



Parental Involvement Equals Student Success

JEFFERSON CITY — During the 2008 legislative session, the General Assembly agreed to designate the second week in September each year as *Parent and Family Involvement in Education Week* (House Bill 2213) to increase awareness that Missourians play an integral role in their children's education — both at home and in school.

Schools across the state this week (Sept. 7-13) will host activities to encourage greater involvement of parents and families and throughout the year are expected to study and implement new ways to strengthen vital parent-school partnerships.

I don't think anyone could disagree that the more parents are involved in their children's schooling — and the more parents and teachers work together to set common goals — the better chances of student academic success. Decades of research show that when parents are involved, students do better in school, parents become empowered, teacher morale improves, schools get better, and communities grow stronger. The results can be measured in better school attendance, higher grades and test scores, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in post-secondary schools.

Just as importantly, research shows parental involvement in education positively impacts students' well-being, through enhanced self-esteem, more positive attitudes and behaviors, and a decreased use of drugs and alcohol.

Here are some other important facts to consider. Most experts agree that family involvement is more important than socio-economic status, race, or ethnic background, or the education level of parents in predicting a child's academic success. Also, single-parent families are generally just as involved in schools as two-parent families. A common assumption is that two-parent families have more time for parental involvement than smaller family units.

There are a number of ways parents can become more involved in their children's learning process. Because students spend 70 percent of their time outside of school, it's important for parental involvement to begin — and continue — at home, through home-learning activities, such as reading practice, and other positive activities designed to stimulate learning. Other things parents can do include: communicating with your child's teacher, going to open houses, attending parent/teacher meetings, visiting your child's school, getting involved with after-school activities, helping with classroom learning, or committing time to fundraising groups, booster

clubs, or volunteering. Parents can also become involved by serving on school organizations and committees, seeking a school board post, or by working as paraprofessionals.

Education has long been a focus of mine, and as a member of the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am very pleased to have played an important role in making education our state's highest budget and policy priority — another key component of our children's academic success.

During the past four budget years, Missouri has delivered \$1.2 billion in new support for education — the largest education funding increase without new taxes in state history. Those budgets have included new funding for technology, quality afterschool programs, advanced learning in math and science, and early learning. In addition, \$652.5 million in increases have been secured for elementary and secondary education programs for innovative and high-tech programs designed to ensure that our students receive a first-rate education.

This year — for the first time ever — Missouri's total funding for higher education tops \$1 billion. This nearly quadruples funding available for Access Missouri scholarships, at \$91.5 million, and provides \$40.1 million in new funding for colleges and universities. In total, the General Assembly has supported an impressive 18.4 percent increase in direct state aid for local schools since 2005.

School funding is only part of the equation for our students' academic success. A parent or significant adult's influence is vital in ensuring positive and long lasting benefits for everyone.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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