



**Ideal Elementary  
"Draft"  
As of 3/11/2011**

*Note: Ideal Elementary doesn't yet exist. It is a "concept school" – an evolving model "template" that will be used to build a roadmap of priorities for the four elementary schools served by the [Charleston Promise Neighborhood's School Infusion Strategy](#). The current version will undergo significant edits over the next two months as we receive feedback from the schools, the community, and our partners.*

*–Laura Deaton*

*The most current version of this template can be accessed online at <http://www.CharlestonPromise.org>.*

Ideal Elementary is located in Charleston County, South Carolina. It is one of four public [Charleston County School District](#) elementary schools located in the [Charleston Promise Neighborhood](#).

Because Ideal Elementary is consistently recognized as one of the best schools in the district, the majority of families with Neighborhood children who are zoned for the school choose to send their children to this Neighborhood school above all other choices.

Here's what Ideal Elementary has to offer:

- A top-notch [early childhood program and Family Resource Center](#), including onsite access to pediatric medical and wellness services.
- An [integrated extended day elementary learning environment](#) with a hands-on academic and [enrichment focus](#).
- [In-school supports](#) designed to ensure that every child achieves to his/her fullest capacity.

- A 100% focus on [creating and fostering a college-bound culture](#).
- A strong leadership team spearheaded by [an outstanding Principal](#), and [the best faculty](#) in the County.
- A family-friendly culture and a [robust family involvement program](#).

### **Ideal Elementary School Academic Instruction**

Because Ideal Elementary School is a [“conceptual” public school](#) within the [Charleston County School District \(CCSD\)](#), the academic action plan for the school is explicitly outlined, governed and monitored by CCSD. For the years 2008-2011, the district is governed by the following core principles, excerpted directly from the plan:

#### **Core Values: Results – Access – Partnerships:**

**Core Value I** is to **Focus on Results** by increasing the **Rigor** of instruction and challenging all students to achieve high levels. Weighted resources may be needed to bring consistent results. Improved results also require attention to **Relevance**. Specifically, course offerings and instruction need to be connected to both student life and to future post-secondary career goals.

**Core Value II** is to establish **Access** and **Equity** by providing all students with opportunities to receive effective instruction, enrichment, and advanced courses. By creating a portfolio of school types, families will be given the **Choice** to select an educational setting that best meets student learning needs and interests.

**Core Value III** articulates the importance of **Partnerships** in making our goals a reality. We will increasingly seek to strengthen our productive partnerships with volunteers, parents, communities of faith, public agencies, the business community, elected officials, and institutions of higher learning. Effective partnerships are built on a foundation of **Respect** and trust. Our culture must respect and value diversity, collaboration and the viewpoints of all stakeholders.

[Read the full Charleston Achieving Excellence Action Plan.](#)

### **Ideal Elementary School Literacy Emphasis**

**Ideal Elementary recognizes that early childhood literacy skills are key to lifelong achievement, both in school and in the workforce.**

At Ideal Elementary, specialized literacy coaches are available to collaborate with classroom teachers to expand their ability to teach literacy through presentations about literacy education, teacher study groups, grade-level team meetings. Literacy coaches also support individual teachers as they refine their instructional and assessment skills in literacy.

If needed, one-to-one student literacy tutoring by reading specialists is available to supplement existing classroom time. Sessions are structured with lesson plans created by reading specialists and may be provided by literacy specialists, expert classroom teachers, or highly-trained and supervised volunteer tutors.

### **References**

[Early Warning! Why reading by the End of Third Grade Matters. Kids Count Special Report, Annie E. Casey Foundation, \(2010\).](#) Also, [Grade Level Reading Indicators by State.](#)

L’Allier, S., Elish-Piper, L., & Bean, R. M. (2010). What Matters for Elementary Literacy Coaching? Guiding Principles for Instructional Improvement and Student Achievement. *Reading Teacher*, 63(7), 544-554.

