

School, Family, and Community Partnership Trainings

Maryland State Department of Education
Baltimore, Maryland

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) partnered with its Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) to support a series of training sessions for Title I schools. The state's Working Together for Student Success seminars helped more than 10,000 students from five school systems by encouraging stronger partnerships among parents, educators, and community leaders.

MSDE has long monitored the progress of its Title I schools. The state requires all schools receiving Title I funds to develop a school-level plan for family involvement that is part of the school's improvement plan. Over the years, state officials identified challenges at the local and school levels: school-level involvement plans, building capacity for involvement, and school-parent compacts.

State officials wanted to provide training for educators and parents alike, and they wanted to link that training to the family involvement requirements of No Child Left Behind. MSDE agreed to provide training material and staff to any interested Title I school if the PIRC could find the funds to cover the expenses. The two groups hashed out the details and made a deal. The opportunity for schools to participate without cost was a tremendous support, organizers said.

Once the plan was set, MSDE began contacting Title I coordinators from the state's 24 districts about the free training opportunity. MSDE asked that interested schools bring a small team and their parent involvement plans to the workshop. Each school or district needed at least one principal, one teacher, and one parent on its team.

MSDE and PIRC hosted five training sessions across the state last year. The training for teachers, parents and administrators included an overview of parent involvement, school-level plans, strategies for overcoming obstacles to parent involvement, and school-

parent compacts. State department representatives gave a talk on the six types of involvement and promising practices in Maryland schools. Teams discussed their schools' challenges and worked on solutions and school plans. Participants had the opportunity to share their plans with the group, opening up their ideas to peer review.

By the end of each session, teams felt more confident in their abilities to bring parents back into their schools, and meet the demands of NCLB.

"It was nice to sit as a group and discuss common problems and possible solutions," one person said.

"I know as a result of this information that there will be significant changes," another added.

The five training sessions cost about \$10,000, most of that to pay substitute teachers.

The state plans to continue the training sessions next year, modifying the workshops to fit the diverse needs of Maryland's districts better.

Maria Lamb
Director, Program Improvement /
Family Support Branch
(410) 767-0286