caufield & Byers (KPCB)  
 Programs: Spectrum Holobyte WebTV, Marimba, Four 11
10. **Linking Home and School Through Technology**  
 Location: Social Religious Bldg., Room 223  
 Session Leader: Jeroid Bauch, Peabody College  
 Programs: Eisenhower School, New Jersey, Family Education Network, CAST
11. **Building Networks of Learning for Families, Educators and Students**  
 Location: Social Religious Bldg., Room 130  
 Session Leader: Larry Kirkman, Benton Foundation  
 Programs: Learning Technology Center at Peabody College, NETschools
12. **Adapting to Differing Learning Styles**  
 Location: Social Religious Bldg., Room 102  
 Session Leader: Howard Gardner, Harvard University  
 Programs: Cab Calloway School, Delaware; Washington High School
13. **Strategies That Involve Families in Schools**  
 Location: Social Religious Bldg., Room 132  
 Session Leader: James Comer, Yale Study Center  
 Programs: Bowling Park Elementary School, Virginia; Parent Academy, Baltimore, MD;  
 National Council of Jewish Women Parent Involvement Project

The Vice President is planning to make four announcements:

- **Findings from a parent survey** sponsored by the Department of Education, the Family Involvement Partnership for Education, and GTE. Key findings:
  - 88% of parents of parents think schools treat them as important partners in helping children learn, and 86% say teachers generally listen to what they have to say.
  - However, close to 80% of parents believe they and their teachers should learn more about how parents can be more effectively involved in their children's education.
  - Parents give higher marks to elementary schools than middle schools on several measures of parental involvement. For example, 62% of elementary school parents said schools do a very job explaining to parents what students should know and be able to do in each subject, versus 45% in middle school.
- **Establishment of a new partnership to train teachers on parental involvement**, with a kickoff teleconference on effective use of technology set for this fall.
  - Founders include members of the Department of Education-sponsored Family Involvement Partnership for Education and four leading schools of education: Vanderbilt University, University of Minnesota, Bank Street College (NY), and Columbia Teachers College.
  - In addition to the fall conference, the partnership expects to produce and disseminate a guidebook on effective practices, sponsor new research, and organize follow-up meetings and activities to allow teachers to share ideas.
- **Creation of a privately financed school reform fund** that would provide grants to support good school leadership and innovation among three different categories of public schools: "start-up," "speed-up," and "turnaround" schools.
  - The fund is being established as a 501(c)(3) based in Silicon Valley, headed by John Doerr and overseen by a board of private sector and education leaders.
  - The VP will have no formal role in the fund, although it stems from his challenge and vision of school improvement.
  - The VP has agreed to be the honorary co-chair of a kickoff conference to be held in the next several months.
- **Announcement (and demonstration) of a new technology tool** -- an "electronic dashboard" -- that parents could access via computer to get important information about their child's school (school standards, events, homework assignments, etc.) and their

child's performance (homework completion, attendance, etc.). The dashboard will also help parents communicate with other parents, as well as with teachers.

- Student privacy will be scrupulously protected using cutting edge technology, as well as passwords for parents.
- Developers of this new technology include Netscape and Marimba. Marimba's CEO is expected to assist with the demo.
- An early version of the dashboard will be used to gather input on what's useful, with a more complete version made widely available later.
- The VP will note that there are additional technology tools in existence to help parents, students and teachers work together.

Family Conf.

**INFORMATION FOR DINNER GUESTS  
FAMILY RE-UNION CONFERENCE PLANNING DINNER  
APRIL 24, 1996**

This dinner will be one of a series of discussions held by the Vice President to create a shared understanding of the issues to be considered at this year's family policy conference, "Family Re-Union VI: Families and Learning". (See enclosed information about Family Re-Union).

The sponsors and the planning group have been considering every aspect of family involvement in learning from early childhood on. The sponsors and the Vice President are particularly concerned about how schools can respond more adequately to the ways that children learn best. We will consider what changes would be necessary in order for schools and pre-schools to:

1. **Have an interest in, and an ability to, characterize each child's underlying individual differences and developmental capacities.**
2. **Have learning approaches based on these differences and dynamic, emotional interactions. They use evolving technologies to work with differences and to enhance interactive learning, not to replace it.**
3. **Promote ongoing relationships between educators and children characterized by warmth and nurturance.**
4. **Create a partnership between educators and the child's family involving collaboration on school governance, the integration of learning experiences in home and school and the facilitation of the child's overall development.**
5. **Build on the strengths of communities to support learning, and promote cooperation and future citizenship with service learning.**

The evening will begin with an informal cocktail hour, followed by a discussion in the front hall. During this time we will hear briefly about the process of creating schools that meet these challenges and seek reaction from the varying points of view represented by the guests.

