

Infusing Parent Engagement into Developing Long-term Action Plans

The ultimate goal of the dropout prevention summits supported by the America's Promise Alliance is not merely to raise awareness of the dropout crisis, but to mobilize state and community leaders to develop comprehensive action plans that will result in more young people graduating from high school, ready for college, work and life. As a requirement of the planning grants that they receive, the state and community planning teams must submit their initial action plans to America's Promise within 60 days of their summit. The Alliance provides a common action planning worksheet and form (available at <http://www.americaspromise.org/APAPage.aspx?id=12016>).

These action plans are an opportunity to demonstrate and codify their community's commitment to parent and family engagement. Each of the plans' four sections has questions that directly or indirectly involve parents:

- **Section I. Building Knowledge: Understanding Your State's or Community's Dropout & College-Readiness Challenges**
In this section, communities and states are encouraged to understand the dropout issue from various perspectives. This would be an opportunity to summarize and report out on any work the parent engagement team was able to complete under part B above on "Gathering Perspectives on Parent Engagement." In addition to any pre-summit data collection, communities can also use this section to describe additional surveys, focus groups, and/or interviews that may be planned with parents and parent-serving organizations to better understand why students get off track toward graduation, and why some drop out and others are able to stay in school. As part of this "Building Knowledge" work, parent engagement teams will also want to take stock – before or after their summits – of the existing programs, partnerships and policies that facilitate and/or hinder parents effectively supporting their children through graduation.
- **Section II. Rallying Your State or Community: Getting Buy-In to Address the Crisis**
This section of the action plans is primarily focused on determining the impact the dropout challenge is having on a community's economy and social systems, and developing appropriate public messages that will drive community investment in addressing the issue. The parent engagement team will want to make sure that there are message points that speak to parents, both about the importance of young people staying in school to prepare for college and/or work and eventually, also about the critical role that parents can play in helping their children succeed. As communities and states develop vision statements and long-term quantitative goals in this section, involving parents in the process will help facilitate their sustained commitment to the action plans' implementation.
- **Section III. Identifying Solutions: Considering & Prioritizing Potential Solutions to Comprehensively Address Your Local Dropout Challenge**
Through this section of the plan, communities and states are asked to identify the initial set of prioritized actions they will pursue in four areas: transforming schools, supporting young people, developing effective policies, and employing data systems. While local planning committees will need to prioritize what steps are taken, there are numerous opportunities for

parent-focused strategies to appear in this section, consistent with our framework of the 3As (Attendance Every Day, Achievement Every Year, and Attainment Over Time). See below for a matrix of possibilities that might be generated in your community.

- **Section IV. Organizing for Long-Term Success: Getting the Right People on Board, Committing to Action, Ensuring Accountability, Securing Resources and Tracking Progress Over Time**

Communities and states will need to be thoughtful about how to implement and sustain the activities after the summit. This section prompts thinking about what people, teams, and resources are needed to pursue the action plans, and how to evaluate, track and report progress over time. Having parents adequately engaged in the post-summit action team will be important across the board. The parent engagement team can help make sure parent engagement priorities are not lost over time.

Examples of parent-focused strategies that communities might generate as part of Section III – Identifying Solutions:

| | Attendance Every Day | Achievement Every Year | Attainment Over Time |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Transforming Schools | * Teams of teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals and/or parents will make home visits after students miss 3 days of school to help students and their families address barriers to attendance | * At back-to-school time each year, schools will send parents information about the courses and tests their child must pass that year, as well as all remaining credits for graduation | * Starting in middle school, annual parent meetings at school will engage students and their families in planning for college and careers |
| Supporting Young People | * Volunteer parent mentors will call students with high absences each morning with a wake-up and encouragement to attend school that day. Mentors will connect students and their families to community partners that can help meet their basic needs that may be contributing to their absenteeism. | * Teachers and parents will work together to offer a homework hotline each day after school, and an in-person homework lab on Saturday mornings. | * Parents will be invited to serve as graduation coaches who talk to students about their careers and/or college experiences, and help mentor students to stay on track toward their long-term aspirations. |
| Developing Effective Policies | * Every absence will require an excuse or response from a parent/ caregiver. | * Annual parent-teacher conferences will become three-way discussions that include the student, and review progress toward annual course requirements. | * All students will be required to create a graduation plan starting in middle school that is updated each year. |
| Employing Data Systems | * Schools will develop effective daily attendance systems to track who is and is not in school each day so they can provide accurate reports to parents and caregivers. | * Schools will develop an online portal for parents to be able to access their child's grades, coursework completion, and progress toward requirements. | * Schools will track and publicly report accurate graduation and college-going rates by school each year. |