

Every home is a  
university and the  
parents are the  
teachers.

*Mahatma Gandhi*

## **Envisioning Parent Engagement in Urban Schools**

Andrea A. Lawful Trainer

M.ED

C.A.P.E.S

# A guide to engaging families in Urban Schools



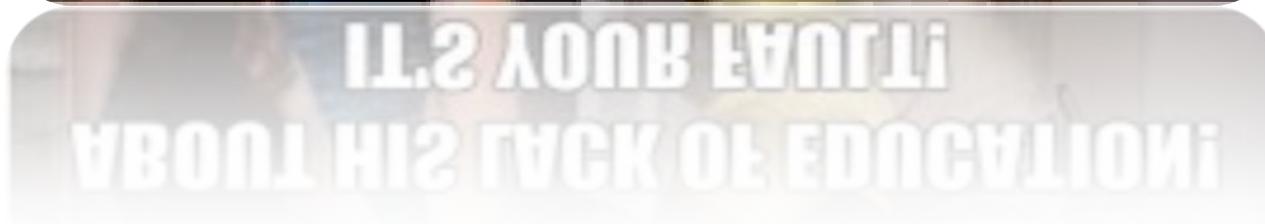
# We Often Hear The Following:

- “Parents have no accountability!”
- “If you want a parent in your school, you must serve a meal and find baby sitters.”
- “Parents are abusive to Educators and staff.”
- “Parents don’t do anything. They don’t raise their children, they don’t discipline, they want teachers to teach and set boundaries. They want us to be the parent”

- Parents don't teach children to respect educators.
- Parents “fight” against educators. “My child didn't do that.”

And the list goes on..

Which can look very much like this..



# As school Board members we are

- Often removed from the daily interactions with families and schools
- Spend our time developing policies as it applies to parental involvement with very little “real time “ experience that shows what is working beyond what we are shown in power points at our board meetings.
- Our own experiences with families can be challenging as we most often do not see parents/guardians at school board meetings unless there is an issue.
- We have our own challenges with budgets, buildings and staff.

# Consider the following..

- In the Philadelphia Public school system, 1 in 5 families are plagued by violence and abject poverty.
- Parents struggle to keep their children from the lure of guns and easy money selling drugs to either support their families or gain street credibility.
- Many of those young people see no hope for living in fear of the streets.

- Truancy is a large issue in many schools
- Budgets are cut from lack of state and federal funds
- Teacher frustration is high and many are opting to choose a different career as schools have become places where learning cannot take place
- Charter schools have taken over many urban districts and in Louisiana's urban school districts, Charters have almost completely taken over.

# Added to the frustration..

- In many urban schools, while the students of color accounts for more than 60% of the population, the staff is not a reflection of that population and students rarely see anyone that represents them in the classrooms.
- The disparities in understanding culture and ethnicity, creates a divide between staff, students and families.

# A large urban school was given a satisfaction survey about culture

- Staff and families responded to the survey and this is what was found.....

# Everyone said they celebrated diversity but...

look level divided African-American middle Furthermore  
schools education discipline  
essentially **community** segregated determines  
follow behind differences WHITE performance among lines  
**school** bias year dearth over needs sections higher begins  
privilege leveled along DHMS serious divide  
student punished same intent long coming Truth  
**racial** race **district** value Looking upon BHMS cultural disrespect  
between ation Relationships inequity expelled  
number remains issues economic two effect behavior  
suffers outcomes affect attitudes classes way  
clear While Until problems **believe** remain difficult profiling  
celebrate expectations racism **BLACK** equitable  
drastically malicious elementary diversity institutional guarantee majority  
**students** high last African-Americans  
reevaluated lack stereotypical **Word**  
expulsions deny through **It Out**

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# Their thoughts about children of color said otherwise

performance these students don't want to learn  
behavior African-American  
school district segregated  
stereotypes perceptions cultural  
degradation educational not equitable fighting  
problems promote cultural differences stereotypes  
Inequity celebrate racial disparity among staff  
divide African-Americans privilege  
discipline intolerance cultures expectations **BLACK**  
district diversity bias student teacher  
profiling relationships Truth disrespect goal  
expulsions issues equality school racism  
fairness differences lack harmful race  
needs outcomes value academic unresolved different  
serious divide punished comments unfair  
economic teachers community intent negative  
segregated institutional tired parents  
divided along racial and economic lines  
institutionalized unacceptable remarks  
intolerance understanding education  
attitudes racial **WHITE** students  
malicious lack of support  
**POLARIZED** academic outcomes  
racial disparity among staff Inequity  
lack of African-Americans in higher-level classes disparity among staff



# How is it that some schools can attract

- Great parent engagement?
- Smiling families who will happily volunteer and raise monies for their school?
- Advocates who enjoys a warm open partnership with teachers?
- Parents that hold their children accountable?
- Families that feel welcomed and invited into a building?

