

Parent Strategies for Student Success with the Common Core Standards

By Jena Ritchie, East Cobb County of PTAs Family Engagement Chair


The majority of East Cobb families would likely assert that their child's education is a high priority. They would go on to attest that many residences are selected in this community precisely because the schools have a reputation of excellence in education. Simply by virtue of establishing a particular mailing address, it's fair to say we've already made a significant investment in our children's academic future. But, a street address in a high performing school is only a small piece of student achievement. The fact is, regardless of school ranking, parental involvement is still the greatest indicator in determining student success. It has been witnessed time and again that even where a particular parent or guardian lacks their own educational accomplishments, consistent engagement and investment in their child's education is of paramount importance.

A primary goal of PTA is empowering parents with a variety of resources and opportunities to help them succeed in championing their child's academic achievements, as well as supporting communication and accountability within schools. As a community, we do already contribute considerable finances and supplies to our classrooms - more than the national average - as many here are fortunate to be able to do so. However, as parents, we can fail to realize the true return on our investment by underestimating the power and potential of the parent-child alliance. Research consistently shows that the family engagement 'habit' is the most effective stimulant for exponentially increasing a child's development, regardless of economic variables.

"The Family Engagement in Education Act (H.R.1821/S.941) incentivizes schools and districts to meaningfully engage families to close the achievement gap. This bill was introduced on May 10, 2011, in the House of Representatives ...Research demonstrates that family engagement in a child's education increases student achievement, improves attendance, and reduces the drop-out rate." Excerpt from <http://www.pta.org/4135.asp>

Fortunately, a lot of the hard work for adopting this habit has already been done for parents in regard to supporting students with the new standards now being implemented in our schools. The Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI) is an effort designed to improve educational outcomes for students by developing a set of common, voluntary, internationally-benchmarked academic standards

in mathematics and English language arts. In conjunction with the rollout of this progressive new curriculum aimed at encouraging critical thinking skills, PTA has developed a grade-level specific series of easily obtainable Parents' Guides. These handy four-page reference tools are downloadable for free and smartly summarize learning goals while offering tips for engaging students and strategies for communicating with teachers. Online access to these documents is quick and simple from the PTA website at www.pta.org/common_core_state_standards.asp and www.pta.org/4996.htm. Built on appreciable assessment data identifying college and career readiness as well as global educational influences, these new standards create a compact for more successful partnerships in learning.

Ideally, these conscientiously constructed measures serve to ensure that families of all backgrounds have uniform access to quality, consistent educational expectations. At minimum, they aspire to assist us in co-creating a meaningful meeting of minds by establishing common ground from which to grow. Here in East Cobb, these goals respond readily with resources to counter performance gaps by offering mass distribution of information helping us to overcome some of the usual ambiguously cited snares often associated with public education shortcomings like 'increasing costs', "budget cuts", "bloating class sizes" and similar issues which are not new or even unique to our community. In practice, it may be different for each individual; however, answers do exist to advocate on behalf of our children in the name of education. By each of us enthusiastically reaching out in working together cooperatively and collectively (parents-students-teachers-communities), we commit to witness the future promise of these worthwhile endeavors. Deciding early to participate in the solution, adopting an attitude of action, combining forces, sharing resources and partnering in our sense of personal responsibility will allow us to recognize and provide for the diverse educational needs of a broader population of children. This is the ultimate intent behind public education, even as our students and society continue to evolve. 



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