Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to the law as it existed prior to this session of the General Assembly.

State of Arkansas

84th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2003

A Bill

Act 603 of 2003

HOUSE BILL 1387

By: Representatives C. Johnson, White, Chesterfield, Green, Goss, Penix, Clemons, Wood
By: Senators Wilkins, Brown

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO REQUIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO CREATE A PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PLAN; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

AN ACT TO REQUIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO CREATE A PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PLAN.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 15, is amended to add an additional subchapter to read as follows:


(a) The General Assembly recognizes:

(1) That a child’s education is a responsibility shared by the school and family during the entire time the child spends in school;

(2) To support the goal of the schools to educate all students effectively, the schools and parents must work as knowledgeable partners;

(3) That although parents are diverse in culture, language, and needs, they are an integral component of a school’s ability to provide for the educational success of their children;

(4) That engaging parents is essential to improve student achievement; and

(5) That schools should foster and support active parental involvement.

(a) By September 1, 2003, each public school district and each public school within its boundaries, in collaboration with parents, shall establish a parental involvement plan including programs and practices that enhance parental involvement and reflect the specific needs of students and their families.

(b) The parental involvement program in each school shall:

1. Involve parents of students at all grade levels in a variety of roles;
2. Be comprehensive and coordinated in nature;
3. Recognize that communication between home and school should be regular, two-way, and meaningful.
4. To encourage communication with parents the school shall prepare family kits, appropriate for the age and grade of the child, describing:
   (i) The school's parental involvement program;
   (ii) The recommended role of the parent, student, teacher, and school;
   (iii) Ways for the parents to become involved in the school and his or her child's education;
   (iv) Activities planned throughout the school year to encourage parental involvement;
   (v) A system to allow the parents and teachers to communicate in a regular, two-way, and meaningful manner with the child's teacher and the school principal.
5. To encourage communication with parents, the school shall schedule no less than two (2) parent-teacher conferences per school year.
6. The school may plan and engage in other activities determined by the school to be beneficial to encourage communication with parents;
7. Promote and support responsible parenting.
   (A) To promote and support responsible parenting, the school shall:
   (i) Purchase parenting books, magazines and other informative material regarding responsible parenting through the school
library, advertise the current selection, and give parents an opportunity to
borrow the materials for review;

(ii) Publish a notice in the local newspaper at the
end of each school year honoring parents who attend all parent-teacher
conferences scheduled by the school;

(iii) Create parent centers; and

(iv) Plan and engage in other activities determined
by the school to be beneficial to promoting and supporting responsible
parenting;

(5)(A) Acknowledge that parents play an integral role in
assisting student learning.

(B) To help parents in assisting students, the school
shall:

(i) Schedule regular "Parents Make the Difference"
evenings where parents are given a report on the state of the school and an
overview of:

(a) What students will be learning;

(b) How students will be assessed;

(c) What parents should expect for the their
child's education; and

(d) How parents can assist and make a
difference in his or her child's education; and

(ii) Engage in other activities determined by the
school to help parents assist in his or her child's learning;

(6)(A) Welcome parents in the school and seek parental support
and assistance.

(B) To welcome parents in the school, the school shall:

(i) Not have any school policies or procedures that
would discourage a parent from visiting the school, specifically including:

(a) Policies requiring parents to pick-up his
or her child outside the school building each day; and

(b) Policies prohibiting the parents from
visiting a child's classrooms during school events;

(ii) Publish a volunteer resource book, listing the
interests and availability of volunteers for school staff members' use,
specifically including:
(a) Survey parents regarding their interests, so volunteer work will be meaningful;
(b) Determine how frequently a volunteer would like to participate, including the option of just one (1) time per year;
(c) Include options for those who are available to help at home;
(d) Use the resource book to help match school needs with volunteer interests;
(iii) Print statements attesting to the school district’s commitment to parental involvement and distribute the statements to parents of student; and
(iv) Engage in other activities determined by the school to welcome parents in the school;
(7)(A) Recognize that a parent is a full partner in the decisions that affect his or her child and family.
(B) To encourage parents to participate as full partners in the decisions that affect his or her child and family, the school shall:
(i) Frequently publish the school’s process for resolving parental concerns, including how to define the problem, whom to approach first, and how to develop solutions;
(ii) Sponsor seminars to inform the parents of high school students about how to be involved in the decisions affecting course selection, career planning, and preparation for post-secondary opportunities;
and
(iii) Engage in other activities that the school determines will encourage parents to participate as full partners in the decisions that affect his or her child and family;
(8)(A) Recognize that community resources strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning;
(B) To take advantage of community resources the school shall:
(i) Contact alumni from the school to create an alumni advisory commission to provide advice and guidance for school improvement;
(ii) Develop paycheck size cards with tips for how parents can foster their child’s success and contact employers about
including the cards with employee paychecks; and

(iii) Engage in other activities that the school determines will use community resources to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning; and

(9) Support the development, implementation, and regular evaluation of the program to involve parents in the decisions and practices of the school district, using to the degree possible, the components listed in this section.

(c)(1) The principal of each school in a district shall designate one certified staff member that is willing to serve as a parent facilitator to organize meaningful training for staff and parents promoting and encouraging a welcoming atmosphere to parental involvement in the school and to undertake efforts to ensure that parental participation is recognized as an asset to the school.

(2) The certified staff serving as a parental facilitator shall receive supplement pay for the assigned duties as required by law.

6-15-1603. Staff Development.

(a) By September 1, 2003, the State Board of Education's Standards of Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools shall require no less than two (2) hours of professional development opportunities for teachers, which may be included in the thirty (30) hours of professional development required as of January 1, 2003, designed to enhance understanding of effective parental involvement strategies.

(b) By September 1, 2003, the State Board of Education's Standards of Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools shall require no less than three (3) hours of professional development opportunities for administrators, in addition to the thirty (30) hours of professional development required as of January 1, 2003, designed to enhance understanding of:

(i) Effective parent involvement strategies; and

(ii) The importance of administrative leadership in setting expectations and creating a climate conducive to parental participation.

SECTION 2. (a) Beginning on October 1, 2004 and by each October 1 thereafter, every school district shall review and update the district’s
parental involvement plan and file a copy of the district’s parental involvement plan with the Department of Education.

(b)(1) The Department of Education shall review each parental involvement plan and determine if the plan is in compliance with provisions of this act and shall indicate on the school’s performance report under § 6-15-1402 if the district is in compliance, or if the district is not in compliance, with this act.

(2) If the Department of Education determines that a school district is not in compliance with section 1 of this act, the department shall send the district written notification indicating any deficiencies in the district’s plan no later than January 1 of each year and allow the district an opportunity to correct any deficiency.

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-15-1402(b)(2)(B), concerning school performance reports, is amended to add an additional subdivision to read as follows:

(iii) The school district has adopted a parental involvement plan in compliance with § 6-15-1602.

SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-15-1402(b)(3)(B), concerning school performance reports, is amended to add an additional subdivision to read as follows:

(iii) The school district has adopted a parental involvement plan in compliance with § 6-15-1602.

SECTION 5. The Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education shall collaborate with institutions of higher education to incorporate into teacher education programs information regarding the importance of parental involvement and how to successfully encourage parents to be partners in their child’s education.

/s/ C. Johnson, et al

APPROVED: 3/24/2003