



# Engaging Families

*Supporting Students From Cradle to Career*

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## U.S. Department of Education Hosts Parent Leaders in Washington, D.C.

On April 20, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach hosted a Parent Leaders meeting. Over 100 participants from across the country attended to discuss what the Department has done, is doing and plans to do to encourage family engagement. The Rev. Brenda Girton-Mitchell, director of the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, welcomed the group on behalf of Secretary Duncan and gave an overview of the Department's work in family engagement. Anna Hinton, director of Parental Options and Information in the Department's Office of Innovation and Improvement, spoke about reframing family engagement as an integrated, systemic and sustainable approach to school improvement and the importance of shared responsibility.

Additional speakers included Tonya Miles, member of the National Assessment Governing Board; Myrdin Thompson, a Mom Congress delegate; Ronald T. Ashford, director of Public Housing Supportive Services at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and Jacque Chevalier, senior education policy analyst at the National PTA. David J. Johns, senior education advisor to Senate Chairman Tom Harkin, Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, also updated participants on the status of the reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*.

Small group discussions ensued, focusing on suggestions from parents on how the Department can better respond to their concerns, including those about education policy. Participants stated that they enjoyed that session because it gave them the opportunity to share their concerns and ideas and to network with other parent leaders and attendees. Closing the day's activities, José Rico, executive director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, spoke about parents as advocates for their children and asked the parent leaders to submit stories that would help shape future policy.

## Summer Fathers Forum in Atlanta Leads to Planning for a Bigger Event

On Saturday, June 7, the Department of Education's regional office in Atlanta hosted an event to engage men in support of their children's education. More than 40 men from throughout Georgia and as far away as



Photo Credit: Dennis Bega, U.S. Department of Education

Arkansas attended for a morning of conversation, and their commitment was clear in the character of their input. Through the oversight, planning and preparation of Region IV's Jonava Johnson, dads, uncles, grandfathers and other men met to discuss how to engage even more men in this important work. While together, the men had a chance to hear from male middle school students about the value of a male role model. Hearing firsthand that their role as men is valued by kids struggling to stay in school set the tone for the rest of the day. The purpose for taking action was sitting right in front of these men. The students made it clear that they want men to be active in their school lives – not just in sports but also in academics.

## Education Department Releases New College Cost Data

The U.S. Department of Education continued to increase transparency around the cost of college by updating several lists on its [College Affordability and Transparency Center](#), highlighting institutions with the highest and lowest tuition and net price, and those schools where prices are rising the fastest. In addition – if you click the College Navigator link on this website – you'll find information that will enable you to see how much a specific school costs in comparison to similar institutions nationwide. You'll also find a tool to calculate the net price of a college, that is, the price after scholarships and grants are considered.

"We want to arm students and parents with the information they need to make smart educational choices," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "Students need to know up front how much college will actually cost them instead of waiting to find out when the first student loan bill arrives. These lists are a major step forward in unraveling the mystery of higher education pricing."

This information is required by the *Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008* and released as part of the Obama administration's continuing effort to make the costs of college more transparent in order to help students and their families make informed decisions on their investment in higher education. The Department also is finalizing a model "financial aid shopping sheet," in which the Department is calling for institutions to voluntarily provide students with easy-to-understand information about their financial aid packages. Earlier this year, President Obama called for a [College Scorecard](#) for degree-granting institutions, designed to provide essential information about college costs, graduation rates, and potential earnings after graduation.

## The Secretary's Corner

*On April 30, Secretary Duncan joined Parenting Magazine's Mom Congress 2012 event at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. He discussed what the Department has championed during his tenure and what he hopes for the future. An excerpt from his prepared remarks is below:*



*Photo Credit: Leslie Williams, U.S. Department of Education*

We often talk about parents being partners in education. When we say that, we're usually talking about the healthy and productive relationships that can develop between the adults in a child's life at home and the adults who work with that child at school. I can't overstate how important this partnership is.

We also need to be partners in bigger, systemic issues. That's where you come in. I've read about the amazing work that all of you have done in your communities, and collectively you inspire me.

So here's your homework assignment: Keep doing what you're doing back home—and you will always have a strong partner in President Obama, in me and in our Department of Education.

Many of you have served as PTA leaders in your schools. Your Connecticut mom serves as the parent rep on the local school board. Your Georgia delegate is advising the state superintendent. Keep contributing that crucial parent voice. Your voice, individually and collectively, is much more powerful than you may realize.

They say that when a student walks across the stage to receive a diploma, a whole family walks with them.

In 2020, today's eighth graders will be finishing college. At that point, we must again be first in the world in graduation rates, not 16th. And with the foundation that President Obama has laid, I can imagine all of us at their graduation ceremony, like a proud family. ... We'll all cheer for our students and ourselves as America's graduates are declared the world's valedictorians.

To read the entire speech, please go to <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/obama-record-education>.

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## Resources

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has recently posted online resources for parents and families, and child advocates. These resources—which include information on navigating the complaint process and ensuring that all students receive equal access to a high-quality education—are available in 19 different languages on the [OCR webpage](#).

## Did You Know?

We are excited to introduce you to a revitalized [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov). Building on the momentum started a year ago by the Obama administration, the departments of Education and Health and Human Services worked in partnership and [relaunched](#) the new site. It emphasizes action steps that individuals can take to prevent and stop bullying in their schools and communities, featuring easy-to-use tools and resources for community leaders, young people and families, including information on how to

- Recognize the [warning signs](#) and when to take action,
- [Prevent bullying](#) before it starts,
- Implement [strategies for intervention](#),
- Share your community's [resources](#), policies or strategies to prevent and address bullying, and
- Access information on bullying [laws](#) in your state.

We hope the new site will help you share ideas and start discussions about the role you can play in preventing bullying in your community. Show your support on your own website with our [widgets and badges](#) and subscribe to [email updates](#) to find out about new content on the site. We also encourage you to consider submitting your materials for inclusion in our [resource database](#). You can also follow StopBullying.gov on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) for more information on how to take action.

## Upcoming Events

Seattle/Tacoma	Fathers Forum	September 15
Atlanta	Fathers Forum	September 22

## Family Engagement Team

The Office of Communications and Outreach family engagement specialists 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.

*Engaging Families* is edited by Stephanie Sprow, U.S. Department of Education. To subscribe, unsubscribe or comment on this newsletter, please contact [parent@ed.gov](mailto:parent@ed.gov). *Engaging Families* is available online at [www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/engagingfamilies/](http://www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/engagingfamilies/)