Vukelich, C. (2004). In search of highly qualified early childhood classroom literacy teachers. *Reading Teacher*, 58(1), 95-100.

[Reading Programs That Work: A Review of Programs from Pre-K to 4th Grade, John Schacter, Milken Family Foundation, \(1999\).](#)

### **Ideal Elementary Early Childhood Programs and Services**

In addition to serving children ages 5-12, (typically Kindergarten through 6th grade), the school also provides high-quality early childhood and child development services to children ages three and four who live in the Neighborhood. Families have the option of

choosing morning or afternoon sessions which last between 3-4 hours each. The basic program is free to eligible low income families. Affordable extended day and summer options are also available for families who need high-quality full-day child care.

### **The Early Childhood Model at Ideal Elementary**

The three- and four-year-olds who attend Ideal Elementary learn through interaction with others, including parents, staff and peers in a safe, friendly, high-quality learning environment. Enrolled children attend classes that have stimulating physical environments so that they can acquire knowledge by manipulating, exploring, and experimenting with real objects. Their nutritional needs are met with the serving of healthy meals and planned activities which teach good eating habits. The comprehensive curriculum offers children learning opportunities through active involvement with age-appropriate materials. Outdoor settings include spaces for play, exploration, and social interaction, and specific times during the day are set aside for recess, outdoor activities, and physical movement, including climbing and playing on playground equipment, digging and planting, and individual play.

Well-trained staff members and early childhood development specialists with specialized knowledge in child development support children's learning and include a focus on building a strong self-concept, task-related attention, following directions, exerting independence, expressing creativity and interacting positively with others. Staff regularly recognize, reinforce, and extend children's strengths while remaining sensitive to cultural values and individual differences.

Attention is given to each child's developmental level, and programs are designed to meet his/her individual growth. Children in this program learn through student-centered curriculum that is purposeful in progression. Teachers follow the children's interests and development abilities and when timely in terms of development, the program focus includes literacy, reading and English Language Development.

[Child/Teacher ratios are low enough to encourage child-teacher bonding and to promote individual interaction](#), and there is a lead teacher who is assigned to each child to ensure continuity. Teachers choose grouping patterns that range from whole-class to small group to pairs to individual work to facilitate learning for each individual child.

## **Access to Additional Early Childhood and Community-Based Services**

Ideal Elementary believes the serving the whole family is the best way to help children succeed. The classrooms work in partnership with Head Start and Early Head Start to ensure that eligible families and children receive referrals to community-based services as needed and to provide comprehensive educational, health, and family support services. High-quality pediatric healthcare and wellness services are available and accessible on-site for families who wish to use them.

Ideal Elementary pre-school teachers are welcoming and work respectfully with all parents as children's first and constant teachers and include them in policymaking, program planning, classroom practice, and evaluation. All of Ideal Elementary Early Childhood programs emphasize parent involvement, prioritize hiring of qualified parents as employees, and have active Parent Advisory Councils that guide the programs. Parents are welcomed into the classrooms as volunteers and as regular participants in child/parent activities and opportunities for learning.

Regular daytime and evening parent education programs led by parenting experts are available and well-attended and include a focus on a diverse range of topics, including "How to listen, talk and play with your child", "Role modeling for respectful behavior and values", "Establishing rituals and routines", "Setting goals and boundaries", "Encouraging, celebrating, and having fun with your child", "Child safety tips", "Self-care for parents", "The importance of reading", "Brain food for your child" and more. If needed, free childcare is available during these programs.

The Ideal Elementary Family Resource Center has an extensive early childhood lending library and offers regular and frequent Parent-to-Parent support groups. Drop-in hours are also available for parents who want to connect with others and/or who need extra support.

Ideal Elementary realizes that school readiness depends not only on a child's cognitive development but also on children's physical, social, and emotional development. In addition to partnering with medical and mental health service providers, Ideal Elementary also works closely with local universities, libraries, parks, recreation centers, and police departments to develop community networks focused on school readiness and success.

