



# Engaging Families

*Supporting Students from Cradle to Career*

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## Roundtable Highlights Importance of Fathers' Involvement in Education



*Participants at the Fathers' Roundtable*

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Fathers, uncles, male mentors, grandfathers, and community leaders recently gathered at the Chicago Vocational Career Academy Café in Chicago, to share what men can do to increase their involvement in and support for the lives of their children—especially their education.

The Department of Education (ED) sponsored the event alongside the Department of Health and Human Services as well as Black Star Project, Watch D.O.G.S., the Illinois Fatherhood Initiative and Real Men Charities. Approximately 45 men attended from across the Chicago area. A panel of fathers and experts shared their experiences and research that affirmed the positive role of fathers in the lives of their children. Panelist Dexter Chaney, one of ED's Teaching Ambassador Fellows and a Chicago assistant principal, explained a principal's perspective on parental involvement. He also linked parental involvement to ED's efforts to motivate parents to be partners in their children's learning.

One young father said the message should be "taken to the street." He shared his feelings of isolation without a job and family supports. The group challenged this young man to return with other young fathers to subsequent meetings. Attendees also challenged each other to encourage their neighbors and friends to become involved.

A result of this session is periodic meetings to continue the dialogue. A fathers' forum—*Strong Fathers, Strong Families, Strong Schools*—featuring ED senior staff and other members of the Administration will take place on May 5th in Chicago.

A version of this article was also featured on [Fatherhood.gov](http://Fatherhood.gov), a service of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse.

## ED Adds Absolute Priority For Parent & Family Engagement to Investing In Innovation Grant

The U.S. Department of Education announced the third year of the Investing in Innovation (i3) grant competition for local education agencies (LEAs), groups of schools and non-profit organizations to improve student results through innovative practices. This competition invites entities interested in grants of up to \$3 million — termed "Development" grants under the i3 competition — to submit a simplified pre-application through April 9.

"We have made efforts to improve the i3 competition each year, and simplifying the application process is part of ongoing efforts to make the Department's programs work better for potential grantees and have greater impact for students," said Jim Shelton, assistant deputy secretary for innovation and improvement.

In its first two years, i3 generated unprecedented interest, receiving nearly 2,300 applications from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The vast majority of applicants sought funds under i3's development grant category, which supports new projects or programs with high potential for success but that have been implemented previously in only limited contexts.

The Department has also included a new absolute priority within the 2012 i3 development grants competition focused on improving parent and family engagement. "Parent and family engagement is a critical component of student success, but there are too few models with evidence of effectiveness. By using i3 to shine a spotlight on this need and on promising approaches, we hope to identify new solutions of national importance," Shelton said.

Other modifications have been added to the i3 grant pre-application process. To learn more about the i3 grant program and the new pre-application process, please visit [the i3 site on ed.gov](http://the i3 site on ed.gov).

## Partnering With Parents To Transition Neglected, Delinquent Or At-Risk Youths

The [Stadium View School](#), located in downtown Minneapolis, Minn., provides education and transition services to Minnesota students aged 10 to 21 in both the Hennepin County Juvenile Detention Center and Adult Detention Center. Stadium View School seeks to improve educational success for students who find themselves outside the mainstream educational setting by helping to close the achievement gap between them and their peers, improve their school attendance, increase their graduation rate and reduce their recidivism. The school aims to accomplish these goals by building relationships with students, families and communities, and empowering them to have a voice in the decision-making process about their education and their futures.

The school actively engages parents early on and throughout a student's entire transition and reentry. Family engagement efforts are multi-faceted. Bi-monthly meetings are held with the Parent Council, which includes parents, vocational and faith-based community members, disability advocates and other community partners. The school further helps parents overcome barriers to involvement by providing additional supports and resources (e.g., transportation support). A transition specialist also follows up with students and parents within 30 days of a student's community reentry to provide individualized reentry support.

Stadium View School is one of the 2011 program sites for the [Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools](#). The program provides summer and after-school enrichment through a model curriculum that supports children and families around five essential components: 1) High-quality academic enrichment, 2) parent and family involvement, 3) social action and civic engagement, 4) intergenerational servant leadership development, and 5) nutrition, health and mental health.



## The Secretary's Corner

Secretary Duncan traveled to Boston, Mass., on Feb. 6, to visit the [Parent University](#) program sponsored by Boston Public Schools (BPS). The secretary participated in a math class with Spanish-speaking parents who were brushing up on their skills in order to better help their students at home and after school.