During dinner, at our individual tables we will continue to discuss the role that each of our constituencies and organizations would have to play in effecting these changes, and the major barriers to success.

At dessert the Vice President will ask us to join in a general discussion and hear our suggestions about action steps toward achieving these goals.

**DINNER GUESTS**  
**Family Re-Union VI Planning Dinner**  
**April 24, 1997**

**THE SPONSORS**

**Representative Bill Purcell**, Director of the Child and Family Policy Center at the Vanderbilt Institute of Public Policy Studies and former House Majority Leader for the Tennessee General Assembly and former Chairman of the Select Committee on Children and Youth. Known for his national leadership in the issues of education reform, criminal sentencing, health care and workers compensation. He led the effort which resulted in passage of the Education Improvement Act, creating "21st Century Classrooms" in schools across the state.

**Dr Martha Farrell ("Marti") Erickson**, Director of the Children, Youth and Family Consortium of the University of Minnesota, Marti is a founder of the award-winning STEEP program, a preventive strategy for high risk parents and infants based on attachment theory and research. She is Co-Chair of the Father to Father program. Featured in a weekly column, radio show and PBS TV show, she speaks and consults nationally and abroad on topics related to her work.

**Ron Erickson**, is Senior Partner of KKE Architects, a large Minneapolis firm that specializes in school design.

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**Dr Doris Alvarez**, Principal of the Hoover High School in San Diego

Elected National High School Principal of the Year for 1997, and California High School Principal of the Year for 1996. Since 1962 she has been a teacher and administrator, chiefly at the high school level.

**Joe Alvarez**, is a pilot for Southwest Airlines and a retired US Naval Commander.

**Gordon Ambach**, Executive Director of the Council of Chief State School Officers

For ten years Mr Ambach was New York State Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York. He served on President Clinton's Transition Team, as a member of the National Council on Education Standards and Testing, and led in the development of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act.

**John Anderson**, President, New American Schools

NAS is a non-profit, bipartisan, public-private partnership dedicated to creating and disseminating proven new designs for public schools. Following a 30 year career with IBM, he was an educational consultant to corporations, and state based coalitions working to create a systemic school reform policy framework. He served on the

President's Transition Team for the Department of Education.

**Carrie Anderson** ("Cissy"), is a volunteer in the President's and First lady's scheduling office, and Vice President of a hospitality service for diplomats posted to Washington.

**Dr Yvonne Chan**, Principal of the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Los Angeles a charter school serving 1200 students living in poverty of whom 95% are Hispanic and 4.5% African American. She is a nationally recognized force behind bold public school reform and restructuring which includes high standards, one-stop shopping for human, social and educational services. Awarded the National Educator Award in 1991 by the CA Department of Education, she donated the entire \$25,000 to her school, and has leveraged more than a million dollars in matching grants. She is also Adjunct Professor at UCLA and California State University.

**Eugene Chan**, is a retired sales representative for Southern Wine and Spirits and a 15 year Teamster Steward.

**Dr Richard Elmore**, Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Co-Chair of the Harvard Project on Schooling and Children. His principal research includes work on the relationship between school and district level management, instructional improvement, and school accountability. Author of "Restructuring in the Classroom: Teaching, Learning and School Organization" and "Getting to Scale with Educational Practice." He has held legislative and policy positions in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

**Lynn Elmore**, is a staff assistant in the teacher education programs at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

**Dr Jill Iscol**, President of the Iscol Family Foundation

An educational sociologist, Jill is a member of the President's Council at Columbia Teacher's College where she previously directed the pre-service program in childhood education, and a Board Member of Bank Street College where she was formerly a member of the graduate faculty.

**Kenneth Iscol**, has owned and operated mobile and personal communications businesses for the past 30 years.

**Dr Augusta ("Gussy") Kappner**, President of Bank Street College which is known for its programs in teacher education, early childhood education, leadership training and a progressive school for children. Previously she has served as Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, US Department of Education, Acting President of the City College of New York, and President of the Borough of Manhattan Community College.

**Dr Thomas Kappner**, is Adjunct Associate Professor of Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the City College of New York.

**Carole Kennedy**, Principal of New Haven Elementary School in Columbia, Missouri is President of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, which represents more than 27,000 elementary and secondary school educators in the US, Canada and overseas. A principal for 15 years, and teacher for 17. Carole has been a leader at the state and national level in the NAESP.

**Ed McElroy**, Secretary-Treasurer, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

A former teacher in Rhode Island, Mr McElroy was president of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO, President of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers, a member of the AFT Executive Committee, and AFT Vice President.

