



Book	Policy Manual
Section	1000 Community
Title	Parent and Family Engagement
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Purpose

The Board recognizes that parent and family engagement contributes to the achievement of academic standards by all students. The Board views the education, health and safety of students as a cooperative effort among the school, parents and community. The District's core beliefs include acknowledgement that families are an essential part of the educational process and a commitment from the entire community is necessary to build a culture that encourages student achievement. [\[1\]](#)[13]

This policy is to comply with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as reauthorized and amended. Federal law states that the District and parents of District students, including those students participating in Title I programs shall jointly develop and agree upon a written Parent and Family Engagement Policy.

Authority and Organization of Policy

The Parent and Family Engagement Policy shall ensure compliance with federal statutory provisions that specifically recognize parent and family engagement as a research-based educational practice that yields effective results. The District's Parent and Family Engagement Policy shall cover the engagement of all parents and families across any federal, state, or local programs being implemented in the District, with recognition and respect for the wide variety of ways in which parents and families can be involved in the education of District students. This policy shall serve as written documentation of the Pittsburgh School District's commitment to ensure parents and families are welcomed, engaged, and valued as stakeholders in the education of their children and the safety, health and welfare of their children while at school. The District will incorporate this Parent and Family Engagement Policy into its Local Education Agency (LEA) plan which is the required plan submitted to the state in its application to obtain Title I and other federal funding.

The District's Parent and Family Engagement Policy shall be evaluated annually, with parental and family engagement. The policy shall be made available in all District schools, on the District's Internet site and various other accessible locations. [\[14\]](#)

The within jointly developed Parent and Family Engagement Policy includes the following information:[\[1\]](#)

1. A description of how parents will be involved in the planning, review and improvement of the District's Parent and Family Engagement Policy (Section II, Section III);
2. Information about an annual meeting that shall be held to inform parents of each District school's participation in the Title I program and to explain the requirements of the program and parents' and families' right to be involved (Section II);
3. A statement that parent meetings, including parent conferences, will be held at different times during the day (Section II, Section V);
4. A statement that Title I funds may be used to pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with parental and family engagement activities, including transportation, childcare, or home visit expenses to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions (Section III);
5. A description of how parents and families will be involved in the planning, review and improvement of District and school level programs, including the Title I program (Section I, Section II, Section III, Section IV);
6. A description of how District schools involve parents in the joint development of the Schoolwide Program Plan, as required under Section 1114 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (applies only to Title I schools operating a Schoolwide Program) (Section IV);
7. A description of how District schools involve parents in the joint development of the school level improvement plan, as required under Section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (applies only to Title I schools identified for School Improvement) (Section IV);
8. A description of how District schools will provide parents of participating children with timely information about school programs, including the Title I program (Section V, VI);
9. A description of how District schools will provide parents of participating children with a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet (Section V, VI);
10. A description of how District schools will provide assistance to parents in understanding the State's academic content standards and student achievement standards, local academic assessments and how to monitor a child's progress and work with teachers to improve the achievement of their children (Section V, VI);
11. A statement that District schools will provide, if requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible (Section V);

12. Information regarding school-parent compacts that are jointly developed with parents and how the compact outlines how parents, the entire school staff and students will share in the responsibility for improved student achievement (Section III);
13. A description of how District schools provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental and family engagement (Section III, V).
14. A statement that the District will disseminate information on best practices focused on parent and family engagement, especially best practices for increasing the engagement of economically disadvantaged parents and family members.

This policy is intended to describe how the District will:

1. Involve parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the joint development of the District's overall Title I plan, its implementation, and the process of school review and improvement of the school Parent and Family Engagement Policy and the joint development of the schoolwide plan under Section 1114(b)(2) of the ESEA, as amended;
2. Provide the coordination, technical assistance and other support necessary to assist participating schools in planning and implementing effective parental engagement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance;
3. Develop activities that promote the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental engagement;
4. Coordinate and integrate parental engagement strategies with appropriate programs, as provided by law;
5. Involve parents in an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the policy in improving the academic quality of District schools;[\[1\]](#)
6. Identify barriers to participation by parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, are experiencing homelessness, or are of any racial or ethnic minority;
7. Use findings of annual evaluations to design strategies for more effective parental engagement; and
8. Involve parents in the activities of schools.

Guidelines

Section I – Parent and Family Engagement General Provisions and Expectations

This policy shall establish the role of the School District of Pittsburgh in involving parents and families and clarifies the relationship between the school's role in parent and family participation and the role of the parent and family. While the District's Parent and Family Engagement Policy largely defines mandated legal parental engagement provisions as stipulated by federal law, the District also realizes that many other adults play an important role in a child's life. The School District welcomes into its buildings all individuals who carry

responsibility for a child's development, education, safety and well-being, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and community members. It shall not only reflect the School District's mission of promoting the achievement of every child but shall establish a framework for recognizing the value of parents and families and for promoting meaningful parent and family participation. The Board of Education recognizes that a child's education is a responsibility shared by the school and family. To support this goal, the school, parents and families must work as knowledgeable partners. All employees of the District at each school must create a climate of respect for and cooperation with parents and families that will be evident in all parent, family, teacher, and staff interactions.

