

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Family Involvement

Definitions:

The term “family” is used to denote parents, extended family, guardians or other persons with whom the student lives. “Parent” or “family” may also include community members or other concerned adults involved in the student’s life, pursuant to state and federal laws surrounding confidentiality.

“Family Involvement” refers to school/family partnerships. It is the collaborative interaction between educators and families in activities that promote student learning and positive child and youth development at home, in school, and in the community, including but not limited to regular, two- way and meaningful communication between parents and school personnel; outreach to families; parent education; volunteering; school decision making; and advocacy.

Implementation:

The superintendent will work with the district administrators on the implementation of this policy and procedure, and each school in the district will develop a family involvement plan aligned with their academic goals and/or school improvement plan and, if applicable, Title 1 services. Each plan will be tailored to the realities of school families, be culturally relevant to the school population and delineate strategies to greater family participation in education (particularly families who are economically disadvantaged, have disabilities, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background).

The district’s family involvement efforts will have six overarching goals. They will include, but not be limited to, the following research-based National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement in schools:

1. Communicating: Effective two-way communication between all parents and schools regarding district policies and procedures, local school operating procedures, and an individual child’s progress.
2. Parenting: Information and programs for parents on how to establish a home environment to support learning and appropriate behavior.
3. Student Learning: Information and programs for parents about how they can assist their own children to learn and meet the student’s short-term and long-term educational goals.
4. Volunteering: Activities to encourage a variety of parental volunteer opportunities in schools both in the classroom and in other areas of the school including attendance at local school programs and events.
5. School Decision-Making and Advocacy: Assistance to develop parental involvement in educational advocacy, including school district task forces and site based advisory committees.
6. Collaborating with Community: Identification and utilization of community resources to strengthen school and family partnerships and student learning.

In order to achieve these goals the board, district and school staff will focus on the roles and responsibilities that are outlined below.

Roles and Responsibilities – Board:

- Establish a district level family partnership committee to advise the Board and to assist the Superintendent in implementing the family involvement policy and procedure at the building and district level. (For example, the committee could include parents reflecting the diversity of the schools’ families.)
- Provide professional development opportunities for teachers and staff to enhance their understanding of effective family involvement strategies.
- Perform regular evaluations of family involvement efforts at each school and in the district;
- Provide activities that will educate families regarding the intellectual and developmental needs of their children. These activities may rely on cooperation between the districts and other agencies or school/community groups. (Describe specific activities within the board’s goals or strategic plan.)
- Implement strategies to involve families in the educational process, including information about opportunities for volunteering and encouraging participation in various school and district activities;
- Provide access to educational resources for parents and families to support the education of their children. (For example, a family training center or a family academy for classes and parenting books, magazines and home teaching materials.)
- Keep families informed of the objectives of district educational programs as well as of their child’s participation and progress with these programs. (This could be accomplished through newsletters, the district website, translated materials, school and district reader boards, etc.)
- Enable families to participate in district level decision-making opportunities. For example, family members may provide input into district policies or district level committees.

Roles and Responsibilities - Administrators:

- Allocate staff, time and resources to ensure effective implementation of this policy and procedure.
- Work with staff and families to identify resources needed to implement planned family involvement activities and programs.
- Provide time for teachers to share and replicate successful classroom strategies that promote and increase school-family partnerships.
- Provide training opportunities for school staff to increase their skills in working effectively with all families and to enable them to provide family workshops that link family involvement to student learning.
- Conduct both formal, such as Title 1 parent meetings, and informal, such as coffee chats and breakfast with the principal meetings, to ensure ongoing two-way communications with families.
- Provide a system where teachers, students and families can resolve problems that arise in ways that promote the best relationships possible allowing them to solve problems first before resorting to the inclusion of principals and other administrators.
- Provide assistance for families to understand topics such as the state academic content standards, and state and local academic assessments, and how to monitor a child’s progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children. (For example, by

publishing information in multiple languages and regularly communicating with families regarding academic requirements);

- Work with staff and families to brainstorm possible activities and actions that are consistent with the family involvement policy and, when appropriate incorporate these into schools' annual goals and/or the school improvement plan.
- Recognize staff, families and community members who promote school-wide family partnerships.
- Monitor and evaluate with district assistance the effectiveness of family partnership efforts in the district.

Roles and Responsibilities – Building and District Staff:

- Allocate staff, time and resources to implement this policy at the school level.
- Help families feel welcome by demonstrating excellent customer service and basic courtesy.
- Treat all families and community members with respect; be sensitive to cultural differences and life circumstances among families.
- Be as flexible as possible when scheduling appointments and school events with families.
- Communicate early and positively with families and continue these positive contacts throughout the year, including home visits during the year, if feasible.
- Consider an annual student led conference and/or an annual parents' meeting.
- Invite parents and family members to observe and assist in classrooms.
- Offer families opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children.
- Share class/school discipline and homework policies with families and follow through in a timely manner if problems arise.
- Involve families in decision-making committees and other site-based councils.

Evaluation:

The content and effectiveness of this policy and procedure, and the individual school plans will be evaluated by the Superintendent or his/her appointee annually with regard to the quality and effectiveness of the strategies presented in the plan.

The findings of the evaluation will be used to design strategies for more effective family involvement, and if necessary to revise this policy and procedure.

Date: 9/26/09.