**Edwina McElroy**, is a reading specialist in the Fairfax County School System and has taught in McLean and Rhode Island.

**Deborah Meier**, Senior Annenberg Fellow at Brown University, Vice Chair of the Coalition of Essential Schools, and Director of a new elementary school to open in Boston in the fall of 1997. Beginning as a Kindergarten and Head Start teacher, she was founder and teacher-director of a network of break-the-mold schools in East Harlem, and principal of the famous Central Park East School.

**William Milliken**, Founder and President of Communities in Schools (formerly Cities in Schools), the nation's largest stay-in-school network, which reached more than 262,000 students and their families in 1996-97. Mr Milliken was White House Advisor on Youth Issues to President Carter, advisor to President Bush on the Education Summit, and is helping to plan "The President's Summit for America's Future" to be held next week.

**The Reverend Jean Milliken**, an Episcopal priest is founder, president and counselor at the Pastoral Counseling Network Inc.

**Dick Parsons**, President of Time Warner, Inc, and a member of the Board of Directors.

He is Vice Chairman of the New York City Partnership and Chamber of Commerce and Chairman of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation. The NYC Partnership is the city's preeminent business and civic organization and is working to engage the business community in workforce development and education.

**Dr Laura Parsons**, is a psychologist for These Our Treasures, Inc, (TOTS), a developmental center in the Bronx, NY serving children ages birth to 5 with developmental difficulties.

**Carol Rasco**, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Education and Director of the America READ Challenge, she previously served as Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy and directed the President's Domestic Policy Council. She was Senior Executive Assistant and chief policy advisor to Governor Clinton.

**Dr Ted Sizer**, President of the Coalition of Essential Schools

Noted long time advocate of school restructuring and reform and originator of the Coalition of Essential Schools which is now a component of the "ATLAS Community" model; one of the seven designs promoted by new American Schools. Author of "Places for Learning" "Places for Joy: Speculations on American School Reform", and "Horace's Compromise", among many other well-known works on school reform.

**Nancy Sizer**, a teacher for over 30 years, she is the Director of a new charter school in Massachusetts.

**Ralph Smith**, Vice President of the Annie E Casey Foundation, and founding President of the Philadelphia Children's Network, founding Director of the National Center on Fathers and Families at the University of Pennsylvania and a member of the university's law school faculty.

**Dorothy ("Cookie") Otani-Smith**, President of Qi Enterprises, Inc., a company specializing in program development and professional education in the field of dentistry. She also consults with private sector companies in the field of oral health care.

**Lois Jean White**, President-Elect of the National PTA, she is a former member of the National PTA's Education Commission, and past president of the Tennessee State PTA where she held numerous other leadership positions. She is a retired principal flutist of the Oak Ridge Symphony, and a flute instructor.

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## **STAFF AND FAMILY**

**Don Gips**, Senior Domestic Policy Advisor to the Vice President, and his wife,

**Elizabeth Berry**, Director of Design Team Operations for New American Schools, she created the original strategy to identify and fund promising visions for dramatic whole-school restructuring.

**Nancy Hoyt**, Advisor to the Vice President for Family Policy and Director of the Family Re-Union conferences, and her daughter,

**Sarah Hoyt Whitman**, President and CEO of Explore, Inc. an experiential after school and extended day learning program, she previously served as Director of Business Planning in the White House Office of National Service and Deputy Director of a division of Americorps.

**Elaine Kamarek**, Senior Domestic Policy Advisor to the Vice President, and her son

**Susan Liss**, Chief of Staff to Tipper Gore and her husband,

**Jeffrey Liss**, Partner and Chief Operating Officer, Piper & Marbury

## FAMILY RE-UNION: A FAMILY POLICY INITIATIVE

### BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Vice President Gore is leading a family policy initiative which is informed by the annual family policy conferences which he moderates. The conferences provide the Vice President and others who make policy at the federal, state and local level an opportunity to learn from the experience of families themselves, and those who work with them. The Vice President believes that for far too long we have created programs designed to address the pathology of individuals, or the needs of the bureaucracy that serves them. He seeks to find ways that we can understand the needs of whole families and communities and build on their strengths. Each conference brings together 800-1000 individuals and provides an opportunity to explore a topic suggested by the work of the previous conference.

For the past few years these conferences have been sponsored by the Children, Youth & Family Consortium of the University of Minnesota and the Select Committee for children & Youth of Tennessee. Funded by charitable foundations and individual donors, they have provided a lively exchange of ideas between experts in various fields, grassroots program directors, academic researchers, and average citizens. The conference site is Nashville, Tennessee.