The School District of Pittsburgh recognizes parents and families as key stakeholders in their children's education and prioritizes parent and family engagement as a key component of its beliefs and shared goals as adopted by the Board of Education in the District's Comprehensive Plan.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized and amended, clearly states its purpose as ensuring all children the opportunity to obtain a high quality education and acknowledges that one of the primary ways to accomplish this is by "affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children."

All efforts in the District shall be guided by extensive research that consistently links parental and family engagement with student success. Grounded in research and practical experience and around which programs will be implemented are six (6) components framed as the national PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships: (1) Welcoming all families into the school, (2) Communicating effectively, (3) Supporting student success, (4) Speaking up for every child, (5) Sharing power and (6) Collaborating with community. These national standards have been endorsed by the National School Boards Association and are endorsed by the Pittsburgh Board of Education with the adoption of this policy.

Parents and families are welcome and encouraged to attend all public sessions of the Pittsburgh Board of Education and may speak on issues related to agenda items at the monthly public hearing. Information on dates, times, and the process for being placed on the agenda can be provided through the Office of the Superintendent or the Board Office. Individual Board members may be contacted through the Board Office.[15]

Section II – Policy Development and Dissemination

The District shall develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents and families of participating children this written Parent and Family Engagement Policy. The policy shall be incorporated into the local District's LEA plan developed under ESEA, establish the School District's expectations for parent and family engagement, and describe how the District will implement provisions.[1]

If the required District plan is not satisfactory to the parents and families of participating children, the School District shall submit any parent or family comments with the District plan upon submission to the state.[1][16]

In carrying out this policy, the District shall provide, to the extent practicable, full opportunities for the participation of parents and families with limited English proficiency, parents and families with disabilities, parents and families experiencing homelessness, and

parents and families of migratory children, including providing information and school reports in a language such parents and families can understand. For more information on translation services, parents and families can contact their child’s school directly, and the school will arrange for available translation services, if appropriate, with the English as a Second Language (ESL) office.[\[1\]](#)

The District shall also provide speech and hearing interpreters for parent-teacher conferences, Parent School Community Council (PSCC) meetings, and other activities as requested and deemed necessary.

This Parent and Family Engagement Policy shall be distributed annually to parents and families. Parents and families shall be notified of the policy in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, the policy shall be provided in a language that parents and families can understand. The policy shall be made available to the local community and updated periodically—with the engagement of parents and families—to meet changing needs. The policy shall be posted on the District’s Internet site. The policy will also be available to parents and families at local schools or through the Office of the Superintendent. Community agencies or programs that have direct access to parents and families may voluntarily distribute the policy at their sites.[\[1\]](#)

Principals in each school shall convene an annual meeting, at a convenient time, to which all parents and families of participating children shall be invited and encouraged to attend. The purpose of this meeting shall be to inform parents and families of school policies, Title I offerings (where applicable), and the right and opportunities for engagement. This engagement includes the planning, review, and improvement of the Parent and Family Engagement Policy. This meeting must occur in the fall by the date identified by and communicated each year to schools by the Title I Programs office. If possible, a second Title I offerings meeting can be held in the spring to review what has occurred during the school year.[\[1\]](#)

The schools shall offer a flexible number of meetings to accommodate parents’ schedules, and may provide transportation, child care, home visits, or other services related to parental and family engagement.[\[1\]](#)

The District will conduct, with parents and families, an annual evaluation of this Parent and Family Engagement Policy through the Office of the Superintendent. (This process is specified in Section III of this policy.)[\[1\]](#)

Section III – Accountability, Responsibility, and Evaluation

Within the administration of the School District of Pittsburgh, there are several divisions/offices that have primary responsibility and accountability for implementing and monitoring provisions and initiatives of the District’s Parent and Family Engagement Policy:

1. The Office of the Superintendent, under the direction of the Superintendent or designee.
2. The Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, and the Office of School Performance, under the direction of the Superintendent or designee.
3. The Title Programs Office, under the direction of the Title Programs Coordinator.

The Office of the Superintendent, in collaboration with the Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development and the Office of School Performance, bears the primary responsibility for fostering programs, activities, and procedures for the Parent and Family Engagement Policy at the District level. It is the responsibility of the Office of the Superintendent to develop, facilitate, and coordinate large-scale events and provide key support and resources for parent engagement.

The Title Programs Office shall have the primary responsibility for ensuring compliance with the District's Parent and Family Engagement Policy inclusive of all schools within the District, not just schools qualifying for Title I assistance. (Refer to Section VII of this policy outlining the complaint process for all concerns/alleged violations regarding Title I and parent engagement.)

The District supports professional development opportunities for staff members, parents and families to enhance understanding of effective parent and family engagement strategies which lead to student achievement and student improvement. The Office of the Superintendent, through the Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, will support the development of teaching curricula and training programs on parent and family engagement and best practices within the District and in the higher education community. These ongoing training programs will enable parents, families, teachers, District administrators, principals, and staff opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills in communicating with and engaging parents.

The District recognizes the importance of administrative leadership in setting expectations and will work with its administrators to enforce this policy. Principals bear the primary responsibility for ongoing parent and family engagement at the school level. Principals will work with classroom teachers to assure that they offer meaningful opportunities for parents and families to be full partners in their children's education and safety, health and welfare while at school. Principals will be held accountable for fostering parent and family engagement in their schools, as defined in Section I of this policy by the Office of School Performance. Parent and family engagement will be maintained as an essential part of school climate review under the School Improvement Plan (SIP). At least one (1) parent per grade level should be invited to participate in the SIP development process, and principals are encouraged to extend an invitation to the entire parent community and include parents who have not been involved in this process before. The SIP shall be made available on each school's individual school website.