# Strategies from a policy level

- Have a parent engagement policy with “teeth”
- Ask the Superintendent and Administration to give follow-up at the building level on programs that are actually working
- Attend some of those programs at the school level so the constituents can see that you care and are accessible to them.
- Hire qualified, engaging facilitators to run parenting programs that work.

# Policy level continued..

- Ask for a district level parent engagement committee and ask that at least 2 parent leaders from each building attend along with faculty and staff.
- Ask those leaders for feedback that will enable you to put a solid plan in place WITH their help and support. That creates a relationship that is invaluable.
- Invite those families to policy meetings at the state level to discuss how harmful budget cuts are to their children.

# Strategies at the building level

- Look at the staff/student ethnicity ratio and begin conversations around safety, trust, cultural responsiveness and responsibilities of all
- You may most likely need an outside facilitator to keep this conversation on an even keel as emotions will run high.
- Encourage the parent leaders in each building to meet with staff leaders and work together on how to engage families fully and with authenticity.

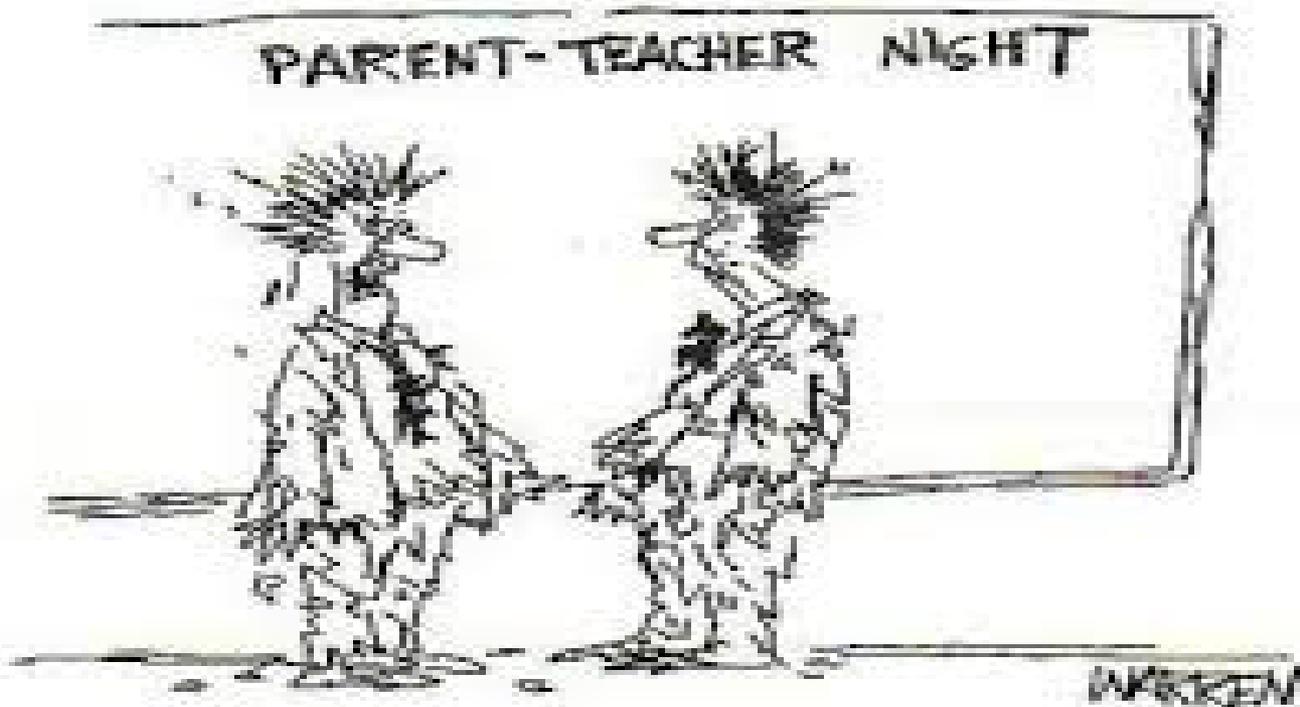
# Strategies at building level continued

- Have building leaders invite parent leaders to sit in on a few key meetings, beyond the classroom so they can have a “buy in” and will be able to stop rumors and misunderstandings as they begin to fester even as they learn more about the process.

No one is as passionate for schools as  
an engaged parent!!



The bottom line is this.. We are in it together..



"You must be Timmy's dad. I'm Timmy's teacher."

**TeachHUB!**