The children who attend Ideal Elementary Early Childhood programs are healthy and thriving, have families who are actively engaged and serve as strong support for their child's early learning and development. The children are learning the skills that they need to start school motivated to read and with the prerequisite language and early literacy skills.

As a direct result of Ideal's Early Childhood programs, the majority of children arrive fully ready for Kindergarten, where learning is fun and is fully integrated into classrooms. Children solve problems, talk, draw, paint, build, dramatize, write, and read as they interact with their peers, teachers, and with classroom materials. Full-day Kindergarten is designed to be the perfect transition into elementary education, both cognitively and socially.

### References

[Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., White, B. A. B., Ou, S.-R. and Robertson, D. L. \(2011\), Age 26 Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Child-Parent Center Early Education Program. Child Development, 82: 379-404.](#)

[South Carolina's Preschool for Underserved 3 and 4 Year Olds, Liberty Fellowship Brief \(November, 2010\).](#)

[THE HIGH/SCOPE PRESCHOOL EDUCATIONAL APPROACH: A Prospectus for Pre-Kindergarten Programs, High/Scope Educational Foundation, \(2008\).](#)

[Viability of a Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program in South Carolina: Internal Document Prepared for the Palmetto Institute Board of Directors, \(October, 2005\).](#)

### Ideal Elementary School Schedule

**The schedule at Ideal Elementary school is specially designed to maximize student learning.**

The expanded school day includes at least 9 hours of combined [academic instruction](#) and [enrichment opportunities](#). The expanded schedule allows additional time daily for [core literacy](#) and math instruction (between 90-120 minutes for each daily), without sacrificing other subjects or enrichment classes. It also allows teachers

to cover more ground, delve deeper into content, and employ creative instructional strategies. In essence, increased time in school translates into extra class time. Extra class time means extra instructional time, and extra instructional time results in more academic learning time. When learning time increases, so does academic achievement. In addition to additional academic instruction, the expanded learning time also provides opportunities for enrichment activities and teacher planning, collaboration and professional development.

[Enrichment activities](#) are hands-on, project-based, coordinated with teaching staff, complement academic opportunities, and include direct ties to the curriculum and [college-bound culture initiatives](#).

Special service schedules also integrate with core instruction to allow for instructional interventions at a one-to-one individualized learning level.

In addition to extended days, extended year services are also available, including weekend and summer sessions.

## References

[Extending the School Day or School Year: A Systematic Review of Research \(1985–2009\) Review of Educational Research September 2010 80: 401-436. \(abstract only\). Expanded Learning Time Toolkit: Redesigning Schools to Enable Higher Achievement and a Well-Rounded Education, National Center on Time & Learning \(2008\).](#)

[Evaluation of the Expanded Learning Time Initiative: Year One Report 2006-2007 School Year, Abt Associates, Inc. \(2008\).](#)

[On the Clock: Rethinking the Way Schools Use Time by Elaine Silva, Education Sector Reports, Education Sector \(2007\).](#)

[Bay Area KIPP Schools: A Study of Early Implementation First Year Report 2004–05 by SRI International and commissioned by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. pp. 31-42 \(2007\).](#)

## Ideal Elementary Enrichment Programs

At Ideal Elementary School, enrichment programs include engaging, varying academic and non-academic activities that complement and extend traditional learning hours.

- Children benefit from participating in activities that are tailored to their age, interests, and stage of development.
- Programs incorporate traditional elements from multiple cultures by including activities, celebrations, books, games, and posters that reflect diverse experiences.
- Programs incorporate teachers and dovetail with academic learning objectives via homework support and/or tutoring.
- Frequent and intense program involvement leads to positive impacts on academic outcomes, including self-concept, educational expectations, academic achievement, high school completion, and post-secondary attendance.
- Technology is used to increase opportunities for self-paced learning and to increase engagement in program activities.

Enrichment programs are provided by school district personnel and/or by community-based partners. They include music, art, physical education, media and technology skill building, and [guidance curriculum](#).

