



Engaging Families

Supporting Students from Cradle to Career

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Town Hall Meetings With Secretary Duncan

In recent months U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has held town hall meetings across the country to allow parents and community members to ask him questions and express concerns. The events are designed to engage people in meeting President Barack Obama's challenge to lead the world in college completion by 2020. In Pico Rivera, Calif., outside of Los Angeles, there were more than 800 participants. Events have been held in Puerto Rico, Oregon, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Ohio, Kentucky, and New Mexico. In each venue,



Secretary Duncan addresses parents at Town Hall meeting in Mason City, OH.

the secretary has met Americans who are passionate about education. Issues addressed at the town hall meetings have been the reauthorization of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act, health care in schools, consequences for teachers who verbally abuse students, and bilingual education.

On Nov. 14, 2011, veteran education journalist John Merrow moderated the Second #AskArne Twitter Town Hall with Secretary Duncan. Go to <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2011/11/secretary-duncan-to-hold-second-askarne-twitter-town-hall/> to find out more and sign up for future Twitter town hall meetings.

Inside this issue:

Town Hall Meetings With Secretary Duncan 1

Handbook on Family and Community Engagement 1

Parent Summit 3

Resources 4

Upcoming Events 4

Handbook on Family and Community Engagement

A resource for SEAs, LEAs and schools

With the U. S. Department of Education's (ED's) Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Academic Development Institute and Center on Innovation & Improvement have produced the *Handbook on Family and Community Engagement*. The *Handbook* is a resource designed to guide state, district, and school Title I personnel in providing high-quality, research-based family and community engagement programs and experiences. Thirty-

six experts on family and community engagement contributed to the *Handbook*. Each chapter is grounded in research and provides practical action principles for working in the field. The concluding chapter lists specific recommended practices that may be replicated at the state, district, and school levels.

To support the use of the *Handbook* as a resource for states, districts, and schools, ED's Regional Comprehensive Centers

have designated family engagement regional specialists. These specialists will work through the state education agencies (SEAs) in their 16 regions to introduce a series of webinars for districts and schools covering the *Handbook* topics. Pre-recorded webinars, Power Points, and more on the *Handbook* are available at <http://www.families-schools.org/>.

Handbook on Family and Community Engagement:
A resource for SEAs, LEAs and schools

(Continued from Page 1)

The contact information for family engagement regional specialists located in ED's Regional Comprehensive Centers are listed below. Contact them for technical assistance on using the *Handbook* to engage families.

Family Engagement Regional Specialists

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Parent Summit

The U.S. Department of Education partnered with the National Alliance of Black Schools Educators (NABSE) to present a one-day Parent Summit on Nov. 16, 2011, at NABSE's annual conference held in New Orleans. Over 300 parents from across the country attended. There were workshops not only for a broad audience of parents—including those whose children have special needs and those who are parent leaders—but also for parental involvement practitioners. They addressed a variety of topics, such as: the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*; parental involvement issues related to reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*; and parents' and educators' partnering to increase student achievement. After the summit parents and teachers in separate and combined focus groups discussed ways to improve communication and increase mutual understanding. In the dialogue that ensued several points became clear:

- Before challenging the teachers, parents should learn more information about the issue at hand, including both sides of a dispute.
- Teachers should actively listen to the parents; they should consider not only what parents say but what they don't say.
- Parents and teachers need to be sensitive to each other's positions so they can better work together .
- Teachers and parents need to respect each other's time.

Even after the combined focus groups of parents and teachers ended, the participants huddled together to continue talking. Though not in the same state, some exchanged phone numbers to keep in touch. More focus groups are planned to bring parents and teachers together to improve communication between them and dispel

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Resources

Information Resource Center (IRC)

The Information Resource Center operates a contact center that offers members of the public information, referrals, and in-depth assistance on all aspects of federal education law and policy as well as on nationally focused Department initiatives. Services are provided via a toll-free telephone number (1-800-USA LEARN) and a Web portal at <https://answers.ed.gov/>. There education stakeholders are able to access the answers to more than 100 frequently asked questions, as well as communicate with the Department via e-mail. Parents may also search FAQs and ask the Department a question via Facebook: <http://on.fb.me/rQrltk>.

Free Resource for College

The National Center for Family Literacy has developed a new free resource that supports the college aspirations and goals of families, particularly Hispanic families. This new resource—*En Camino*—is an educational tool kit for families available at <http://www.familit.org/free-resources/myfamilygoestocollege/>. For more information call 502-584-1133 or visit <http://www.familit.org/>.

Common Knowledge Scholarship Foundation

A resource for schools, students, and families

Throughout the year high school students across the U.S. have an opportunity to win not only money and a trophy for their school but also money towards their college funds. CKSF has replaced applications and essay writing with quick, online, multiple-choice quizzes. CKSF offers many scholarship opportunities to students who score highest on quizzes. Topics range from general "common knowledge" to specific academic subjects, books, websites, and even movies. The procedure is simple: Register, Read the necessary facts, Go online to take the quiz. Once completed scores are compared; the highest scorers win. Every month there is a new topic and another chance to win. Parents may also register and compete at CKSF to win scholarships for themselves or their children. For more information please go to <http://www.cksf.org/>.

Family Engagement Team

The Office of Communication and Outreach has a team of family engagement specialists (see left) who work with state and local education agencies to empower parents with the information and training they need to be full partners in the education and the academic progress of their children. Serving as an information conduit, the team recognizes that parents need to be equipped with the tools necessary to make them informed partners and equal stakeholders. For more information, please email parent@ed.gov.

Upcoming Events

Focus Groups, Forums, and Summits

Parent Forum	New Orleans, LA	Region IV	March 3, 2012
Parent Forum	Detroit, MI	Region V	March 24, 2012
Dads Forum	Chicago, IL	Region V	May 5, 2012
Dads Focus Group	Atlanta, GA	Region IV	June 2012
Dads Forum	Atlanta, GA	Region IV	Sept. 8, 2012
Parent Summit	Nashville, TN	Region IV	November 2012

(Dates are subject to change.)