

# School District of Pittsburgh

## Parent and Family Involvement Policy

This policy is to comply with Public Law 107-110, 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, signed on January 8, 2002, referred to as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESEA) of 1965 and commonly cited as the “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.” References to mandated provisions of ESEA are indicated in bolded italics with the first reference being to ESEA and the second reference to the official citation in the United States Code.

### Section I—Parent and Family Involvement General Provisions, Expectations, and Definitions

This policy shall establish the role of the Pittsburgh School District 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 Involvement Policy largely defines mandated legal parental involvement 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 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 family that will be evident in all parent, family, teacher, and staff interactions.

The Pittsburgh School District not only recognizes parents and families as key stakeholders in their children's education, but prioritizes parent and family involvement as a key component of its beliefs and shared goals as adopted by the Board of Education in its “Excellence for All” plan for student achievement.

#### DECLARATION OF BELIEFS

- All children can learn at high levels.
- Teachers have a profound impact on student development and should have ample training, support, and resources.
- Education begins with a safe and healthy learning environment.
- Families are an essential part of the educational process.
- A commitment from the entire community is necessary to build a culture that encourages student achievement.
- Improvement in education is guided by consistent and effective leadership.
- Central office exists to serve students and schools.

#### SHARED GOALS TO GUIDE ALL WORK

- Maximum academic achievement for all students;
- A safe and orderly environment for all students and employees;
- Efficient and effective support operations for all students, families, teachers, and administrators;
- Efficient and equitable distribution of resources to address the needs of all students, to the maximum extent feasible; and
- Improved public confidence and strong parent/community engagement.

## **School District of Pittsburgh Parent and Family Involvement Policy**

The No Child Left Behind Act 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.” *ESEA Section 1001(12)—20 USC 6301(12)* this policy shall bring the District into compliance with No Child Left Behind provisions that specifically recognize parent and family involvement as a research-based educational practice that yields high results. This policy shall cover the involvement of all parents and families across any federal, state, or local programs being implemented in the District. The District recognizes and respects the wide variety of ways in which parents/families can be involved—whether District-initiated, school-initiated, or parent-initiated. 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. The District will incorporate this Parent and Family Involvement 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 Elementary and Secondary Education Act shall be referred to as ESEA. The United States Code shall be referred to as USC. A local education agency shall be referred to as LEA, which indicates a School District for this policy.

The term “parent” refers to a legal guardian or other person standing in loco parentis (such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the child’s welfare). *ESEA Section 9101(31)—20 USC 7801(31)* This definition of “parent” shall be used as reference for this policy. The Pittsburgh School District also believes in the importance of “families” as other adults who play an important role in a child’s life.

The District recognizes the definition of parent involvement as provided for in the No Child Left Behind General Provisions Section: *ESEA Section 9101(32)—20 USC 7801(32)* The term “Parent Involvement” means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:

- That parents play an integral role in assisting their children’s learning;
- That parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their children’s education at school;
- That parents are full partners in their children’s education; and
- That parents are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child.

The Pittsburgh School District not only embraces the definition of parent involvement as defined in the No Child Left Behind 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.

All efforts in the District shall be guided by extensive research that consistently links parental and family involvement 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: Welcoming all families into the school, Communicating effectively, Supporting student success, Speaking up for every child, Sharing power and Collaborating with community. These national standards have been endorsed by the National School Boards Association and will be endorsed by the Pittsburgh Board of Education upon adoption of this document.

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.

# **School District of Pittsburgh**

## **Parent and Family Involvement Policy**

### **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 Involvement 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 involvement, and describe how the District will implement provisions. *ESEA, Section 1118(a)(2)—20 USC 6318(a)(2)* 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. *ESEA, Section 1118(b)(4)—20 USC 6318(b)(4)*

The District authorized a "District Public Engagement Policy Committee" to jointly develop this policy. Invited to participate were parents, organizations, and community members. A series of open meetings were held during which members brainstormed, reviewed the NCLB Act, reviewed current District policy and policies from other Districts, examined successful and unsuccessful experiences, attended workshops with leading national researchers such as Joyce Epstein, participated in the Governor's Institute for Parental Involvement in Harrisburg, and came to consensus on a suggested policy. Members of the committee were exposed to a variety of facilitators during this process including District personnel, parents, RMC Research Corporation, and the Education Law Center's School Reform Network.