According to the program's *Preliminary Report 2010-2011 Implementation*, the vision for BPS Parent University "is to increase the capacity of families to actively and effectively support their children's education, impact



school improvement and impact the quality of life in their communities." The program works in partnership with the community and provides a wide range of resources and programs "to enrich, engage and empower parents and caregivers as equal partners."

Parent University is free and open to all BPS families, with targeted outreach to low-income families of color and immigrant families. Classes are offered to speakers of Spanish, Chinese and Haitian Creole with plans for adding other languages.

The secretary tweeted about his visit: "The more schools become community centers like [@BostonSchools](#)' Parent University, the better our children will achieve." Follow Secretary Duncan ([@ArneDuncan](#)) on Twitter.

To learn more about Parent University, visit <http://www.bpsfamilies.org/parentuniversity>.

## Parental Engagement Helps Lead to School's Blue Ribbon Success

At Anchorage's [Chugach Optional Elementary School](#), visitors are greeted by an excited group of staff, students and parents. During student-led tours, parent and teacher cooperation is on display amid colorful classrooms set-up to resemble a comfortable home environment, with couches, curtains and rugs.

Chugach was named a Blue Ribbon School in 2011. Principal Anne Salzer explains that parental involvement is the key to success at Chugach. In 2011, 3rd-grade students there were 90 percent proficient in math compared to the state average of 74.6 percent; 90 percent proficient in reading compared to the state average of 81.5 percent; and 90 percent proficient in writing compared to the state average of 74.4 percent.

Chugach Optional was founded in 1973 by a group of Anchorage parents who proposed that the school district offer another option to the traditional neighborhood school. Their vision for a progressive, open-concept school ultimately became Chugach Optional.

Linda Pauley of the Family Engagement Team at ED recently visited the Blue Ribbon School. A student tour guide told her: "Having parents in the school makes me feel warm and comfortable—like home." A parent commented: "Chugach Optional makes you feel like family, a place where you feel at home; everyone is on a first name basis."

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## Resources

Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 2011, a new report issued jointly by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, examines crimes occurring in school, as well as on the way to and from school, and presents data on safety at school from the perspectives of students, teachers, and principals. The report covers topics such as victimization, bullying, school conditions, fighting, weapons, and availability and student use of drugs and alcohol. One significant finding: the total crime victimization rate of students at school declined from 43 victimizations per 1,000 students in 2009 to 32 per 1,000 students in 2010. For more information, please go to <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?Pubid=2012002>.

The newest editions of "School Days," the Department's monthly video journal, features President Obama's State of the Union message and his plans for making college more affordable, Secretary Duncan's challenge for college sports programs to strike a better balance between academics and athletics, and a convening of state education leaders to talk about Race to the Top plans. For more information, please go to <http://www.ed.gov/blog/tag/school-days/>.

## Did You Know?

For the second consecutive year, President Obama released his [annual budget](#) proposal at an institution of education, Northern Virginia Community College's Annandale Campus. "An economy built to last demands that we keep doing everything we can to help students learn the skills that businesses are looking for," he said. "The budget that we're releasing today is a reflection of shared responsibility. It says that, if we're serious about investing in our future and investing in community colleges, new energy technology, and basic research, we've got to pay for it. And, that means we've got to make some choices."

The President is requesting \$69.8 billion in discretionary funding for the U.S. Department of Education, an increase of \$1.7 billion (2.5%) from 2012. He is also requesting \$14 billion in one-time investments for key reform areas. These new investments will ensure that continuing investments in programs like Title I, special education, and Pell Grants are able to serve students and schools well.

Want to dig deeper? Among the resources posted online are the [budget summary](#), [state-by-state tables](#), and various [budget fact sheets](#) on cross-cutting issues.

## Upcoming Events

Parent Forum	Detroit, Mich.	Region V	March 24, 2012
<i>Strong Fathers, Strong Families, Strong Schools</i>	Chicago, Ill.	Region V	May 5, 2012
Fathers' Focus Group	Atlanta, Ga.	Region IV	June 2012
Fathers' Forum	Atlanta, Ga.	Region IV	Fall 2012
Parent Summit	Nashville, Tn.	Region IV	November 2012

*Dates are subject to change.*

## Family Engagement Team

The Office of Communication and Outreach has a team of family engagement specialists 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](mailto:parent@ed.gov).

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