Previous conferences have covered the general topic of family centered practice, family centered policy development, fatherhood, families and the media and work and family. These Family Re-Union conferences have led to an ongoing policy initiative which seeks to "reinvent" family policy so that it reflects the realities facing families and government today.

Several public and private sector activities have resulted from these conferences. For example, in response to one of the conferences, "Family Re-Union III: The Role of Men in Children's Lives", private sector organizations have created funding and research collaboratives, created "FatherNet", and acted on the Vice President's concept of a national "Father to Father" program. A Presidential Memorandum entitled "Supporting the Role of Fathers in Families" is being implemented by a wide array of federal agencies and programs.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of each conference has been the ongoing partnerships created between organizations and individuals in each field which have built momentum behind new ways of addressing long standing issues such as the absence of fathers in children's lives, the impact of the media culture on children, the delicate balance between work & family, and family involvement in education.

# **Family Re-Union VI: "Families and Learning"**

Vanderbilt University

Nashville, Tennessee

June 25, 1997

## **Background**

The next Family Re-Union conference will focus on the essential relationship between families and their children's learning. Conference attendees will explore the state of our knowledge about this subject as well as successful policies and programs which encourage and support family involvement in learning advanced learning technologies, and strategies for school reform that meet the needs of children's individual learning styles and developmental stages.

## **Sponsorship and Funding**

The sponsors will be the Children, Youth & Family Consortium of the University of Minnesota and the Child and Family Policy Center at the Vanderbilt University Institute for Public Policy Studies. The conference is funded by private charitable donations. No government funds are used.

## **The Issue**

There is an abundance of research demonstrating the essential connection between family involvement and effective learning by children of all ages. This is true for families of all education levels any socio-economic group. This relationship begins at birth with parents as the child's first teachers, and continues through the school years, when parents must become active partners with the schools, and into adulthood.

New research on brain development and attachment supports the need for parents and care-givers to be actively involved in early learning if children are to realize their full potential. Parental involvement especially the involvement of parents for whom school has been a source of frustration and failure, can lead to increased adult literacy and skills leading to employment and increased self esteem.

Despite this research, and many widely varying examples of successful school/family partnerships most schools and school administrations are not designed to encourage this process. Experts in the field of education and child development feel that more attention needs to be paid to the policies at federal, state and local level which may intentionally or unintentionally discourage parental involvement, and that both parents and educators are greatly in need of information about effective strategies for school/family partnerships and school reform strategies that result in effective teaching and learning.

During the last six months the sponsors and the Vice President have met with many leaders in the field of education. Together they have developed a design for the conference which they hope will

promote lively discussion, demonstrate innovative approaches, and lead to positive change in the arenas of policy and practice. In addition to sessions involving the entire audience of 1000 at which the President and Vice President will preside, there will be breakout sessions in four clusters:

- **Early Childhood**
- **Partnerships with Working Families**
- **Learning Technologies**
- **Strategies for Change**

#### Film Reflecting the Viewpoint of Children

Once again the Boston University School of Broadcasting and Film has agreed to produce a film which interviews children on this subject and communicates their experiences in the realm of work and family. In past years this film has been considered one of the most powerful and memorable parts of the conference.

#### A Network of Multiple Sites

Hundreds of remote sites will be networked by satellite and some be able to interact with the conference participants and to give feedback from their locations across the country. Four sites will be live and interactive with the Vice president during a policy discussion.

#### A Survey of Parental Involvement in Education

A major survey sponsored by GTE and the US Department of Education is being conducted. This survey will attempt to discover the extent to which parents are, and want to be, involved in their school-age children's learning.

Elmore: rather than permit function over to schools

MIKE/BILL -  
Is this something we  
could soup up for Family Conf in June?  
-BR

*[Handwritten signature]*

cm -  
File 1014  
under  
Family Conf.

### Overcoming Barriers to Family Involvement in Title I Schools: Report to Congress

This is a 120 page study (with an 11 page executive summary) of barriers to parental involvement in their children's education and strategies for overcoming those barriers. Required by Congress in the Improving America's Schools Act, it also includes findings on early implementation of provisions of the parent involvement provisions in Title I. The report finds that some of the major barriers to increasing parental involvement are time (both for parents and for teachers), technology (for example, lack of access to classroom telephones for teachers or voice mail that could be used to explain homework assignments to parents), training (for both schools and parents), school organization (such as the sheer size and impersonality of many secondary schools). Other barriers cited include lack of education, language and cultural differences between families and schools, and lack of support from employers.

