



For Immediate Release

October 5, 2009

For more information contact:

Bonny Millard, Executive Director, Blount Education Initiative
(865) 273-1210, bonny@blounteducation.org
www.blounteducation.org

Other Media Contacts:

Amy Schwinge, (865) 982-6626 or amy@marybethwest.com
Tyra Haag, (865) 982-6626 or tyra@marybethwest.com

Parent-Led Groups Can Improve School Quality in Blount County
*Parents Provide Major Influence on Children's Achievement in School and Throughout Life,
But the Key is to Remain Active*

Maryville, Tenn. — Most active parent-led groups have the same goal – to enrich student education. Nearly all schools for grades K-8 in Blount County's three school systems have parent groups that work within the school to supplement many kinds of school programs, activities and fund-raising efforts.

"Blount Education Initiative's goal is to make education the number one priority in our community, but we can only do that if we have parents on board," said BEI Executive Director Bonny Millard. "One simple way parents can get involved in their children's education is to become active in the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) at their children's school."

This vital role that parents play sometimes can be a daunting task when so many demands are placed on parents these days—from shuffling children to extracurricular activities, meeting a work deadline or simply being a single parent trying to be in several places at once.

"Research consistently tells us that when parents are involved in their children's educational lives, more positive outcomes are achieved," said Matt Murray, president of Blount Education Initiative (BEI). "A great deal of research is available

Fast Facts: Local PTO Information

Alcoa City Schools

School: Alcoa Elementary
PTO: Alcoa Elementary School PTO
Meeting Attendance: 15-20
Principal: Merna Schott

School: Alcoa Middle
PTO: Alcoa Middle School PTO
Meeting Attendance: 10-20
Principal: Jim Kirk

Blount County Schools

School: Carpenters Middle School
PTO: Carpenters Middle School PTSO
Meeting Attendance: 6-10
Principal: Mike Crabtree

School: Eagleton Elementary School
PTO: Eagleton PTSO
Meeting Attendance: 15
Principal: Jerry Bailey

School: Friendsville Elementary School
PTO: Friendsville Booster Club
Meeting Attendance: 6-10
Principal: Ellen Jenkins

School: Heritage Middle School
PTO: The HMS Parent Support Organization
Meeting Attendance: n/a
Principal: Jesse Robinette

to validate the profound benefits for both students and schools when parents and family members become participants in their children's day-to-day educational experience. BEI encourages parents to join their local PTO, because when parents become involved at school, the students make the greatest gains."

Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp researched the impact of various family and community connections surrounding student achievement since 1995 and published their findings in a report in 2002 entitled "A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement." Some highlights include:

- Schools that have parent-led groups have higher student achievement than schools that do not.
- Schools that work well with families have improved teacher morale and higher ratings of teachers by parents.
- Schools with highly rated parent partnership programs make greater gains on state tests than schools with lower rated programs.
- When schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and like school more.
- When schools build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honor their contributions, they are successful in sustaining connections that are aimed at improving student achievement.
- Students are more likely to fall behind in academic performance if their parents do not participate in school events, develop a working relationship with their child's educators, or keep up with what is happening in their child's school.

"Programs to engage parents actually do make a difference," Murray said. "Henderson and Mapp's research

Fast Facts: Local PTO Information

Blount County Schools (Continued)

School: Mary Blount Elementary School
PTO: MBE PTO
Meeting Attendance: 5-25
Principal: Sandra Bell

School: Middlesettlements Elementary School
PTO: Middlesettlements Elementary PTO
Meeting Attendance: 200
Principal: Cindy Schneitman

School: Porter Elementary School
PTO: Porter PTO
Meeting Attendance: 10-12
Principal: Deborah Craig

School: Rockford Elementary School
PTO: Rockford PTO
Meeting Attendance: 40
Principal: Carol Chastain

School: Townsend Elementary School
PTO: Townsend Elementary School PTO
Meeting Attendance: 8-10
Principal: John Dalton

Maryville City Schools

School: Foothills Elementary
PTO: Foothills Family Teacher Organization (FTO)
Meeting Attendance: 20
Principal: Amy Vagnier

School: Fort Craig Elementary
PTO: Fort Craig PTO
Meeting Attendance: 30-50
Principal: Ramona Best

School: John Sevier Elementary
PTO: John Sevier PTO
Meeting Attendance: 10-12
Principal: Rick Wilson

School: Maryville Intermediate
PTO: Maryville Intermediate School Parent Teacher Cooperative
Meeting Attendance: 12-15
Principal: Jan Click

School: Maryville Middle
PTO: Parents In Partnership
Meeting Attendance: 20-35
Principal: Lisa McGinley

Fast Facts: Local PTO Information

Maryville City Schools (Continued)

School: Sam Houston Elementary
PTO: Sam Houston PTO
Meeting Attendance: 12-15
Principal: Scott Blevins

proves that in schools where teachers reported high levels of outreach to parents, test scores grew at a rate 40 percent higher than in schools where teachers reported low levels of outreach.”

Henderson and Mapp’s research also concluded when parents and/or family are involved, students (no matter what their family income or ethnic background) are more like to:

- Be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits;
- Attend school regularly;
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt well to school;
- Graduate and go on to post-secondary education.

“Schools gain much benefit from parent/teacher organizations, but we must not forget that the main goal of a parent-led group is to nurture a strong educational environment and share valued feedback with school administrators,” Millard said. “BEI encourages local PTOs to continue engaging parents in an ongoing educational discussion in addition to their fund-raising efforts and to serve as a catalyst for increased school involvement.”

For more information about becoming involved in a child’s education, contact your child’s teacher or principal.

ABOUT BLOUNT EDUCATION INITIATIVE:

The Blount Education Initiative’s (BEI) mission is to make education the Blount County community’s top priority by developing a sustained public awareness campaign focusing on the critical issues related to education, supporting local schools in their efforts to provide a top-notch education for all students and serving as a bridge between the educational community and businesses to develop meaningful collaborations. Achieving consensus about education’s vital importance, and what forms of support are required to achieve educational excellence, requires an organized, concerted campaign involving information exchange, dialogue, learning and persuasion. That’s why BEI exists – to facilitate this process. **For more information, visit www.blounteducation.org**

###