



# HOOVER SCHOOL COMMUNITY INFORMATION NETWORK (HSCIN)

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October 2008

October is Parent Visitation Month for the State of Alabama! Check with your principal to see if your school is engaging in any special activities in cooperation with the State Department of Education's Family Involvement Initiative!

This month, we've borrowed an article from the PTO Today website, [www.ptotoday.com](http://www.ptotoday.com) on how to support new families in your school. With Hoover's mobile community, many new faces appear each school year. As parent leaders in our schools, it is up to us to work to include new families in our parent groups. This article focuses on how to make PTO/PTA/PTSO meetings more welcoming. Please consider discussing these points at your next parent group meeting. Strong family groups build strong schools.

*Our newsletter tip is on the back of this page. We post all newsletters on our web site at [www.hscin.org](http://www.hscin.org)*

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## **From: [Make New Families Feel Welcome](#) by Patti Ghezzi Meetings**

A parent who attends a meeting for the first time is showing real interest in your group. Unfortunately, meetings are probably the least interesting thing you do—especially to outsiders. Meetings can also feel very clique-like. It's important to make sure new people feel included rather than left out.

**Have a greeter who helps new people** know what to expect, meet others, and feel comfortable. Never let anyone come and go from a meeting without being spoken to.

**Ask everyone to wear a nametag** at meetings. The old-timers know each other, but new people often feel excluded because they don't know any names. This simple device makes it much easier for newcomers to fit in.

**Have speakers state their name** when they speak at meetings. It may feel awkward at first, but it will seem natural after a few times.

**Avoid insider talk** such as acronyms or shorthand references that will only be understood by people who have been highly involved. Explain issues for newcomers.

**Encourage input** from new people by asking how they handled issues or events at their previous school.

**Avoid turnoff language** like "We tried that. It doesn't work." Instead say, "That's a good idea. We tried it like this and got this result. I wonder if there's a better way to try it." It's OK to say no, but the key is to listen and not be dismissive or offhand.

**Pair up a new PTO member with a veteran** whose children are close in age with her kids. Allow this informal relationship to blossom naturally. Don't force it.

**Let new members know about volunteer opportunities**, but don't heap responsibilities on them at first. Give them time to find their niche.

Being a new kid at school is tough, but being a new parent can be difficult, as well. No matter how great your school's reputation for test scores, you want it to have an equally great reputation for parent involvement. Your efforts to welcome families will be directly reflected in your success at building involvement. By focusing on creating a welcoming atmosphere, you can make sure your school is one where new families feel comfortable and want to participate.

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## **Family Engagement Newsletter Tip for October**

As the first grading period ends, families are sometimes disappointed in the grades on their child's report card.

If you believe your child is capable of earning better grades than his report card shows, make an appointment to talk with your child's teachers as soon as possible! Be direct and ask what behaviors or work habits might better enable your child to earn better grades. Let your child's teachers know that you support their efforts to teach your child. Let your child's teacher know that you're ready to help with whatever it takes for your child to reach his full potential in the classroom!

If you believe that your child isn't being challenged, you should let your child's teacher know that you would like more challenging material for your child. Teachers are happy to hear that children want to learn more, and many will be thrilled to offer your child more challenging supplemental material.

Remember, as your child's first teacher, you know your child's educational potential. Keep the lines of communication open with your child's teacher to help your child achieve his full potential in the classroom.

**FACT: The most consistent predictors of children's academic achievement and social adjustment are parent expectations of the child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education at school.**

(Source: "[WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION In Relation to Academic Achievement](#)", Michigan Department of Education, March 2002)

*Please let us know if you have any suggestions for our newsletter. Contact us at [hscin@hscin.org](mailto:hscin@hscin.org).*