



## PIRCs Foster Parent Involvement for Long-Term Student Success



Children whose parents are engaged in their education earn better grades, score higher on tests, and are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college. To encourage parental involvement in schools, the U.S. Department of Education created Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) in 1995.

These community-based centers provide information, tools and training to facilitate parental involvement, making parents “school ready” along with their children. When Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), PIRCs took on additional responsibility to implement parental involvement programs and help parents understand their education options under the new legislation.

PIRCs serve more than 800,000 parents across the country. More than 30 percent of program funding helps establish and operate programs that partner with PIRCs, such as Parents as Teachers, focusing on early childhood education, development and parental involvement.

As of 2008, there are 62 PIRCs with at least one in each state, the District of Columbia and six U.S. Territories. These serve families through resource libraries, counseling, workshops, information phone lines and early family literacy programs. PIRCs exist to:

- Help families navigate and fully participate in the school system;

- Develop and strengthen partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, administrators and other school personnel to meet the educational needs of children;
- Help parents understand data from state and school district performance ratings; and
- Explain opportunities for supplemental educational services available to children at the federal, state and local levels.

## Parents as Teachers National Center’s Position

Parents as Teachers National Center supports continued federal funding for PIRCs. This critical investment supports the direct service provided by PIRCs and by the other early childhood and parent education programs that receive funding through them. Parents as Teachers programs provide resources to encourage and equip parents to participate in their children’s development and learning from birth and to stay engaged. Parental involvement is the cornerstone of the Parents as Teachers philosophy.

## Supporting Points

### 1. Parental involvement improves children’s school success.

- Parent involvement leads to improved educational performance. (Epstein et al., 2002; Fan & Chen, 2001; NMSA, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Van Voorhis, 2003).
- PIRCs partner with other established early childhood and parent education organizations, such as Parents as Teachers, Head Start and Even Start, to foster parental involvement and help parents prepare for their children’s first few years in school—the most critical time to ensuring long-term educational success.

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2. PIRCs help parents realize the full potential of NCLB, so they can provide the best possible education for their children regardless of need, risk or demographic.
  - PIRCs are vital resources for communities because they specialize in parental involvement and are able to share that expertise with schools and families.
  - PIRCs identify and coordinate federal, state and local parent services and make them more accessible to children and families.
  - School districts fulfill the requirements of NCLB through PIRCs, while providing parents with clear information about the options they have for their children's education.
  - Culturally diverse populations, particularly minority and English Language Learner (ELL) families, receive PIRC benefits. PIRC services are offered in a variety of languages to help families conquer language barriers.
  - Economically diverse populations, including both rural and urban areas, benefit from PIRCs, with at least half of the funding supporting areas with high concentrations of low-income children.
3. Parents as Teachers programs, often supported by PIRC funds, foster parental involvement that is vital to long-term academic success.
  - Parents whose children participate in Parents as Teachers are more involved in their children's schools, request more conferences and volunteer more in the classroom. (Source: Pfannenstiel, 1998; Pfannenstiel, Lambson and Yarnell, 1996.)
  - Research indicates that parents who participate in Parents as Teachers programs demonstrated high levels of school involvement, with 85 percent initiating contact with the school or a teacher and 75 percent assisting with home activities related to school work. (Source: Pfannenstiel, Lambson and Yarnell, 1996.)
  - Results of a multi-site randomized trial showed that for families with very low income, those who participated in Parents as Teachers were more likely to read aloud to their child and to tell stories, say nursery rhymes, and sing with their child. (Wagner and Spiker, 2001).



## Additional Resources

[www.parentsasteachers.org](http://www.parentsasteachers.org)

[www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html)

<http://www.pirc-info.net/>



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