Principals, teachers, and staff members will be encouraged to select at least one (1) individual goal to enrich parent and family engagement. This selection will become part of each annual individual evaluation. All employees will be held accountable for parent and family engagement and fostering positive parent interactions by their immediate supervisor.

This policy shall be reviewed annually as part of all staff development, including administrative and support staff. The policy shall also be reviewed as a part of all orientations for new staff within the schools.

The District encourages parents and families to become actively engaged with teachers and administrators at the onset of their children's school careers. To foster this goal, the District will promote the integration of early childhood programs as a primary strategy to ensure parents and families are involved in and aware of school readiness and opportunities for

engagement.

All parents and families will be asked to share responsibility with the District for:

1. Communication between the home and school on an ongoing basis. This includes ensuring that the school is updated on changes of telephone number, email address, home address and emergency contact information.[\[1\]](#)
2. Support of their children's learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching, and positive use of extracurricular time.[\[1\]](#)

In order to facilitate parent and family responsibility for monitoring homework, attendance and academic achievement, the District and individual schools need to foster routine and frequent communications between the District/schools and families. Of paramount importance is a computer-based, information-sharing system by which parents and students can monitor homework, attendance, grades, test scores and academic achievement. An information sharing system, such as a Web-based parent portal that is designed to allow parents, teachers and students to interact, needs to be utilized by all schools to the maximum extent possible. A parent, student and teacher committee shall be formed, with the assistance of the Office of the Superintendent, to evaluate the utilization of parent, student and teacher "portals." The committee shall also identify obstacles to its use and try to seek solutions. In order to further the stated goals, the parent, student and teacher committee shall work with the Office of Information and Technology or other designated Departments or staff necessary to maximize results.

3. Participating in decisions relating to the education of their children.[\[1\]](#)
4. Participating in all parent-teacher conferences.[\[1\]](#)
5. Responding to school notices and requests by deadlines given.
6. Providing for the health and well-being of their children including, but not limited to, discipline, nutrition, and hygiene.

School-Parent Compact

As shared responsibility for high student academic achievement, each school shall jointly develop with parents and families a school-parent-family compact that outlines how parents, families, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school, parents and families will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the state's high standards.[\[1\]](#)

The District will conduct, with parents and families, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the Parent and Family Engagement Policy in improving the academic quality of its schools served. The Office of the Superintendent shall be given responsibility for convening this annual committee for policy review. The evaluation will include identifying barriers to greater participation by parents and families in activities authorized by this policy (with particular attention to parents and families who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, are experiencing homelessness, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background). The District will use the findings to design

strategies for more effective parent and family engagement, and to revise, if necessary (and with the engagement of its parents and families), its Parent and Family Engagement Policy. The District will annually convene a focus group of parents, families and community members for this purpose and also distribute a parent and family satisfaction survey. Parents and families shall work with the Office of the Superintendent in an advisory capacity to define the design and distribution of the survey. Results of the survey will be shared with all Parent School Community Councils and parent leaders.[\[1\]](#)

Reservation of Funds

The District shall reserve at least one percent (1%) of its financial allocation under Subpart 2 of the ESEA to assist in parental and family engagement. The District will involve the parents of children served in Title I, Part A schools in decisions on how the one percent (1%) of Title I, Part A funds reserved for parent and family engagement is spent. These funds shall be used to carry out activities and strategies including the following:[\[1\]](#)

- i. Supporting schools and nonprofit organizations in providing professional development for local educational agency and school personnel regarding parent and family engagement strategies, which may be provided jointly to teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, early childhood educators, and parents and family members.
- ii. Supporting programs that reach parents and family members at home, in the community, and at school.
- iii. Disseminating information on best practices focused on parent and family engagement, especially best practices for increasing the engagement of economically disadvantaged parents and family members.
- iv. Collaborating, or providing subgrants to schools to enable such schools to collaborate, with community-based or other organizations or employers with a record of success in improving and increasing parent and family engagement.
- v. Engaging in any other activities and strategies that the local educational agency determines are appropriate and consistent with such agency's parent and family engagement policy.

Section IV – School Improvement Opportunities and Activities

All parents and families will have the opportunity to volunteer on school and/or District initiated committees. The District will make parents and families of children within the school system integral to all District committees that are created around issues of student achievement, school improvement and the safety, health and welfare of children while at school. The District shall make every effort to utilize the skills, expertise, and interests of the maximum number of parents and families willing to make the commitment necessary for the committee's work and shall not limit parent and family participation to any particular subgroup. Parents and families selected to serve on committees should be willing to share information and bring the perspective of the broadest number of parents to the issue. Parents and families willing to volunteer to provide such service and make the necessary commitment should signify their willingness in writing and submit it to the Office of the Superintendent or to the school principal on an annual basis or respond to specific requests as committees are

created and the opportunity for participation arises.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized and amended, gives parents explicit rights to be involved in their children's education and to participate in the school improvement process as outlined in this section of the policy. Parents and families also have the right to be part of "restructuring" efforts in schools that have consistently failed to meet performance measures set forth by federal and state law and have entered into corrective action. The School District shall not only give parents "an adequate opportunity to comment before taking any action but to participate in developing any plan for restructuring of the school." NCLB defines "restructuring" as any arrangement "that makes fundamental reforms" aimed at improving student achievement. If the District cannot meet these obligations by accepting input from those parents and families who take the initiative to provide it, the District has the obligation to reach out to parents to ensure they are aware of their right to participate in the restructuring process.

