

The Parents Network for Better Education



Program Mission

The Parents Network for Better Education is a regional, federally funded initiative designed to help parents become more informed about the options available to them, and the opportunities available to their children through No Child Left Behind.

Target Population

There are approximately 200,000 parents in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina eligible for public school choice or supplemental services. There are close to 10,000 children on waiting lists for charter schools in these four states alone. Among these parents there is a need and demand for information concerning other options.

Among parents of pre-school children: early childhood programs are also in demand, and among economically distressed families there are few options. These families make up a core of the target population that the Parent Consortium-SE will engage in its programs and services. There are a total of more than 220,000 families of pre-school children in the four states combined. Working with early education centers, Head Start and the like, these parents going into school will be armed with more data and will thus be more effective in exercising their rights than parents before.

Major Goals of the Program

Goal 1: To achieve a higher degree of understanding among parents – at least 10% per year of parents of low-performing schools – reached, of state accountability systems and stimulate the use of choice options under NCLB in the states of Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

Goal 2: To educate parents of young children about how best to prepare for their children's elementary school entry in a new era of accountability and choice, and specifically about their rights under NCLB.

The Parents Network for Better Education Program Outline

Goal 1

To achieve a higher degree of understanding among parents – at least 10% per year of parents of low-performing schools – reached, of state accountability systems and stimulate the use of choice options under NCLB in the states of Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

Objective: Create user-friendly information pieces (tools) for parents.

Strategies:

1. Parent Guides: detailed, well-designed, user-friendly, step-by-step guidance, multilingual; accommodate sight-impaired. *(These guides should also reach unique immigrant populations, and the increasing numbers of migrant children.)*
2. Point of Purchase pocket-sized cards.
3. Easy-to-read pamphlets and brochure made available through personal contact and partner organizations.
4. Brochure that highlights parental choice provisions of NCLB. Includes information about choice options, when each right kicks in, definition of terms, questions to ask, and where to find support.
5. Toll-free Parent Hotline/Parent Connection: Answered by trained staff, and forwarded to each state's parent liaisons for customer service and follow-up.
6. Create identical materials and information that are unique to each state and communities with low-performing schools.

Objective: Promote *The Parents Network for Better Education* to achieve maximum visibility and awareness of the program.

Strategies:

1. Public Service Announcements.
2. Create major advertising campaign to publicize Parent Hotline on radio, TV, through public transportation, collaterals such as candies and key chains, schools, civic groups, libraries, state government institutions, and county support service centers.
3. Provide support to other PIRCs by making our resources available to them in different mediums.
4. Disseminate program best practices for additional leverage through national networks [BAEO, etc.]

The Parents Network for Better Education Program Outline

Objective: Create and deliver training for parents and community partners.

Strategies:

1. Identify partners in communities to provide a venue for reaching parents. Partners should be community-based groups that provide a wide range of services to families in districts where schools are in need of improvement: such as early childhood providers, YMCAs, child services, family support programs, libraries, etc. Develop a comprehensive database of these groups along with the following:
 - i. Community organizations
 - ii. Low-performing schools
 - iii. Supplemental service providers
2. Create model training efforts that ensure ongoing support for parents, and have these training efforts be carried out by community and state organizations. Track activity and progress of communication with each group.
3. Parent liaisons connect with parents at convenient community locations to receive direct and personal training and counseling to elicit some action toward knowing more about their state, their school's performance and their rights.
4. Identify good delivery locations and event opportunities.
5. Provide an electronic bulletin board for community partners to allow sharing of information.

Objective: Create and work with the parent advisory committee.

Strategies:

1. Solicit input into content development and implementation of services, including quality of materials.
2. Set meeting schedule to ensure minimum number of meetings quarterly via phone and once per year in person.
3. Collect meaningful "real life" input as the project develops.
4. Share information about likely community partners.

The Parents Network for Better Education Program Outline

Objective: Establish and create ongoing communication links to states, community based partners and CER.

