

2014-15 DISTRICT-WIDE PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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PART I. GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA (SDP) is deeply committed to partnership with parents and families, and has put in place a number of programs, services and initiatives with the goal of:

- Supporting parent engagement and participation at the District-wide, regional and school level,
- Inviting parent and community input in District and school level decisions,
- Expanding access to information, and
- Providing better support in resolving parent concerns and building parent capacity for leadership and advocacy.

Such District-wide programs and initiatives include:

- Improving Access to Information
 - Making information about District programs, services, processes and procedures available on the School District of Philadelphia website www.philasd.org;
 - Using FaceBook and Twitter and working with traditional media partners to share information with families and community;
 - Implementing AskPhliaSD (<http://ask.philasd.org>) – a web-based knowledge management system which leverages technology to offer instant answers to most frequently asked questions;
 - Launching Parent and Family Portal which offers parents a new way to stay abreast of everything happening at the District and their child’s school through a web based account which allows them to update their contact information as it changes, select the means of communication that work best for them (texting, phone calls or e-mails), sign up for specific types of updates they are interested in, as well as get online access to their child’s attendance and grades;
- Offering multiple entry points that parents and community can use to access information and get support in resolving their concerns through:
 - The School District of Philadelphia’s Call Center and Main Information Center 215-400-4000, which provides front-end information about District services, initiatives and programs, facilitates links between customers and appropriate District offices and works directly with schools and Learning Networks to address parental questions and concerns through one-on-one case management support;

- Parent and Family Resource Center which offers parents in person support in resolving concerns and exploring ways to better support their child's education, helps parents navigate the School District of Philadelphia, offers information about the District's policies, procedures, programs and services, shares information about community based programs and resources and hosts a variety of parent workshops and events.
- Parent Coordinators, whose many functions include assisting schools in expanding parent engagement opportunities and building stronger school-family partnerships, supporting parents in resolving their concerns through one-on-one case management support, acting as a liaison between central office/school staff and families, collecting disseminating information about services and resources, organizing and facilitating parent workshops and information fairs, helping schools form a School Advisory Council, and providing other services and resources to meet the diverse needs of all families.
- Using School Reform Commission's Strategy, Policy and Priorities meetings to reach out to all stakeholder groups, including parents, students, staff and community, to receive input, get new ideas and solicit feedback to inform District policy and priorities.
- Strengthening family and community involvement in school-based decision making through the District-wide implementation of the School Advisory Councils – an advisory body that ensures school-wide representation when discussing matters that affect the whole school. Bringing together peer-elected representatives from all stakeholder groups: parents (who have a majority voice on the SAC), school leadership and staff, community partners and students (for high schools), SACs provide a platform for discussion and collaboration to ensure success of all students.
- Ensuring that multilingual families have access to information, support and parent involvement opportunities through the:
 - District's Translation and Interpretation Center, which provides an array of services and tools to facilitate communication with multilingual families, including access to telephonic interpretation service in over 170 different languages and dialects, translation of District-wide and school-specific documents, maintaining an online database of translated documents and managing web pages for parents and community in nine most used District languages (Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, French, Khmer, Russian, Albanian and Nepali).
 - Office of Multilingual Family Support, which helps multilingual families establish ongoing communication with the school and access District information and resources in their native language through the services of Bilingual Counseling Assistants, provides access to live interpretation at parent meetings, conferences, District and school-wide events, builds partnerships with immigrant and refugee serving organizations and supports families through parent workshops and trainings

for immigrant and refugee families called Welcome Wagons. Welcome wagons are delivered in the community at the times convenient for the parents and in their native language. They address a variety of topics of importance to immigrant community, including literacy, college application process and financial aid resources, employment safety, access to health benefits, asthma management, HIV prevention, transition to life in the United States, acculturation and parent/child conflicts, child rearing practices and discipline, recognizing and seeking treatment for depression, recognizing domestic violence, and child abuse prevention.

- Working closely with parent leaders, families and community stakeholders to raise awareness about the importance of their involvement at the School and District level and encourage them to invest in building relationships with teachers, principals and school-based staff, attend Back to School Nights and parent-teacher conferences, stay in constant communication with the schools, visit their child's classroom, come to school meetings and events, volunteer, join parent groups and assume leadership roles.