After identifying barriers, the report outlines successful steps that have been taken in 20 schools and districts to help improve parental involvement, such as a parent center in Buffalo that offers parent-child computer classes for students grades 6-12, an elementary school in Philadelphia that operates a parent network headed by a core group of ten parents, and a Cleveland elementary school that holds parent-teacher conferences at the local library and the YMCA, which are closer to some parents homes--and where the principal sometimes contacts employers if necessary to request time off so parents can meet with teachers. In addition, the report covers state policies and practices that support family involvement, with examples from Kentucky, Rhode Island, Wisconsin and elsewhere.

If used in a radio address, the report could highlight several themes: the tie between parental involvement and children's early learning, the link between parental involvement and achievement of high standards, the potential for technology to bring parents and schools closer together, the need for expand family leave legislation, the fact that the Administration's Title I legislation supports closer school-family partnerships, as well as the very broad Family Involvement Partnership for Education that the Department of Education has organized. Listeners could be invited to call the Department's 1-800 number for more information on parents can get involved in their children's education.

Mike -  
Whatever happened to  
those PTA standards?  
(we almost endorsed them in Feb.)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thirty years of research supports the conclusion that family involvement in children's education is critical to student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Increasing families' involvement in the education of their children so that all children can achieve at levels articulated in challenging academic standards is an important goal of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994. For example, Title I requires all schools and districts receiving Title I funds to engage in an extensive array of activities to build the capacity of both parents and school staff to work together in support of students' learning. Title I also requires schools to develop, with parents, a written parent involvement policy that describes how schools will keep parents adequately informed and how they will involve parents in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs.

IASA requires that the U.S. Department of Education (ED) conduct a study of parent involvement that identifies and describes:

- "common barriers to effective parental involvement in the education of participating children;" and
- "successful local policies and programs that improve parental involvement and the performance of participating children."

Data sources for ED's study include: (1) a review of the research literature on parent involvement; (2) the Fast Response Survey of School and Family Partnerships in Public Schools, K-8 (SFSP), a nationally representative survey of 810 elementary and middle schools; (3) the Parent/Family Involvement component of the National Household Education Survey (NHES), a nationally representative survey of 20,792 children and their parents; (4) profiles of 20 local Title I programs that have been successful in overcoming barriers to parent involvement; (5) parent focus group interviews conducted at five of those programs; and (6) a survey of 36 state educational agencies regarding state activities to promote school-family partnerships.

### Barriers to Family Involvement in Their Children's Education

A large body of research has documented that when schools make a concerted effort to enlist parents' help in fostering children's learning, student achievement rises (Armor, 1976; Epstein, 1991;

Leler, 1983; Toomey, 1986). When schools invest in developing partnerships with families that enable parents to support their children's learning at home and in school, the potential benefits for students are great. When school-related, family-related, or community-related barriers deter parents from becoming involved, students lose an important source of support for their academic learning.

### Lack of Time and Other Resources

Both schools and families frequently lack the time and other resources they need to establish effective partnerships.

- *Principals of K-8 Title I schools report that time is a barrier to parent involvement more often than any other factor.* Eighty-seven percent of Title I principals report that lack of time on the part of parents is a significant barrier to parent involvement, and 56 percent report that lack of time on the part of school staff is a barrier.
- *Teachers and parents lack the logistical support that would facilitate their work together.* For example, many teachers lack access to private telephones, and parents often lack the transportation and child care that would allow them to make more frequent visits to schools.
- *Time and resource constraints are especially problematic for poor parents.* For these parents, basic survival, child care, and health needs often interfere with their participation in school events (Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992; Liontos, 1991). Principals of high-poverty Title I schools report that fewer parents attend traditional school events than principals of low-poverty Title I schools.

### Lack of Information and Training

Most parents and school staff receive little training on how to work with one another.

- *Almost half of principals (48 percent) in K-8 Title I schools report that lack of staff training in working with parents is a great or moderate barrier to parent involvement.*
- *Some parents report that they do not know how to assist their children's academic learning.* These parents would like more guidance from school staff on how to help (Epstein, 1992; Leitch & Tangri, 1988).

Without the proper information and the skills to work together, school staff and families are more likely to view each other with suspicion and distrust:

- *Twenty percent of principals in K-8 Title I schools report that staff attitudes about parents are a barrier to parent involvement in school. Uninformed teachers are more likely to view parents' absence in school as an indication that parents don't care about the education of their children.*
- *Parents who experience schools as unwelcoming or alienating may decide that teachers do not really care for them or their children. Twenty-seven percent of Title I principals report that parent attitudes about the school are a problem.*

### School Organization and Practices

Traditional school organization and practices, especially in secondary schools, often discourage family members from becoming involved.

