
PARENT CENTER INCENTIVE GRANTS

Los Angeles Unified School District

Los Angeles, California

“The Los Angeles Unified School District Parent Community Services Branch will promote increased student academic achievement by building the capacities of local schools and communities to train, educate, and support parents as partners in their children’s education” (mission statement)

In 1994, the Los Angeles Unified School District created the Parent Collaborative under the auspices of the Parent Community Services Branch (PCSB) for better parent/community communication and decision-making. The Parent Collaborative currently has a membership of 101 parent representatives from the following: local districts (55), central district (4), PTA (2), non-public schools (1), and members-at-large (39). Members are parent volunteers; members-at-large may be employees. A PCSB staff member works with the Collaborative to coordinate its meetings.

The Parent Collaborative focuses on increasing student achievement. Recognizing that parents play crucial roles in their children’s academic achievement, the Parent Center Incentive Grant was established. This grant allocated funds to schools specifically to open a parent center to encourage parent engagement. The grant is used to help start the center with basic office equipment such as computers, telephones, and supplies. With limited budgets, schools welcomed the parent center grant, which ranged from \$3,000 to \$7,500 depending on the student population.

The local school parent center provides a room or space set aside to facilitate and coordinate activities for parents. The center promotes a partnership of school, parents, family members, and community partners designed to increase student achievement. Parents, school staff, district staff, and/or community members conduct activities.

Locations for parent centers may include a classroom or portable classroom, or a designated area in the school library, cafeteria, auditorium, multipurpose room, or office. A center may also be housed off campus in sites such as a public library, community center, or church.

Parent center activities are based on parent, school staff, and student surveys and may include the following:

- Parent and family workshops linked to increasing student achievement;
- Adult education classes such as literacy, ESL, citizenship, GED, and computer technology;
- Parent education classes;
- Establishing information and homework help lines;
- On-site or referral to health and human service agencies;
- School volunteer recruitment and training;
- Training for participation in decision-making bodies; and
- Developing a resource library for parents.

Since its inception, the Parent Collaborative has used the district's general funds to award 380 Parent Center Incentive Grants. In the 2001-2002 school year, an additional forty-two schools were awarded first-time grants in the amount of \$123,000 from a budget of \$150,000. Second-time awardees will share the remaining amount of funds.

Parent center directors meet monthly with staff to discuss, evaluate, and research activities. The directors and site administrators also conduct an annual survey about the effectiveness of the centers. Plans are in progress for parent center site visits.

The Parent Center Incentive Grant is one of many projects nurturing school and community partnerships supported by the Parent Community Services Branch, Los Angeles Unified School District.

Doré Wong
(213) 217-5272