

The Importance of Parental Involvement in Schools

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According to a PBS report, close to [one million](#) American children drop out of school every year. In light of the staggering rate and our current crisis, it is important parents are involved in their children's education early.

I sat down with Principal Jeremy Baugh to discuss the impact of parental involvement. Baugh has a Master of Science in School Administration from Butler University and was the Principal of Mill Creek West Elementary School in Amo, Indiana for seven years. In his role as principal, Mr. Baugh implemented building-level change that led to major school improvement. He specifically developed a school-wide focus on data analysis and usage, including a tiered intervention model for math and reading. High parental involvement was also a key factor in his school's success.



Principal Jeremy Baugh (Courtesy of Phalen Leadership Academies)

In the fall of 2013, Principal Baugh will lead the inaugural year of the George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academies, which will provide a high quality academic blended learning curriculum to children in Indianapolis.

Earl: In light of the current drop out crisis, why do you think it's important for parents to get involved in the elementary education of their children?

Principal Baugh: A child's elementary education is the foundation of a solid, life-long education. Since parents are the first educators in a child's life, it is essential for parents and school staff to ensure a high quality, rigorous education so that opportunities abound in the future without hurdles of difficulty and struggles in school. Without a partnership between families and the school, parents miss out on vital sharing of information about a child's academic strengths and challenges. Parents are the number one advocate for their child. A parent is the key for information sharing between grade-levels, various schools, and from teacher to teacher. When a parent takes an active role in their child's education the child understands that education is important to their family.

Earl: What steps can parents take to be more involved in their child's school?

Principal Baugh: Simple steps include attending parent meetings, open houses, parent/teacher conferences, Parent Teacher Organization meetings (PTO). I would also recommend that parents sign up to volunteer in their child's classroom at least once per week. Volunteering could include: working as a facilitator of small group instruction, tutoring a student, or reading with an individual or small group. For parents who are not able to volunteer during the school day, I would recommend some of the following opportunities: make copies for your child's teacher, cut out and prepare lesson material from home, make flash cards, ensure that your child has a consistent study routine at home. Additionally parents should email or call their child's teacher frequently, weekly is best, in order to stay on top their child's progress in class.



(Courtesy of Phalen Leadership Academies)

Earl: In terms of the parent-school relationship, how might a charter school be a better fit for some parents?

Principal Baugh: Charter schools cater to the needs of scholars and families. Families choose to attend charter schools, and therefore it is essential that schools constantly monitor the effectiveness of instruction, and parent/family satisfaction. Charter schools also cater to working families by offering extended school days (8 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at PLA), an extended school year (200 days vs. 180 days at PLA), and summer enrichment (25 days of Summer Advantage USA at PLA). For these reasons, I believe that parents might find charter schools to be a better fit for their families.

Earl: Do you have any advice for parents of children who may be struggling in school?

Principal Baugh: Parents need to find out what the critical issues are with their child. Parents should request a meeting with their child's teacher as soon as possible. They should also be specific in their request. Ask for two or three skills that they can work on at home to improve. Working on more than two to three goals is often not effective in meeting the needs of scholars. Request a meeting with the school's Response to Intervention (RTI) Team in order to develop a plan for placing their child back on track. Parents should expect additional support from staff at school as well as additional work and practice for their child at home. Finally, parents should establish a regular study routine at home. This routine should include math fact and sight word practice, as well as fifteen minutes of reading per night on text that is at or above grade level.

For more information and resources: [PBS Parents](#), Phalen Leadership Academies, and [Parents Get Involved](#).