PART II. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA agrees to implement the following statutory requirements:

- The School District will put into operation programs, activities, and procedures for the engagement of parents in all of its schools, consistent with section 1118 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I, Part A programs. Those programs, activities and procedures will be planned and operated with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children.
- Consistent with section 1118, the School District will work with its schools to ensure that the required school-level parent engagement policies meet the requirements of section 1118(b) of the ESEA, and each include, as a component, a school-parent compact consistent with section 1118(d) of the ESEA.
- In carrying out the Title I, Part A parental engagement requirements, to the extent practicable, the School District and its schools will provide full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children, including providing information and school reports required under section 1111 of the ESEA in an understandable and uniform format and, including alternative formats upon request, and, to the extent practicable, in a language parents understand.
- The School District will involve the parents of children served in Title I, Part A schools in decisions about how the 1 percent of Title I, Part A funds reserved for parent and family engagement is spent, and will ensure that not less than 95 percent of the one percent reserved goes directly to the schools for parent-related activities as agreed upon

between the parents and the school administration with approval of the School Advisory Council (SAC)

- The School District will be governed by the following statutory definition of family engagement, and expects that its Title I schools will carry out programs, activities and procedures in accordance with this definition:

Parent and family engagement means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring—

- (A) that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;*
- (B) that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;*
- (C) that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child;*
- (D) the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA.*

PART III. DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE DISTRICT WILL IMPLEMENT REQUIRED DISTRICT-WIDE PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT POLICY COMPONENTS

1. **THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA** will take the following actions to involve parents in the joint development of its district-wide parent engagement plan under section 1112 of the ESEA:
 - All District schools will be invited to designate at least one family member to enroll in the School District's Family and Community Engagement Action Team (FACE-A-Team) to participate in trainings and bring information back to their school.
 - FACE-A-Team members will be invited to provide input into the School District's parent and family engagement policy and plan during District-wide or regional meetings.
 - The School District will send a directive (signed by the Superintendent) to Assistant Superintendents and Principals regarding the distribution of the District's Policy to parents.
 - Updated policy will be available online for parents' review and comments.
 - A parent letter accompanying the policy will inform parents about additional avenues for providing input and suggestions, including submitting their suggestions via an online survey, by phone or by joining FACE-A-Team meetings in their area.
2. **THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA** will take the following actions to involve parents in the process of school review and improvement under section 1116 of the ESEA:

- By June 1st, 2015 at least 50% of District schools will have a School Advisory Council (SAC) comprised of parents, students¹, school administrators, staff and community partners, with parents being the largest group on the SAC². The primary responsibility of the SAC is providing input into the each school's Comprehensive School Plan and budget.
 - Appropriate District representatives will be available to work collaboratively with parent leaders and the Office of Family and Community Engagement staff to provide District, regional, and/or school level trainings on various aspects of Title I, including understanding school data, comprehensive school plans and budgeting process.
 - Professional development will be provided to School Advisory Councils (school-based staff, students, families and community partners) to help understand the roles and responsibilities of all parties in this process.
 - The District's Translation and Interpretation Center and the Office of Multilingual Family Support will provide language access services to parents whose first language is other than English.
3. **THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA** will provide the following necessary coordination, technical assistance, and other support to assist Title I, Part A schools in planning and implementing effective parental engagement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance:
- In collaboration with parent groups, provide workshops to schools on parent engagement.
 - Through Parent University provide trainings for parents to include, but not be limited to, reading, math, sciences, PSSA and Keystone testing preparation.
 - Provide workshops to parents on school safety, cultural diversity, conflict resolution, how to engage in schools, and other topics, as requested.
 - Train FACE-A-Team parents to serve as liaisons to principals and SACs on District and Network level initiatives.
 - In compliance with the District's Action Plan 2.0, encourage parent and family access to teachers and principals.
4. **THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA** will coordinate and integrate parental engagement strategies in Title I, Part A with parental engagement strategies under the following other programs: Head Start, Bright Futures, and ELECT, by:
- Increasing collaboration between Pre-K and ELECT program staff responsible for parent engagement and Office of Family and Community Engagement.
 - Inviting parents of Pre-K students to participate in District meetings, events and activities.

¹ Mandatory for high schools

² In elementary and middle schools parents hold 51% of the allowable 7 to 21 voting seats on the SAC. In high schools the minimum 51% of voting seats on the SAC is shared by parents and students, with parents holding at least 2 seats for each student seat, the minimum being 6 parents, 3 students.

- Providing translation services for early childhood programs to families whose first language is other than English.

5. **THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA** will conduct an annual Parent and Guardian impact survey to collect data on school level and District-wide parent engagement outcomes, and will reach out to parents to get their input and feedback during the survey design and review process.

Survey results will be used to identify barriers to greater participation by parents in parental engagement activities (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background). The School District will use the findings of the evaluation about its parental engagement policy and activities to design strategies for more effective parental engagement, and to revise, if necessary (and with the involvement of parents) its parental engagement policies.

6. **THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA** will implement the following activities to build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parent engagement in order to ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the school involved, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement:

A. The School District, with the assistance of its administrative offices, will undertake the following actions to provide assistance to parents of children served by the School District or school in understanding topics such as the following:

- the State's academic content standards;
- the State's student academic achievement standards;
- the State and local academic assessments including alternate assessments;
- the requirements of Title I, Part A;
- how to monitor their child's progress; and
- how to work with educators.