The School District will involve parents in activities of the schools, including the process of school review and improvement to assist students in achieving.[\[1\]](#)

Schools operating a Schoolwide Program Plan under Section 1114 of the ESEA, as amended, shall include a description of how parents and families will be involved in the development of the Schoolwide Program Plan within their school level Parent and Family Engagement Policy.

All District schools shall complete a school level improvement plan in consultation with parents, school staff, the School District, and outside experts. The school level improvement plan should be completed or revised within three (3) months of the beginning of each school year. When a school does not meet performance measures set forth by federal and state law, the school shall complete or revise a school level improvement plan within three (3) months after being so identified.

The plan shall cover a two-year period and include strategies grounded on scientifically based research to strengthen core academic subjects, directly address the academic achievement problem that caused the school to be identified, and provide for additional staff development. Parents and families will be active partners to review the achievement data and assist in directing the school level improvement plan. Parents and families will participate in the implementation, budgeting, execution, and monitoring of the plan. Reports will be made available to parents and families as the plan progresses through PSCC/PTO/PTA monthly meetings and other creative methods of communication.

The District will also provide the necessary coordination, technical assistance, and other reasonable support (as requested by parents and families) necessary to assist schools in planning and implementing effective parental and family engagement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance.[\[1\]](#)

As a District, in addition to fostering maximum achievement for all students, we also seek to create positive school and District culture and to have strong family and community engagement leading to holistic development of students. We also promote innovation and recognize the efforts of schools to involve parents/guardians and families in school culture. In order to work toward these goals, the District will create a Best Practices document that highlights efforts in schools that have led to families feeling empowered to become more involved and invested in the education of their children. This document will be made available

on the District website on the Family, Youth and Community Engagement page, and copies will be disseminated to each school in the District.

The District will coordinate and integrate parental and family engagement strategies with other District operated programs. The District has embarked on a strong commitment to a “seamless” pre-school experience, including District-operated pre-school program and Head Start. Efforts from the District will be made to ensure seamless transitions from pre-school to elementary to middle and middle to high school. This will be accomplished by working with parents, families, students, staff and, where appropriate, community-based organizations. This will take place through parent and family workshops, parent meetings, Parent School Community Councils, conferences, school visitations, Open House, and volunteering in the classroom. The District will fulfill the above requirements by initiatives outlined below and further reinforce its commitment in its Strategic Plan.[\[1\]](#)

Parent School Community Councils (PSCC)

The District will maintain a core parent engagement initiative of Parent School Community Councils (PSCC). All schools shall have an established PSCC and will convene monthly meetings to discuss educational issues through the school level improvement plan relevant to each school. Parents and families will be a part of the review and revision of the school level improvement plan and will be required to be part of the approval process on individual school level improvement plans as the guiding principle in schools. Each school level improvement plan will include parental and family engagement provisions linked to school improvement. A PSCC Handbook, including more detailed information and guidelines for District PSCCs, will be published by the District and may be obtained by contacting the Office of the Superintendent. Each PSCC is expected to abide by the terms of the PSCC Handbook.

Purpose –

Parent School Community Councils will create a climate where participation of all stakeholders results in increased understanding, commitment, responsibility, and satisfaction for the total school community. The purpose of the PSCCs is to provide direction and support to the school in the development and revision of its school level improvement plan and to serve as an advisory body to the principal regarding issues such as student achievement, increasing parent and community support for the educational program, school safety, and dress codes. Individuals who participate in the school PSCC shall assume responsibility for communicating information to other parents. Interested individuals should contact their schools to become involved. PSCC meetings are open to the public.

Relationship to Other School Organizations –

There shall be a direct communication link established between the Parent School Community Council and other groups within the school. The PSCC shall serve as a central clearinghouse and umbrella organization for information among groups with a shared mission of focusing on students. Each of the established groups within the PSCC will maintain their own identity and function. Representatives from these organizations communicate information to the PSCC about their respective groups. They include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Instructional Cabinet.
2. Discipline Committee.

3. PTA/PTO/PTSA.
4. Right to Education Task Force.
5. District-wide Parent Advisory Council.
6. Early Childhood Education Policy Council, where applicable.
7. School Volunteers.

PSCC Procedures –

PSCCs shall hold monthly meetings. The date and time of such meetings will be posted on the District's Internet site and publicized through other means of communication with parents and families of the school. Agendas shall be developed collaboratively between principals, parents and families. Each PSCC shall publish monthly meeting minutes and other relevant information on the school's Internet site for access by all parents and families of the school. Meeting minutes shall also be available to parents and families upon request to the school principal.

Participation In Parent School Community Councils –

Parents or family members interested in participating in a Parent School Community Council (PSCC) should contact their school principal who will facilitate the process. Roles and responsibilities are outlined in detail in the District's Parent School Community Council Handbook which can be obtained through the Office of the Superintendent and online on the District's Family, Youth and Community Engagement Internet site.