- *Survey data show that parents of older children are less likely to attend a school event or volunteer at their child's school than parents of younger children. For example, 61 percent of principals of Title I elementary schools report that most or all of their parents attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences, compared with 22 percent of principals of Title I middle schools.*
- *Because secondary schools are generally much larger than elementary schools, with each teacher responsible for many more students, they can seem impersonal to parents. Parents often find it difficult to identify a staff member specially charged with the well-being of their child (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Rutherford, Billig, & Kettering, 1995), and find it more difficult to develop a relationship with school staff as a result.*

Some schools continue to rely exclusively on traditional outreach methods that have proven effective for only a limited number of families:

- *Many school activities that involve parents, such as open houses and student performances, tend to be school-dominated and peripheral to the day-to-day operations of the school (Fruchter, Gallena, & White, 1992; Mannan & Blackwell, 1992; Swap, 1992). Survey data show that parent attendance at these kinds of events is lower among parents with lower income and education levels.*
- *If schools do invest in developing a repertoire of parent involvement activities that emphasize personalized attention and interaction with parents, they will be more successful in engaging parents whom they had given up as "hard to reach." Survey*

data show that when schools engage in more personalized interactions with parents, such as parent-teacher conferences, low-income and less-educated parents attend about as often as other parents.

### Family-School Differences

Differences in education level, language, and cultural styles between parents and school staff sometimes make it more difficult for them to form effective partnerships.

- *Parents who have little education themselves participate less often in school-related parent involvement activities, such as volunteering in their child's classroom or attending parent-teacher conferences. Parents who have had negative experiences themselves as students may avoid contact with their children's schools as a result. In fact, survey data show that parents' educational level is even more strongly associated with their involvement in schools than is household income level.*
- *Survey data show that parents who do not speak English at home are less likely to participate in school-based activities, and more likely to participate in fewer activities over the course of the school year. Nevertheless, few principals of Title I schools serving children with parents whose English skills are limited identified language differences as a significant barrier. Parent survey data also suggest that parents do not see language differences as a significant problem.*
- *Culturally based differences in communication styles, expectations for teachers, parents, and children, and views on the best ways to raise and educate children can create discontinuities between families and schools (McCollum & Russo, 1993; Kelliaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993).*

### Lack of External Support for Family-School Partnerships

Family-school partnerships are difficult to nurture without the support of state and district policymakers, community organizations, and employers.

- *The absence of clearly defined and articulated policy on family involvement from the state or district level and a lack of resources to support professional development related to family involvement sends a powerful message to schools. When state or district policies and resources do not reflect a clear priority placed on school-family partnerships, schools are likely to respond by neglecting efforts to work effectively with parents (Burns & McClure, 1993).*

- *Many neighborhoods lack easy access to resources that can support parents' efforts to help their children learn.* Such resources include libraries, museums, recreation facilities, and health and social services.
- *Many employers compound the pressures on parents.* Flexible work schedules, part-time employment options, and child care for working parents can provide the time and logistical resources parents need to get more involved in school (Mannan & Blackwell, 1992).

Survey data suggest that many of the barriers described in this report have significant measurable effects on parent involvement in schools, especially among low-income parents, parents with little education, and parents of older children. Nevertheless, a very large percentage of parents are involved in some way—for example, 76 percent of Title I principals report that half or more of their parents attend open house or back-to-school night. Research on schools and families that have developed effective partnerships in support of children's learning suggests that parents and schools must build on these first steps. Schools, under the leadership of principals, possess the primary responsibility for initiating family-school partnerships; the experience of hundreds of schools across the country demonstrates that it can be done.

## **Successful Local Approaches to Promoting Family Involvement in the Education of Their Children**

Many successful strategies used by Title I schools and districts across the country demonstrate the capacity of families, schools, and communities, working together, to influence children's learning in positive ways. The experiences of 20 schools and districts that have been successful in engaging parents in their children's education illustrate many effective strategies for moving schools, families, and communities beyond the common barriers to family involvement.

### **Overcoming Time and Resource Constraints**

- *Schools can set aside time during the school day for teachers to meet with parents or free teachers from routine chores, such as lunchroom supervision, so that they can work with parents.* Teachers can use this time to meet with parents at school or visit them in their homes. Stipends and compensatory time off also encourage teachers to use time after school and on weekends.