- The Office of Grant Development and Compliance /Title I will be available to collaborate with various offices and parent groups to provide presentations and workshops about Title I requirements and parents' right-to-know under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
- Recommend that principals include parents during staff development days at school sites when appropriate.
- Sponsor and encourages schools to support parent attendance at conferences and workshops such as the annual State Parent Advisory Council conference, Annual Family Involvement Conference (PA Coalition for Parent Involvement), and others.
 - Require parents who wish to attend parent conferences to verify that turn-around trainings were completed either at the school and/or District level. Verification will be: 1) sign-in sheet(s); 2) agenda; and 3) copies of documents distributed.

- Ensure that any parent who is selected to participate on a Title I PAC at the state or national level regularly attends the District's FACE-A-Team meetings and submits a report (verbal or written).
 - Provide information to parents in clear and simple language.
 - To the extent practicable, provide workshops in the target language to families whose first language is not English.
 - Disseminate to parents materials from the Office of Curriculum and Instruction and other offices that will be useful references at home, including, to the extent feasible, translations.

- B. The School District, with the assistance of its schools, will provide materials and training to help parents work with their children to improve their children's academic achievement, such as literacy and technology workshops, as appropriate, to foster parent engagement by:
 - Implementing Parent University throughout the city to provide a range of parent educational offerings by School District personnel and other providers, including on how to support one's child in school and computer literacy.
 - Supporting the establishment of Parent Resource Centers/Corners/Rooms in schools.
 - Providing computer literacy training and other trainings for parents, including on how to use Parent and Family portal as a tool to monitor their children's achievement.
 - Supporting schools in planning and implementing school based activities such as family literacy and family math nights and other workshops to help parents understand how to support their child's academic achievement with the assistance of appropriate District offices.
 - Providing the above workshops and materials, where appropriate, in languages other than English.

- C. The Office of Family and Community Engagement will be available to conduct professional development sessions at schools to educate teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff, in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to implement and coordinate parent programs and build ties between parents and schools, by:
 - With the help of parents providing professional development opportunities for principals and other administrators on how to develop promising partnerships with parents.
 - Suggesting that all parents are invited to participate in a review of the schools' Title I Parent Engagement Policy and Parent-School Compact (as needed).

- D. The School District will, to the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate parental engagement programs and activities with Head Start, Bright Futures, ELECT and other programs, and conduct other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children by:
- Increasing collaboration between Pre-K and ELECT program staff responsible for parent engagement and Office of Family and Community Engagement.
 - Recruiting parents of Pre-K students to participate in District-based meetings, events and activities.
 - Provide translation services for early childhood programs to families whose first language is other than English.
- E. The School District will take the following actions to ensure that information related to the school and parent-programs, meetings, and other activities, is sent to the parents of participating children in an understandable and uniform format, including alternative formats upon request, and, to the extent practicable, in a language that the parents can understand:
- To the extent practicable, provide communications in clear and simple language.
 - Post parent communications on the District’s website and Facebook page.
 - Ensure that the District’s parent communications include a telephone number that parents can call for clarification.
 - Share important information with the School District of Philadelphia’s Call Center and Main Information Center 215-400-4000, Parent Coordinators and Bilingual Counseling Assistants, so they can share information with families and provide clarifications of important District communications.
 - Host parent and community meetings and workshops to address the most important topics.
 - Ask community partners, including libraries, recreation centers, community-based organizations, and faith-based organizations, to assist in disseminating information.
 - Provide language access services to families whose first language is other than English through on-site or telephonic interpretation services, as appropriate.

PART IV. DISCRETIONARY DISTRICT WIDE PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT POLICY COMPONENTS

- involving parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of that training;
- providing necessary literacy training for parents from Title I Even Start and Family Literacy funds;
- paying reasonable and necessary expenses associated with parental engagement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable

- parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions, as budgets allow;
- training parents to enhance the involvement of other parents;
- arranging school meetings at a variety of times, or conducting in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, with parents who are unable to attend those conferences at school; in order to maximize family engagement and participation in their children’s education;
- researching, adopting and implementing model approaches to improving parent engagement;
- establishing a representative and inclusive district-wide parent advisory council to provide input on all matters related to family engagement in Title I, Part A programs;
- developing appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses, including faith-based organizations, in family engagement activities; and
- providing other reasonable support for family engagement activities under section 1118 as parents may request.

PART V. ADOPTION

This District-wide Family Engagement Policy has been developed jointly with, and agreed on with parents of children participating in Title I, Part A programs, as evidenced by meetings held on January 14, 23, and 30, February 6, May 15 and June 2, 2014.

This policy was adopted by **THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA** on March 19, 2015 and will be in effect for the period of one academic year. The School District will distribute this policy to all parents on or before **April 30, 2015**.

(Signature of Authorized Official)

(Date)

References:

- NCLB: 20 U.S.C. §§ 6316(b)(7), (8)
- C.F.R. 34 C.F.R. § 200.36
- State School Code: 24 P.S. § 1-101 *et seq.*, including 24 P.S. §§ 6-693, 6-696