Strategies:

1. Through weekly meetings among partner states and CER, the program will facilitate communication about best practices and similar obstacles across all states.
2. Website: have all published material available here. Provide interactive links for school report cards and test scores. Links to other PIRC grantees.

Goal 2

To educate parents of young children about how best to prepare for their children's elementary school entry in a new era of accountability and choice, and specifically about their rights under NCLB.

Objective: Establish relationships with parent advocacy groups and early childhood education providers.

Strategies:

1. Solicit at least 50% of all partners among these groups as providers.
2. Provide significant resources to allow them to increase their focus on preparing parents of young children on how their state evaluates and holds schools accountable, and what they can expect from their school, district and state.
3. Conduct community family events: picnics, fairs, coffees at Head Start centers, dinners and movies at libraries, supervised sporting events at YMCA. Regularly scheduled, widely publicized, meal times. Events can tie new parent customers together with "veterans" that have been served.

Objective: Educate parents of young children about their rights under NCLB.

Strategies:

1. The training for this segment of the population will be similar to the general focus but include a focus on:
 - a. what these parents need to know before school begins for their child to make effective decisions.
 - b. How they can prepare their children with educational programs to help ensure success in school.
2. Other Parent-friendly information will include: how to understand labels and jargon; what their rights are and how to exercise them; how to remain vigilant and involved in their child's education to ensure that their school is always improving.
3. Provide resources to each early childhood partner to teach parents about educating their children.
4. Organize events to bring together these parents in social settings to encourage their interaction. Activity support: we will be identifying community fairs, ballgames, etc. and hosting events to help reach parents, through these organizations.
5. Provide ongoing Support and assistance – i.e. information, consultation about special needs and facilitate continued outreach to parents.

The Parents Network for Better Education Program Outline

PIRC Program Evaluation

Major outcomes:

- a. Increased knowledge by parents of accountability and school performance
- b. Increased choices of schools or supplemental services, and as a result;
- c. Increased student achievement

Indicators	Year 1 Goal	Year 2 Goal	Comments
Number of parents in low-performing school districts reached.	Reach at least 10% of low-performing school parents (20,000)	Reach an additional 10% (20,000 more)	Baseline data: 200,000 parents estimated to be eligible for choice or supplemental services, but only 5% exercising those rights. Measure: No. of materials delivered; No. of meetings held; No. of parents attended; No. of partners recruited. Source: state partners
Number of parents who show increased knowledge of NCLB and of the options.	Change in the number of parents reached who show increased knowledge.	Change in the number of parents reached who show increased knowledge.	Pre- and post-project surveys.
Number of parents who exercise choice.	Change in number of parents who exercise choice over prior year.	Change in number of parents who exercise choice over prior year.	Sources: state charter school Associations; LEAs, SEAs.
Number of parents who utilize supplemental services	Change in percent and number of parents who use supplemental services over prior year.	Change in percent and number of parents who use supplemental services over prior year.	Both percent and number are used because the number of eligible supp. Services users will change annually. Source: SEA, LEAs
Number of children on charter school waiting lists.	Number of children on charter waiting lists at end of Year 1	Number of children on charter waiting lists at end of Year 2	Baseline data: 10,000 total children on waiting lists for charter schools among the 4 states Source: state charter school associations

The Parents Network for Better Education Program Outline

PIRC Program Evaluation Continued

Indicators	Year 1 Goal	Year 2 Goal	Comments
Number of community groups participating in PIRC.	Number of groups participating as partners at end of Year 1	Number of groups participating as partners at end of Year 2	Source: CER partners in each state.

PIRC Program Reporting Requirements

Type of Report	Due Date	Comments
1st year performance report	Due August 1 (est., 30 days after reporting period)	This allows DOE to make a determination to approve next year's funds by Sept. DOE will notify us of exact date.
2nd year performance report	Due at end of 2005.	Estimate per DOE; final information to come
Final report	Due in January 2006.	Estimate per DOE; final information to come