District-wide Parent Advisory Council

The District-wide Parent Advisory Council is comprised of up to four (4), and at least one (1) parents or family representatives from each of the District's schools. These representatives are committed to working directly with the Superintendent and the Superintendent's designee(s) as a sounding board for ideas, suggestions, issues, concerns, and discussions. They serve on District-wide committees such as focus groups, Charter School Review Teams, Book Selections, Discipline Policy Reviews, Parent and Family Policy Reviews, Gifted Education Task Force, etc. A commitment of two (2) years is requested.

Early Childhood Education Programs

The District operates Early Childhood Education Programs that are funded by both federal and state Head Start/Early Head Start and other state Pre-Kindergarten grants. All programs follow the Head Start Performance Standards which include a high level of family connection to school and community, as well as family engagement in the transition to new learning environments. This will occur through the inclusion and participation of Early Childhood families in school-based parent and family engagement and engagement activities.

PTO/PTSO

Parents and families in schools may organize and participate in activities of a locally organized Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) for greater engagement in the schools. Local membership is open to those willing to make a difference in the lives of children and youth. As a supportive

arm of education, they offer a vehicle for parents and families to participate in activities such as Family Fun Nights, Family Science Nights, Family Math Nights, Book Fairs and other events that provide families information on school, District and state programs, and also equip families to support learning at home.

PTA/PTSA

Parents and families in schools may organize, participate, and join a local Parent Teacher Association (PTA), a local non-profit 501(c)(3) group with a state and national affiliation and voice for parents and families. Membership is open to those willing to make a difference in the lives of children and youth through improving policies and laws, receiving leadership skills and opportunities, and sharing valuable state and national information on the health, education, and welfare of children. Like the PTO/PTSO model, these groups also serve as vehicles for information dissemination to families.

Right To Education Task Force

The Right to Education Task Force is a parent-led group that meets monthly to provide updates on issues and topics that affect special education in the District. Parents, relatives, and guardians of children who receive special education services are invited to attend any meeting and become participating members. Each meeting includes time for discussion of parent concerns. Information on where and when meetings are held is available from the District's Program for Students with Exceptionalities and is posted on the District calendar, which can be found on the District's Internet site.

Right to Education Task Force members include parents, public agencies, and school officials. School District Administrators from the Program for Students with Exceptionalities attend each meeting. The purpose of the Right to Education Task Force is to monitor the delivery of special education services in District schools, address parent concerns, and communicate problems to the appropriate sources. The Right to Education Task Force works to ensure that parents and families of students who receive special education services are provided information on District programs and equal access to these programs. The group is part of the State Local Task Force System comprised of twenty-nine (29) parent-led task forces, one in each Intermediate Unit in Pennsylvania.

For more information, call the Parent-to-Parent Special Education Helpline at 412-529-2300.

School Volunteers

While the District's Parent and Family Engagement Policy largely defines mandated legal parental engagement provisions as stipulated by federal law, the District also realizes that many other adults play an important role in a child's life. The School District welcomes into its buildings all individuals who carry responsibility for a child's development, education, safety and well-being, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and community members. All stakeholders who wish to assist in the academic achievement or school improvement process are welcome to serve as school volunteers.

Consistent with Board Policies 920 – Background Checks and 1004 – School Visitors, volunteers who are responsible for the welfare of a child or have direct volunteer contact with children are required to have Act 34 Criminal Background History, Act 114 Federal Criminal History and Act 151 Child Abuse History clearances before volunteering in schools. The Act

114 Federal Criminal History may be waived by the District if the volunteer can demonstrate that s/he has been a resident of Pennsylvania for the last ten (10) years and signs an affidavit attesting that s/he has never been arrested or convicted of a disqualifying crime.[3][4]

Clearances will be reviewed and the parent/guardian or family member will be notified regarding whether they are eligible to hold a volunteer position with responsibility for the welfare of a child or direct volunteer contact with children. Individuals who are not cleared to hold a school volunteer position may inquire at their student's school regarding available volunteer opportunities which do not require background checks.

Once parents/guardians and family members are cleared, they are cleared for a five-year period. This means that parents/guardians only have to get new clearances once every five (5) years. Copies of all clearances will be kept on file with the designated central District office.

Engaging the District

Parent Hotline -

The District has established a Parent Hotline that can be accessed for feedback, concerns, complaints, positive reports, questions, and information. The number for the Hotline is 412-529-HELP (4357).

Parent Survey -

The District will distribute an annual Parent Survey to solicit feedback from parents/guardians. This survey will be mailed to each home, and it will also be available electronically. Each school will make copies of the survey available to parents/guardians upon request.