## References

[Evidence-Based Enrichment Programs: Summary of Child Trends Research Briefs by Laura Deaton, Charleston Promise Neighborhood, \(December, 2010\).](#)

**[More links coming soon]**

## Ideal Elementary In-School Supports

**Although the focus at Ideal Elementary is on academic achievement, we know that children achieve best when there are strong instructional support services in place that can be tailored to meet individualized student learning needs.**

At Ideal Elementary:

- Positive student behavior is “the school norm” and any necessary behavioral intervention resources exist on-site and occur in real-time.



- Students receive regular medical, dental, vision, and hearing screenings. Families also have access to site-based routine preventive care and treatment from the onsite pediatric practice.
- Children who are performing below grade level, particularly in English/Language Arts and Math, receive supplemental tutoring/instructional support that is individually designed to help them achieve proficiency.
- In-school support services are seamlessly dovetailed with community-based resources for students and their families.

Our Ideal Elementary School Support Team includes:

- [Literacy specialists and trained tutors](#)
- Student advocates, system navigators and [guidance counselors](#)
- Classroom volunteers and educational aides
- Social workers and behavioral specialists
- Health, wellness, and medical specialists

### **Ideal Elementary School Guidance Counseling**

**Research demonstrates that a comprehensive, developmental approach to school counseling is associated with gains in academic achievement. As a result, Ideal Elementary has a highly-trained full-time guidance counselor as part of our core instructional and leadership team.**

Ideal Elementary's school counseling programs are comprehensive, collaborative, and developmental. They serve all students and families, encourage and promote student achievement, offer an assortment of services, and provide one-to-one support when needed.

Our Ideal Elementary Guidance Counseling Programs:

- Implement classroom guidance and small groups targeting student mastery of academic/educational competencies.
- Facilitate cross- and same-age peer tutoring for students needing an extra academic support, and

- Conduct workshops and in-services for parents, teachers, and staff on ways to foster student learning.

Elementary age students benefit from Ideal's "how to get ahead in school" guidance curriculum, which includes such topics as listening, study, and test-taking skills, building positive school attitudes and behaviors, effective writing and reading skills, and homework completion skills.

### **Ideal Elementary's Students Benefit in a Variety of Ways**

- Students acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning at Ideal Elementary and beyond.
- Students at Ideal Elementary are already preparing academically to [go to college](#) and have a fulfilling and well-paying career.
- Students understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home and in the community. This understanding spurs them to reach for the best academically.
- Students make informed decisions, set goals and take necessary action to achieve their goals.

### **References**

[Scarborough, J. L. \(2005\). The School Counselor Activity Rating Scale: An instrument for gathering process data. Professional School Counseling, 8,3. 274-283.](#)

[McGannon, W., Carey, J. & Dimmitt, C., The Current Status of School Counseling Outcome Research, Center for School Counseling Outcome Research, School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Research Monograph, Number 2 \(May, 2005\).](#)

[Sink, C. A., & Stroh, H. R. \(2003\). Raising achievement test scores of early elementary school students through comprehensive school counseling programs. Professional School Counseling, 6, 352-364.](#)

[Sink, C.A., & Stroh, H.R. \(2003\). Improving Academic Achievement in Primary Students Through a Systemic Approach to Guidance and Counseling, Washington School Research Center, \(April, 2003\).](#)

## **Ideal Elementary College-Bound Culture**

**A college-bound culture is imbedded in every aspect of the learning environment at Ideal Elementary and is evident from the moment you walk in the door.**

Flying in the entry hall are flags and pennants from the [College of Charleston](#), the [Citadel, Charleston Southern University](#), [Trident Technical College](#), and other local, regional, and national colleges.

On any given day, a segment of students is participating in special workshops and hearing from community role models (e.g. business people, artists, musicians, local celebrities, TV anchors, and public leaders) about their experiences at college and its importance in their lives. On other days, high school seniors who have recently applied to colleges are visiting to talk about why they want to attend college, what the preparation and application process was like, and what their career paths will be. Parents are encouraged to come and share their own college experiences or to act as classroom volunteers or support for the assemblies so that they are likewise exposed to the culture.