- *Some schools can also use technology to support school-home communication. This kind of logistical support includes easier access to telephones for teachers, voice mail, and "homework hotlines."*
- *To help parents overcome time and resource constraints, schools can provide transportation and child care services, schedule events at convenient times, and conduct home visits. Each of these strategies addresses a barrier faced by parents who want to participate more often in school-sponsored parent involvement activities.*
- *In addition to finding ways to help parents become involved at school, schools can help parents support their children's learning at home. In their daily interactions with their children at home, parents can be powerful resources for promoting their children's academic success:*

### Providing Information and Training to Parents and School Staff

- *Training in basic parenting skills teaches parents about child development and how to establish a home environment that supports student learning. This information can help parents create a context at home that fosters students' academic progress.*
- *Courses that help parents build their own basic literacy skills, earn a GED, accumulate college credit, or develop job-related skills also support parents' involvement in their children's education. By helping parents to reach their own educational and vocational goals, schools equip them to better support their children's learning.*
- *Workshops help parents support their children's learning at home by offering practical ideas on ways that parents can work with their children directly on school work. Common topics include helping students with curriculum-related activities, homework, other academic decisions and planning, and preparing for required tests.*
- *Some training prepares parents to contribute effectively to school decision-making or to serve as volunteers. This training enables parents to participate in school governance and day-to-day operations.*
- *Training for school staff is essential for supporting the development of effective school-family partnerships. Such training addresses telephone calls, home visits, and other contact strategies; communication skills for parent-teacher conferences; and involving parents as leaders and decision-makers in the schools.*
- *Engaging parents coordinators or volunteers to train school staff not only builds their leadership skills but also offers teachers the opportunity to learn first-hand about parents' perspectives.*

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## Restructuring Schools to Support Family Involvement

Some schools highlighted in this report have reorganized to promote closer interaction between teachers and students and, by extension, between teachers and families. They have also redefined traditional parent events to create more meaningful ways to welcome and involve parents in school life.

- ***An on-going needs assessment helps schools respond more effectively to parents' needs and interests.*** By asking parents about their interests, needs, and ideas for family involvement on an ongoing basis, schools help ensure that their efforts to reach out to parents complement parents' real needs and strengths.
- ***Schools can make changes to their physical environment.*** For example, they can create a space just for parents within the school, such as a parent resource center, and they can post a parent volunteer in the entrance hall to welcome parents.
- ***Schools can also create formal organizational structures for parent participation.*** Groups such as parent committees, volunteer committees, and site-based management councils allow parents to take an active role in decisions affecting the school and their children.

Whatever steps schools take to develop close partnerships with families on behalf of students' learning, schools that are most successful are prepared to reconsider all of their established ways of doing business and to restructure in ways that will make them less hierarchical, more personal, and more accessible to parents.

## Bridging School-Family Differences

- ***Schools can help parents strengthen their own basic literacy skills.*** Some schools highlighted in this report offer GED, ESL, and other adult basic education classes to parents on site; other schools send home projects and activity kits intended to build parents' literacy skills as they work on them with their children. At two of the schools highlighted in this report, Even Start projects combine adult basic education, parenting classes, and early childhood education in on-site programs designed to foster literacy skills for both parents and children.
- ***"Family Math" nights or similar events help allay parents' fears about their own mastery of subject matter.*** These events give parents a chance to learn together with their children in an environment that is pleasant and non-threatening.

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- *To address language barriers, schools highlighted in this report provide extensive translation services. These schools provide translation for school-home communications, parenting training, and participation in decision-making and school governance.*

- *A home-school liaison, often a parent who lives in the community, can play a crucial role in building trust between home and school. Because a home-school liaison is usually closely identified with the community and shares the same cultural background with parents, he or she is well-equipped to reach out to parents whose cultural backgrounds differ from teachers'.*

- *Other schools provide training and other activities to promote understanding of different cultures among school staff.*

### Tapping External Support for Family-School Partnerships

Among the schools highlighted here, successful parent involvement strategies often grow out of family resource centers and partnerships with local businesses, agencies, colleges, and universities.

- *School-community partnerships can support an array of services that help parents get more involved in their children's education. Such services may include homework hotlines, social services such as substance abuse or child abuse prevention, conferences and workshops, adult education, health services, refurbished school facilities, and refreshments for and transportation to school-sponsored events.*

- *District and state supports for family involvement include policies, funding, training, and family services that support school-family partnerships. With the backing of these district and state supports, schools can draw on a broad system of expertise and experience to cultivate partnerships with families. District and state-run parent resource centers are one example of how schools can benefit.*

### Effects on Student Achievement

Although it is impossible to attribute student achievement gains or other positive outcomes in any school or district solely to their parent involvement activities, it does appear that many schools that make parent involvement a priority also see student outcomes improve in some way. For example, of the 13 schools highlighted in this report, eight report gains in student achievement data over the last one to three years and four report gains in attendance rates or attendance rates hovering consistently over 95 percent. Parents themselves believe that their involvement influences their

child's performance in school. In focus group interviews, for example, many parents argued that their involvement had improved their children's attitude toward school and engagement in learning.