Section V – Capacity Building for Parent and Family Engagement

The District will build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental engagement by implementing strategies outlined in this document. The District, with the assistance of the Office of the Superintendent, will support all capacity building and opportunities for parent and family engagement. **Capacity building** within the District shall be defined as creating conditions and the welcoming environment for successful parent and family engagement to flourish. This includes examining internal structures, staff alignment, staff development, communication, programs, and resources to sustain effective parent and family engagement. Professional development opportunities for staff, parents and families will be provided through District-wide meetings, trainings, and workshops. Any employee with parent engagement responsibilities (i.e., each school's Family and Community Engagement Coordinator) or anyone who serves as a parent liaison shall support and assist the District in its mission to build opportunities for parent and family engagement.[1]

Staff Development to Support Parental Engagement

The District shall, with the assistance of its schools and parents, educate its teachers, administrators, principals and all other staff about how to effectively support parental and family engagement. The District will involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of such training. Such training will include, but not be limited to:[1]

1. The value of parent and family engagement and involvement as a research-based practice that leads to school improvement and student achievement.
2. The value of parent and family contributions.
3. How to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents and families as equal partners.
4. How to implement and coordinate parent and family engagement programs.
5. How to build ties between parents, families, and the school.
6. How to develop and foster meaningful school, family and community partnerships.

Pre-K-12 Parent Training on Partnering for Academic Success

The District will provide training for parents to enhance the engagement and involvement of other parents. The District will be given responsibility for facilitating workshops and training for parents and families of children in the School District of Pittsburgh, inclusive of parents with children in Pre-Kindergarten through 12th Grade. Workshops and training will enhance the knowledge and skill level of parents as they relate to the academic success of their children. These initiatives will provide opportunities for parents and families to engage in literacy activities through Book Clubs, math activities through workshops, technology through the District Web-based parent “portal” initiative, and activities promoting the general health, nutrition, and welfare of their children. [\[1\]](#)

Parents and families can inquire with their principals or Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Coordinators to find out which training opportunities are available on an individual school level, and with the Office of the Superintendent to find out which District-wide opportunities are available. All District-wide trainings will be publicized.

Parental Access

The District shall assist parents in understanding the topics of Pennsylvania Academic Standards, state and local assessments, monitoring their child’s progress, and working together to improve student achievement. In order to do so, the District will provide the following: [\[1\]](#)

1. Timely information about programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized and amended.
2. A description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the proficiency levels students are expected to meet. Parents and families shall be part of a Book Selection Advisory Committee under the Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development.
3. Frequent reports to parents on their children’s progress. When report cards or progress reports are distributed to parents in a school or District mailing, relevant information on educational activities, parent and family engagement - initiated by the school, the District, or the parents - is encouraged to be included.

4. The District shall provide parents access to materials and training to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy or technology training. The District will assist parents and families in gaining communication skills through technology such as the Web-based parent "portal" program to help parents not only gain access to their child's academic information and children's progress but to network with teachers through email.
5. A system for reasonable access to school staff, including accommodations for working parents. Parent-teacher conferences shall be held annually. Parents and families shall be given several options of times in order to accommodate schedules. Adequate time shall be allotted to discuss student progress.
6. Opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's classroom. Parents committed to participating in volunteering activities directly related to students should contact their local school for details and information regarding clearance procedures. Parents and families will be required to have both Criminal Background History and Child Abuse History clearances. As of July 2015, all fees for the Child Abuse Clearance and State Police background check have been waived by the state for volunteers working with children. Parents and families will also be required to obtain the FBI Criminal History Report, which includes fingerprinting. Those who have lived in Pennsylvania for the last ten (10) consecutive years, however, may not be required to get the FBI Criminal History Report. In this case, they must complete the Residency Verification and Waiver Request Form. Individual schools may elect to provide the FBI security clearances to volunteers at school expense as their budgets permit. Inquiries for obtaining the necessary forms from local schools may be made when students are registered and shall be posted on the School District's Internet site. If parents wish to accompany children on field trips or volunteer in other capacities, they are encouraged to submit application for security clearances several months in advance in order to allow for processing at appropriate local and state levels.
7. Opportunities to observe classroom activities in accordance with the Board Policy 1004 – School Visitors and the accompanying administrative regulation.
8. If requested by parents, the opportunity for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, with the District responding to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible. This includes engagement of parents and families in decisions about how the District allots funds reserved for parental engagement to District schools. The District may use its District-wide Parent Advisory Council and individual school PSCCs to provide advice on this and other matters relating to use of funds for parental and family engagement.
9. Arrangements for school meetings or in-home conferences between staff and parents who are unable to attend conferences at school in order to maximize parental and family engagement and participation.
10. Investment of federal, state, and local dollars to strengthen and sustain parent and family engagement activities such as paying reasonable and necessary expenses associated with local parental engagement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable parents and families to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions.

11. A system designed to include appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in parent engagement activities. The School District not only encourages local neighborhood partnerships but will maintain school facilities that accommodate and are accessible to local community groups, including sports, in accordance with Board Policy 807 – Use of School Facilities and the accompanying administrative regulations.[17]

Information and Its Distribution to Parents in Understandable Language

The District will ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the parents and families of participating children in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents and families can understand.[1]

When possible, all information for parents and families shall be posted on the Family, Youth and Community Engagement Site and individual school page of the School District Internet site.

“Your Guide to Offerings and Options in the Pittsburgh Public Schools,” a publication which contains information on District magnet schools and other programs, shall be mailed to every parent at the beginning of each school year. Additional information shall be made available to parents and families at the District Internet site and at all individual schools which describes programs and explains how to take advantage of opportunities. Such information shall include, but not be limited to, the following categories:

1. Academic (Examples include Advanced Placement (AP) options, Center for Advanced Studies (CAS) gifted offerings, and Pittsburgh Scholar Program (PSP)).
2. Early Childhood Programs.
3. Tutoring Programs.
4. Extracurricular.
5. Athletic.
6. After-School Programs.
7. Outreach Activities (Example: Intergenerational programs).
8. Parent/Family Engagement Opportunities.