Special speakers, hall decorations, and parent involvement are just the start, though. The college-bound culture is a thread that runs through everything that happens at the school.

During opening announcements every morning, the students recite the Ideal Elementary College-Bound Creed, which provides daily reinforcement that college is not just a possibility, but can be a reality, for every student. Students are referred to by the year they will graduate college, so this year's third-graders are "The Class of 2024."

During the day, students create college-related collages, bookmarks, posters, and graphics in art class, write essays about why they want to go to college in their language arts classes, study the history of statewide universities and colleges in history and social studies classes, and learn how to save money for college in math classes. Every class finds a way to connect to the college-bound culture as part of the regular curriculum.

When they aren't visiting the schools on field trip tours to get a feel for campus life, students are exploring them virtually during computer classes or browsing through the

college brochure section of the library. When you stop students in the hall and ask them about college, they'll tell you what they are going to do "when" they go to college, not "if" they go. It's not an option or a choice for Ideal's students. College is an expectation.

Ideal's teachers regularly wear shirts or other articles of clothing that feature the names of their college alma maters and each classroom door features a "bio" of the teacher that highlights academic credentials at the top. Local universities have donated shirts, jackets and other college-branded items to the schools and these are used to reward outstanding student performance. College clothing is incorporated and accepted into the daily dress code for the school.

Teachers are also encouraged to use college-related language to help build the culture. The cafeteria is the "dining hall," and teachers are "professors." Academically focused words are introduced early, including: achieve, career, goal, graduate, major, mascot, scholarship, dormitory, advisor, alumni, application, bachelor's degree, dean's list, final, GPA, grants, loan, research, and more. Ideal Professors also provide college-bound culture tips for parents to use at home.

### **References**

[Building a College Going Culture: Principles and Examples, Patricia M. McDonough, UCLA \(January, 2011\).](#)

[Creating a College Going Culture: A Resource Guide, Melissa Friedman MacDonald and Aimée Dorr, UCLA, \(October 2006\).](#)

[CollegeEd:Creating a College-Going Culture Guide, College Board, \(2006\).](#)

[Setting Realistically High Academic Standards and Expectation, Mehmet A. Ozturk Cleveland State University, and Charles Debelak, Birchwood School \(2005\).](#)

[TurnAround Schools No Excuses University Website](#)

## Ideal Elementary School Leadership

*Note: “She” is used for merely for convenience in this section (particularly in light of the fact that the current principals in all four CPN elementary schools are women). The masculine “He” can easily be substituted, and no bias is intended.*

Ideal’s Leader and Principal is consistently recognized for superior performance, not only in Charleston County, but across the State via Palmetto Awards and Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence as well as throughout the nation. She consistently meets or exceeds the annual goals that are established as part of a regular (at least annual) review process and aligned with research-based standards for improving academic performance, local/state educational standards, and national professional standards.

She is a creative and entrepreneurial leader who gladly takes responsibility for student achievement and academic excellence.

She is well-respected and well-loved by Ideal’s students, parents, teachers, and administrative staff, as well as colleagues at other schools, with whom she collaborates regularly. Because of the pervasive team culture, low turnover rates for teachers, and high academic achievement of students, Ideal is considered a model elementary school and is regularly visited by teachers and researchers from communities throughout the nation so that these visitors can experience the Ideal difference first-hand.

Ideal’s Principal stays primarily focused on the school, though. As an instructional leader, she’s regularly inside classrooms observing teachers and students, and provides both individual and group mentoring and coaching to teaching faculty to ensure that a key focus on reading and math skill development is always present regardless of subject matter. She’s always on the lookout for ways to help teachers be more effective, and is respected by the teachers for her commitment to shared planning time and ongoing opportunities for professional development, and for rewarding outstanding teacher performance. [Learn more about Ideal Elementary’s Teaching Faculty.](#)

Ideal’s Principal is also a skilled communicator. When she speaks, everyone listens. School-Parent communication is a point of pride for the entire Ideal team, and Ideal’s

Principal has a detailed communication plan designed to effectively target students, parents, teachers, and the community-at-large.