## **State Policies and Practices to Support Family Involvement in Education**

*State survey data suggest that states are taking an active role in supporting school and district efforts to involve parents in their children's education, although the intensity, extent, and quality of this support is unclear.* States have also undertaken a number of activities that support school and district efforts to implement the Title I parent involvement requirements in IASA.

- Almost two-thirds of the 36 states responding to the survey report that they have developed documents to guide state-level support of school and district family involvement efforts.
- In more than half of responding states, statutes are in place to guide state-level support of family involvement efforts.
- All of the 36 responding states identified at least one source of funding that contributed to a state-level parent involvement budget.
- Of all the sources of funding available to states to support family involvement activities, states rely most often on Title I and other federal funds. Thirty states identified Title I as a source of funding for parent involvement activities, while only 19 of 36 states support family involvement with their own general education funds.
- Most of the 35 states responding to this section of the survey report providing technical assistance and support to schools and districts that includes disseminating information, providing staff development, and supporting parent education and training.
- Most of the 35 states responding to this section of the survey report assisting schools and districts in implementing the Title I parent involvement provisions, including assisting with crafting parent involvement policies and school-parent compacts, building capacity among staff and parents, and ensuring access and coordination with other parent involvement efforts.

## **Early Implementation of the Title I Parent Involvement Provisions**

Survey data collected from Title I elementary and middle schools in spring 1996, less than a year after the new Title I provisions went into effect, provide some preliminary information on the

implementation of many activities required or endorsed by Title I. Because the data were collected early, the findings presented in this report should be considered baseline measures of schools' progress in implementing Title I.

- *Sixty-four percent of Title I principals report that their schools consult parents in the development of parent involvement activities. This consultation is a key requirement of Title I.*
- *More than three-quarters (78 percent) of Title I principals report that their schools have advisory groups or policy councils that include parents.*
- *A much smaller number of Title I schools report, however, that they consider parent input when making decisions on selected topics related to school programs and policies. For example, only 40 percent involve parents in making decisions about the allocation of funds, and only 49 percent involve parents in making decisions about discipline policies and procedures.*

To build parents' capacity to support their children's learning, most Title schools take steps to provide parents with information on how to help their children learn at home, although the quality, as well as the reach, of the information provided clearly varies across schools.

- *Ninety-six percent of Title I principals report that their schools provide information to parents on at least one topic related to parenting or helping their children learn at home. Topics include: (1) child or adolescent development; (2) nutrition, health, or safety; (3) parenting skills; (4) information on community services; (5) helping with homework; (6) developing study skills; and (7) ideas for learning activities outside of school.*

Other services to parents endorsed in the Title I legislation are fairly common among Title I schools, although they are not universal.

- *Of the Title I schools that serve students whose parents have limited English skills, 86 percent report that they provide interpreters for meetings. Sixty-nine percent report that they provide translations of printed materials. These findings indicate a relatively widespread effort on the part of Title I schools to accommodate parents with limited English proficiency.*
- *Thirty-seven percent of Title I school principals report that their schools have parent resource centers. An additional 14 percent report that their schools are currently developing them.*

More than two-thirds (67 percent) of Title I principals report that at least some of their staff make home visits. Staff reach an average of 17 percent of families in one year.

## Conclusion

Although evidence of the most common barriers to parent involvement can be found in almost any school, the experience of many schools and districts demonstrates that they can be overcome. Schools that succeed in involving large numbers of parents and other family members in the education of their children invest energy in finding solutions for problems, not excuses. Successful schools view children's success as a shared responsibility, and all stakeholders—including parents, administrators, teachers, and community leaders—play important roles in supporting children's learning.

Title I, as reauthorized by IASA, can be an important catalyst for the wider adoption of policies and practices that have proven effective in fostering partnerships between schools and families. Title I requires or endorses many strategies that are recognized as effective in supporting parents' involvement in their children's education, and many of the practices highlighted in Title I—for example, parent resource centers, home visits, and the provision of information and training to parents—are already common among Title I schools.

It remains to be seen how well federal and state efforts to foster family-school partnerships will support the successful development of school-family partnerships in Title I schools. Continuing research will be needed to assess schools' implementation of the Title I parent involvement provisions as well as the quality of the assistance that schools receive from states and districts. A closer look at the strategies required or endorsed in federal and state policy—for example, school-parent compacts, information and training for parents and school staff, and special strategies such as home visits—as they are implemented in schools will provide policymakers, practitioners, and parents with a better understanding of how all schools can sustain effective partnerships with families.