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, and parents and families of migratory children, including providing information and school reports in a language such parents and families can understand. *ESEA, Section 1118 (f)—20 USC 6318 (f)* The District shall also provide speech and hearing interpreters for parent-teacher conferences, Parent School Community Council meetings, and other activities as requested and deemed necessary.

This Parent and Family Involvement 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, 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 involvement of parents and families—to meet changing needs. *ESEA Section 1118(b)(1)—20 USC 6318(b)(1)* The policy shall be posted on the Parent and Family Site of the Pittsburgh School District web site. The policy will also be available to parents and families at local schools or through the Division of Communications and Marketing. Community agencies or programs that have direct access to parents and families (Example: Welfare to Work, CYF, Urban League, NAACP, libraries, places of worship, etc.) may voluntarily distribute the policy at their sites.

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 involvement. This involvement includes the planning, review, and improvement of the Parent and Family Involvement Policy. 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 involvement.

*ESEA Section 1118(c)(1)(2)(3)—20 USC 6318 (c)(1)(2)(3)*

The District will conduct, with parents and families, an annual evaluation of this Parent and Family Involvement Policy through the Division of Communications and Marketing. (This process is specified in Section III of this policy.)

# **School District of Pittsburgh**

## **Parent and Family Involvement Policy**

### **Section III—Accountability, Responsibility, and Evaluation**

Within the administration of the Pittsburgh School District, 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 Involvement Policy:

- The Division of Communications and Marketing, under the direction of the Office of the Chief of Staff;
- The Office of Curriculum and Instruction, the Office of Professional Development, and the Office of School Management, under the direction of the Deputy Superintendent; and
- The Funding and Compliance Office, under the direction of the Assistant to the Superintendent for NCLB Compliance.

The Division of Communications and Marketing, in collaboration with the Office of Curriculum and Instruction and the Office of School Management, bears the primary responsibility for fostering programs, activities, and procedures for the Parent and Family Involvement Policy at the District level. It is the responsibility of the Division of Communications and Marketing to develop, facilitate, and coordinate large-scale events and provide key support and resources for parent involvement.

The Funding and Compliance Office has responsibility and is accountable for all federal programs including Title I. As such, this office has the primary responsibility for ensuring compliance with the District's Parent and Family Involvement Policy inclusive of all Pittsburgh public schools, 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 involvement.)

The District supports professional development opportunities for staff members, parents and families to enhance understanding of effective parent and family involvement strategies which lead to student achievement and student improvement. The Division of Communications and Marketing, through the Office of Professional Development, will support the development of teaching curricula and training programs on parent and family involvement 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 involvement 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 principals will be held accountable for fostering parent and family involvement in their schools, as defined in Section I of this policy. Parent and family involvement will be maintained as an essential part of school climate review under the School Plan for Excellence (SPE). Principals, teachers, and staff members will be encouraged to select at least one individual goal to enrich parent and family involvement. This selection will become part of each annual individual evaluation. All employees will be held accountable for parent involvement by their immediate supervisor.

This policy shall be reviewed annually as part of all staff development, including administrative and support staff. The review shall also be a part of all orientations for new staff within the schools by 2007.

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 involvement.

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

# School District of Pittsburgh

## Parent and Family Involvement Policy

- Communication between the home and school on an ongoing basis;  
*ESEA 1118(d)(2)—USC 6318(d)(2)*
- Support of their children’s learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching, and positive use of extracurricular time;  
*ESEA 1118(d)(1)—USC 6318(d)(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 Division of Communications and Marketing, 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.

- Participating in decisions relating to the education of their children;  
*ESEA 1118(d)(1)—USC 6318(d)(1)*
- Participating in all parent-teacher conferences;  
*ESEA 1118(2)(A)—USC 6318(d)(2)(A)*
- Responding to school notices and requests by deadlines given; and
- Providing for the health and well-being of their children including, but not limited to, discipline, nutrition, and hygiene.

As shared responsibility for high student academic achievement, each Title I 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. *ESEA 1118(d)—USC 6318(d)* Since the District’s mission is to encourage the involvement of all parents and families, school-parent-family compacts shall also be part of the parent and family involvement process at schools not eligible for Title I assistance.