She's regularly requested as a community speaker, and inspires volunteerism everywhere she goes. As a result, the school has a robust volunteer program that includes opportunities for classroom participation, lunch buddies, one-to-one mentoring, tutoring, speaking engagements, and more. Volunteers, including parents, act as reliable supplements to the teaching faculty and help provide enhanced opportunities for one-to-one instruction, skill-building and social development.

As a manager and administrator, Ideal's Principal is budget savvy (frugal but not cheap), and skilled at identifying, seeking and receiving external public and private support from corporate and business partners, community philanthropists, and grant funders. Because she recognizes that evidence-based leadership is the only way to effectively catalyze success, so she regularly collects and analyzes data and uses it to bolster requests for funding and to drive strategic decision-making throughout the school in areas as diverse as transportation needs, attendance monitoring, teacher performance, and, of course, academic achievement.

### References

[National Board Certification for Principals: Redefining Educational Leadership for the 21st Century, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, last accessed online on 3/9/2011.](#)

[Evaluating School Principals, National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, July 2010.](#)

[National Board Certification for Accomplished Principals: Opportunities for Supporting Tiered Licensure, Southern Regional Education Board, 2010 Leadership Forum, Atlanta, Georgia, May 7, 2010](#)

[Hiring Quality School Leaders: Challenges and Emerging Practices, Learning Point Associates, February, 2010.](#)

[Review Finds Principal-Evaluation Tools a Bit Outdated, Education Week; 1/6/2010, Vol. 29 Issue 16, page 8.](#) (available by subscription only)

[Catano, N., & Stronge, J. H. \(2007\). What do we expect of school principals? Congruence between principal evaluation and performance standards. \*International Journal of Leadership in Education\*, 10\(4\), 379-399.](#)

### **The Ideal Elementary School Faculty**

*“(1) The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers, (2) The only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction, and (3) Achieving universally high outcomes is only possible by putting in place the mechanisms to ensure that schools deliver high-quality instruction to every child.” - [How the World’s Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top, McKinsey & Company, September 2007](#)*

### **Ideal Elementary identifies, recruits, fosters and retains the best teachers in the Charleston County School District by providing:**

- High-quality induction/mentoring/coaching/training for teachers, including an external network of teacher supports.
- Incentive-based certification and individual professional development opportunities.
- [Common, purposeful planning time](#) and on-going team-based professional development.
- Standards-based evaluation processes that provide intrinsic rewards for teaching excellence, including financial incentives.
- An opportunity for teachers to be part of an entrepreneurial and innovative elementary school model designed to rapidly increase educational achievement.

### **Most of our faculty members have a minimum of 3-5 years teaching experience and use that experience to drive student outcomes.**

As a result, they:

- Set ambitious goals for student achievement.
- Individualize curriculum based on students’ learning needs and design homework to help them achieve their individualized goals.
- Leverage classroom technology, including Smart Boards, to increase student learning, and
- Actively engage parents in their children’s learning, both within and outside the classroom.

**Ideal Elementary’s highly-qualified teachers (aka [Professors](#)), use evidence-based practices designed to produce high performance from students. They consistently:**

- **Prioritize student achievement** via high expectations and well-defined plans for instructional improvement. They also place a priority on school achievement goals and federal adequate yearly progress goals, and set measurable goals for exceeding growth targets for improved achievement.
- **Implement a coherent, standards-based curriculum and instructional program.** There is schoolwide instructional consistency within grades, curricular alignment from grade-to-grade, and classroom instruction is guided by academic standards. Teachers have subject-matter expertise in literacy and numeracy, and the curriculum materials in mathematics and language arts are aligned with CCSD and State of South Carolina standards.
- **Use assessment data to improve student achievement and instruction.** Principals also use assessment data from multiple sources to evaluate teachers’ practices, identify teacher coaching needs, and provide ongoing targeted professional development opportunities.
- **Have access to high-quality instructional resources,** sufficient and up-to-date instructional materials, and support for supplementary instruction for struggling students.