The District will draw from multiple sources of information and materials for parents, families, and school staff. To assist in implementing this requirement, the District will use written materials, toolkits, and other resources that shall be made widely available to parents and families and can be accessed through local schools. Sources of information will include, but not be limited to:

1. United States Department of Education.
2. Federal Education Technical Assistance Centers.
3. National Center on Family Literacy.

4. National Coalition of ESEA Title I Parents.
5. National Coalition for Parental Engagement in Education (NCPIE).
6. National Head Start Association.
7. PA Title I State Parent Advisory Council (SPAC).
8. Pennsylvania Parent Information Resource Center.
9. Pennsylvania Department of Education.
10. National PTA and Pennsylvania PTA.
11. Education Law Center-PA.
12. Various regional and local community resources.

Parent Resource Information

The District shall make parents aware of parental and family engagement resource information through its school-based information centers. [\[1\]](#)

Each school shall have a central location (i.e., a classroom, a table in a common area of the school, a bulletin board) that makes information readily accessible for parents and families, and all parents and families should be made aware of this location.

The School Improvement Plan, the Parent-School Compact, the District level Parent and Family Engagement Policy and the school level Parent and Family Engagement Policy are the documents that are required to be made available for parents in this location.

Section VI – Parents’ Right-to-Know, Notifications, and Other Rights

At the beginning of each school year, the School District shall notify the parents of each student that the parents may request information regarding the professional qualifications of the student’s classroom teachers. The School District will provide the parents—on request and in a timely manner—at a minimum, the following information: [\[16\]](#)

1. Whether the teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
2. Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which state qualification or licensing criteria have been waived.
3. The baccalaureate degree major of the teacher and any other graduate certification or degree held by the teacher, and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.
4. Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

The District shall mail to each individual parent the following: [\[16\]](#)

1. Information on the level of achievement of the parent’s child in each of the state

academic assessments as required under the law.

2. Information that shows how all students in the District achieved on the statewide academic assessment compared to students in the state as a whole, along with other indicators of performance.
3. Timely notice that the parent's child has been assigned, or has been taught for four (4) or more consecutive weeks by, a teacher who is not highly qualified.

The District shall provide to parents of eligible students in schools that have either entered improvement status or otherwise qualify, the following notices:

1. Eligibility to participate in a voluntary school choice plan if the school is in appropriate improvement stage: Not later than the first day of the school year following improvement identification, the District shall provide parents—in an understandable format and language—with the option of transferring their child to another public school served by the District which is meeting performance measures set forth by federal and state law. Parents will be mailed the notice—in an understandable format—and given the opportunity to review offerings and opportunities at available schools. A reasonable amount of time shall be given for parents to visit schools and make this decision.
2. Eligibility to transfer their child to another school within the District if their current school is designated as “persistently dangerous” or if their child is a victim of a violent crime.[\[5\]](#)
3. Eligibility to participate in Supplemental Educational Services (SES)—tutoring for their child if the school is in appropriate improvement status. The District shall provide annual written notice to parents—in an understandable format and language—the availability and description of services in addition to a list of approved providers.

Development and Adoption of Local Policies: The District shall develop and adopt policies, in consultation with parents, regarding the following rights:[\[2\]](#)

1. To inspect scheduled surveys and opt-out students, specifically as stated in NCLB: The right of a parent of a student to inspect a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed to a student and for granting reasonable access to such survey within a reasonable period of time after the request is received.
2. To inspect instructional materials, specifically as stated in NCLB: The right of a parent of a student to request inspection of any instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum for the student and granting reasonable access to instructional material within a reasonable period of time after the request is received.
3. To review the District's policy on the right to collect, disclose, and use personal student information, specifically as stated in NCLB: The right of a parent of a student to inspect any instrument used in the collection of personal information before the instrument is administered or distributed to a student and granting a request by a parent for reasonable access to such instrument within a reasonable period of time after the request is received.
4. To inspect the state assessments and, if found to be in conflict with their religious beliefs, may have their child excused from the assessment, with the written request not to be denied by the Superintendent or designee.[\[6\]](#)

5. To review the state assessments in the School District, two (2) weeks prior to their administration, during convenient hours for parents. All necessary security requirements to maintain the validity of the assessment shall be taken in accordance with the state assessment administration instructions.[\[6\]](#)
6. To review procedures for having their child receive reasonable accommodations, if available, when taking state assessments.
7. To be notified of selection for administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and right to opt-out students, specifically stated in a voluntary participation section of NCLB as: Parents of children selected to participate in any assessment authorized under this section shall be informed before the administration of any authorized assessment, that their child may be excused from participation for any reason, is not required to finish any authorized assessment, and is not required to answer any test question.[\[16\]](#)
8. To opt-out students from military recruiter access lists, specifically stated as: A secondary school student or the parent of the student may request that the student's name, address, and telephone listing not be released to military recruiters without prior written parental consent and the District shall notify parents of the option to make this request and comply with the request.[\[7\]](#)
9. To participate in parental engagement activities affiliated with programs such as:[\[8\]](#)
[\[9\]](#)[\[11\]](#)[\[12\]](#)
 - a. Limited English Proficiency Program.
 - b. Homeless Education Program as appropriate.
 - c. 21st Century Community Learning Centers.
 - d. Safe and Drug Free Schools Programs.

