

Increasing Parent Involvement on Special Education and Disability-Related Interagency Committees, Councils, and Boards

Benefits of increased parent involvement in governance

- Parents and school or community personnel gain more accurate and positive views about each other's attitudes, intentions, and abilities
- More parents are equipped to act as advocates for and supporters of public schools and public programs throughout the community

Increasing participation: Identifying and recruiting parents

- Ask district Special Education staff to recommend parents
- Ask current parent-members to recommend other parents
- Put a recruitment notice in district publications, school newsletters, district websites, local papers and public-access television
- Schedule meetings at parent-friendly times and locations
- Offer stipends to cover childcare or transportation expense

Increasing effectiveness: Facilitating parent participation

- Send out a "welcome packet" before the first meeting including the statement of purpose, mission, and goals; meeting schedule; role and responsibilities; member roster
- Schedule a personal, individual contact between Special Education Director and new parent member to provide initial orientation
 - Personally welcome at first meeting and facilitate introductions
- Ask an "experienced parent" member to provide additional orientation
 - Call to welcome them and answer questions
 - Greet at first meeting, introduce to other parents, sit with them
- Make the meeting easy to find with clear directions and well-placed signs indicating parking, entry door and room location
- Provide name tags and table placards at each meeting
- Start all meetings with introductions
- Intentionally plan for parent leadership:
 - Parent/professional chair/vice-chair, co-chair
 - Teaming of parents and professionals on subcommittees, workgroups
- Actively solicit parent input at each meeting
- Provide on-going training opportunities
 - Invite parent-members to attend relevant staff in-services
 - Offer parent-scholarships to conferences or seminars