**As a result of this focus on high performance, student achievement rises at faster-than-expected rates.**

## References

[Value Added of Teachers in High-Poverty Schools and Lower-Poverty Schools, Tim Sass, Jane Hannaway, Zeyu Xu, David Figlio, and Li Feng, National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research \(CALDER\), \(November, 2010\).](#)

[The Impact of Teacher Experience: Examining the Evidence and Policy Implications, Jennifer King Rice, National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research \(CALDER\), \(August, 2010\).](#)

[Using Early-Warning Data to Improve Graduation Rates: Closing Cracks in the Education System, Policy Brief, Alliance for Excellent Education, \(August 2008\).](#)



[Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Making the Most of Recent Research, National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, \(March 2008\).](#)

[Similar students, different results: Why do some schools do better? A large-scale survey of California elementary schools serving low-income students, EdSource \(2005\).](#)

[Teachers Make a Difference:What is the research evidence? John Hattie, University of Auckland ,Australian Council for Educational Research, \(October 2003\).](#)

### **Ideal Elementary School Parent and Family Involvement**

**Ideal Elementary is a family-friendly and welcoming school, designed to encourage and foster high levels of family involvement both within and outside of the school day. Most importantly, families are strong educational advocates for their children.**

- They are shared decision-makers in the design of individual learning goals for their children.
- They communicate regularly with faculty and school leadership about children’s learning goals and accomplishments, and
- They extend the work of the school by fostering learning at home, and
- They act as community collaborators and ambassadors, and are advocates for high-quality public education.

**The Ideal Elementary Team works hard to make sure that parents are actively engaged by providing:**

- Parenting skills training, including [Pre-K and early childhood via our Family Resource Center.](#)
- One-to-one communication between highly-involved teachers and parents/caregivers that focus on student’s success and achievement.
- Regular phone calls by school staff and/or parent-volunteers.
- Parent/caregiver activities that appeal to the individual interests and skills of all parents.
- A culture of interaction; a positive warm environment where parents and extended family feel welcome.
- Personalized invitations to monthly or more frequent opportunities for parent activities on school grounds, designed in collaboration with parents.
- Information and skills training designed to increase learning at home.

- Parent recognition integrated with student recognition.

**Parent/Family Programs Include:**

- **Parent Visitation and Observation Days** where parents are encouraged to join the classroom and participate in activities alongside their children.
- **Parent Volunteer Programs** including career/hobby days, school fun days, fundraisers, field trips chaperoning, and help with assemblies and special holiday events.
- **Award Assemblies** designed to recognize students for citizenship, achievement, attendance, school or community services, and more.
- **Curriculum-Based Fairs** like Science Fair, Math Fair, and Art Exhibitions.
- **Principal Coffee Hours** for drop-in, informal conversations.
- **Parent Education Workshops and Classes**
- **Regular Parent/Teacher Conferences**

**References**

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Green, Christa et al. Parents' Motivations for Involvement in Children's Education (2007): An Empirical Test of a Theoretical Model of Parental Involvement, *Journal of Educational Psychology*; Vol. 99 Issue 3, p532-544 ([abstract only](#).)

[National PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, last accessed 3/2/2011.](#)

[Sample Best Practices for Parent Involvement in Schools, Ohio Department of Education Website, last accessed 3/2/2011.](#)

[Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Parent Involvement, Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., et. al., Partnership Center for the Social Organization of Schools. Johns Hopkins University, \(2004\)](#)

Benson, F., & Martin, S. (2003). ORGANIZING SUCCESSFUL PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN SCHOOLS. *Child Study Journal*, 33(3), 187-193. (not available online)