Section VII – Process for Title I and Parent and Family Engagement Policy Complaints

The District maintains the following written procedures for receiving and resolving complaints which allege violations of the law regarding administration of Title I programs or other responsibilities outlined in this policy.[\[18\]](#)

A parent who feels that the school or District is not meeting its Title I or other responsibilities as outlined in this policy, should first discuss the problem with the school principal.

If the concern is not resolved at the school level or if the concern is District-wide, a parent should begin a formal complaint procedure as outlined below. The parent need not exhaust the below complaint procedure before pursuing their complaint with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Division of Federal Programs or a court of law.

All complaints shall be in the format of a written, signed statement filed by an individual or an organization and must include:

1. A statement that a school has violated a requirement of federal statute or regulations which apply to Title I or other violations as outlined in the Parent and Family Engagement Policy;
2. The facts on which the statement is based; and
3. Information on any discussions, meetings, or correspondence with a school regarding the complaint.

Complaint Resolution Procedures

1. Referral – Complaints against schools should be referred to the District’s Title Programs office. The location and contact information for the Title Programs Office can be obtained by contacting the Parent Hotline, any District school, or by visiting the District’s Internet site.
2. Notice to School – The Title Programs Office will notify the school principal and the principal’s immediate supervisor that a complaint has been received and provide a copy of the complaint. The principal will also be directed to respond to the complaint.
3. Investigation – After receiving the principal’s response, the Title Programs Office, along with the principal’s supervisor, will determine whether further investigation is necessary. If necessary, the Title Programs Office and/or the principal’s supervisor may do an on-site investigation at the school. If the Title Programs Office and the principal’s supervisor deem no on-site investigation to be necessary, the complainant will be notified in the Title Programs Office’s report and recommended resolution of the reason no on-site investigation was conducted.
4. Opportunity to Present Evidence – The Title Programs Office may provide for the complainant and the principal to present evidence.
5. Report and Recommended Resolution – Once the Title Programs Office has completed the investigation and taking evidence, a report will be prepared with a recommendation for resolving the complaint. The report will give the name of the party bringing the complaint, the nature of the complaint, a summary of the investigation, the recommended resolution and the reasons for the recommendation. Copies of the report will be issued to all parties involved. The recommended resolution will become effective upon issuance of the report.
6. Follow-up – The Title Programs Office and the supervising Assistant Superintendent will ensure that the resolution of the complaint is implemented, if applicable.
7. Time Limit – The period between the Title Programs Office receiving the complaint and resolution of the complaint shall not exceed sixty (60) calendar days.

Right to Appeal to Superintendent or designee – Within thirty (30) days of the date of the Title Programs Office’s report and recommended resolution, the complainant may appeal the dispute to the Superintendent or designee with appropriate supervisory authority over the Title Programs Office. A final report and recommended resolution will then be provided to all parties involved.

Right to Appeal to PDE – Either party may appeal the final resolution to PDE’s Division of

Federal Programs. Information regarding how to file an appeal, including contact information for the Division of Federal Programs, will be issued along with the report and recommended resolution to all parties.

Definitions

Parent shall include a legal guardian or other person standing in loco parentis (such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, a person who is legally responsible for the child's welfare, or a legally appointed Education Decision Maker). The definition shall include court-appointed guardians and decision-makers. The School District also believes in the importance of families as other adults who play an important role in a child's life. Parents may grant written consent for third parties to access personally identifiable information regarding their child's education.[\[10\]](#)

Parent and family engagement shall mean the participation of parents and families in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, ensuring:

1. That parents and families play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
2. That parents and families are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
3. That parents and families 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;
4. That other required parental and family engagement activities are carried out in compliance with relevant federal and state law and regulations.

The School District not only embraces the definition of parent and family engagement as defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, but further expands that definition to include diverse, ongoing, meaningful activities and opportunities that are designed to engage a range of parents and families throughout the school year. Some of these activities shall be focused on helping parents and families help their own children succeed academically, while others engage parents and families in the process of school improvement.

Title I, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is the largest single federal aid for elementary and secondary education. This grant is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging academic achievement standards that the State has set for all children.

The District's Parent and Family Engagement policy shall be evaluated annually, with parental and family engagement. The policy shall be made available in all District schools, on the District's Internet site and various other accessible locations.

Legal

1. 20 U.S.C. 6318
2. 20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq
3. Pol. 920
4. Pol. 1004
5. 20 U.S.C. 7912
6. 22 PA Code 4.4
7. 20 U.S.C. 7908
8. 20 U.S.C. 6812
9. 42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq
10. 20 U.S.C. 7801
11. 20 U.S.C. 7115
12. 20 U.S.C. 7175
13. Pol. 101
14. 24 P.S. 510.2
15. Pol. 1001.1
16. 20 U.S.C. 6312
17. Pol. 807
18. 20 U.S.C. 7844
- 20 U.S.C. 7845
- 29 U.S.C. 3271 et seq
- 29 U.S.C. 701 et seq
- 42 U.S.C. 11301 et seq
- 42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq