

AB 590 (SOLORIO): MEANINGFUL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

“All of the materials were only in English and the meetings were in English. Because I don’t speak English, I don’t feel brave enough to attend these meetings. I feel that this also affected the communication between my children and myself. I am not really able to understand how they are doing in school, what areas they need help in and what I can do to help them. And because it is all in English, I feel that it would be very difficult for me to ask.”

As increasing attention focuses on making progress in education and closing the achievement gap, parental involvement must become a key component. Research illustrates that active and involved parents contribute to successful student performance and school participation. However, of California’s 6.3 million public school students, 2.7 million, or nearly 43 percent, speak a primary language other than English at home. For this significant population of students, language barriers prevent communication between their parents and educators about important matters such as academic performance, school programs and services, standardized testing, and disciplinary codes, resulting in a detrimental impact on students’ success in education.

Parent Involvement is Key for Academic Success

- Studies illustrate the positive impact of parental involvement on academic achievement. Students with involved parents are more likely to:
 - Earn higher grade point averages and scores on standardized tests
 - Enroll in more challenging programs
 - Pass more classes and earn more credits
 - Attend school regularly
 - Have better social skills and adaptation to schools
- The federal No Child Left Behind Act also emphasizes and prioritizes the importance of communication to involve and engage parents in their children’s educational schooling.

Limited English Proficient Parents Want to be Involved

- 91% of Latino and 73% of Asian American parents have met with their children’s teacher more than 2 times during the school year.
- Approximately one-fifth of Latino and Asian American parents, however, face barriers communicating with their children’s teachers because the teacher does not speak their language.
- A survey of limited English proficient parents in San Francisco found a majority need better language assistance to participate fully in parent-teacher conferences and other in-person meetings related to their child’s education.

AB 590 (Solorio) is Needed to Improve Involvement of Limited English Proficient Parents

- The provision of oral interpretation services is needed at critical school events involving parents, such as parent-teacher conferences, disciplinary proceedings, and suspension/expulsion hearings.
- AB 590 would provide matching grants to a pilot of school districts so that they can develop infrastructure for involving limited English proficient parents. School districts would outline their approach in a competitive application process for the funding.
- An evaluation would assess and measure the impact of the services to improve parental involvement.