The District will conduct, with parents and families, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the Parent and Family Involvement Policy in improving the academic quality of its schools served. The Division of Communications and Marketing 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, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background). The District will use the findings to design strategies for more effective parent and family involvement, and to revise, if necessary (and with the involvement of its parents and families), its Parent and Family Involvement Policy. *ESEA Section 1118(a)(2)(E)—20 USC 6318(a)(2)(E)* 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 Information and Technology 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.

# School District of Pittsburgh

## Parent and Family Involvement Policy

### Section IV—School Improvement Opportunities and Activities

All parents and families will have the opportunity to be selected to serve as volunteers 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 and school improvement. 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 Division of Communications and Marketing or to the school principal on an annual basis or respond to specific requests as committees are created and the opportunity for participation arises.

No Child Left Behind gives parents explicit rights to be not only involved in their children's education but to be participants in the school improvement process as outlined below 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 make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and have entered into Corrective Action stages. 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." *20 USC 6316* 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, under the ESEA statute, the District has the obligation to reach out to parents to ensure they are aware of their right to participate in the restructuring process, *per USDOE Parental Involvement Guidance 2004*.

The School District will involve parents in activities of the schools [*ESEA Section 1118(a) (2) (F)—20 USC 6318(a) (2) (F)*], including the process of school review and improvement to assist students in achieving. *ESEA Section 1118(a) (2) (A)—20 USC 6318(a) (2) (A)* When a school has not met criteria for Adequate Yearly Progress and is identified as in "school improvement" status, each school shall, not later than three (3) months after being so identified, develop or revise a school improvement plan—in consultation with parents, school staff, the School District, and outside experts. The plan shall cover a two-year period and include strategies based 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. *ESEA Section 1116(b) (3) (A)—20 USC 6316(b) (3) (A)* Parents and families will be active partners to review the achievement data and assist in directing the School Plan for Excellence. 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 involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance.

*ESEA Section 1118(a)(2)(B)—20 USC 6318(a)(2)(B) and ESEA Section 1118(e)(14)—20 USC 6318(e)(14)*

The District will coordinate and integrate parental and family involvement strategies with other District operated programs. *ESEA Section 1118(a)(2)(D)—20 USC 6318(a)(2)(D)* 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 Policy Council, conferences, school

# **School District of Pittsburgh**

## **Parent and Family Involvement Policy**

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 *Excellence for All Plan*.

### **PARENT SCHOOL COMMUNITY COUNCILS (PSCC)**

The District will maintain a core parent involvement initiative of Parent School Community Councils (PSCC) established during the 1992-1993 school year as its action arm. All schools shall have an established PSCC and will convene monthly meetings to discuss educational issues through the "Getting Results" plan relevant to each school. Parents and families will be a part of the review and revision of the "Getting Results" plan and will be required to be part of the approval process on individual "Getting Results" plans as the guiding principle in schools. Each "Getting Results" plan will include parental and family involvement provisions linked to school improvement. A PSCC Handbook will be published by the District to serve as a guide for more detailed information and may be obtained by contacting the Division of Communications and Marketing.

### **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 Council is to provide direction and support to the school in the development and revision of its "Getting Results" 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 maintain a seat on the PSCC shall assume responsibility for communicating information to other parents. Interested individuals should contact their schools to become involved. Council 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 Council 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 Council will maintain their own identity and function. Representatives from these organizations communicate information to the Council about their respective groups. They include, but are not limited to the following:

- Instructional Cabinet
- Discipline Committee
- PTA/PTO
- Right to Education Task Force
- *Excellence for All Parent Steering Committee*
- Early Childhood Education Policy Council
- School Volunteers

### **MEMBERSHIP IN PARENT SCHOOL COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

Parents or family members interested in becoming a member of 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 Division of Communications and Marketing.

### **EXCELLENCE FOR ALL PARENT STEERING COMMITTEE**

The Excellence for All Parent Steering Committee is comprised of four or more parents or family representatives from each of the 66 schools. These representatives are committed to working directly with the Superintendent as a sounding board for ideas, suggestions, issues, concerns, and discussions. They serve as 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 years is requested.

# **School District of Pittsburgh**

## **Parent and Family Involvement Policy**

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

The District operates Early Childhood Education Programs that are funded by both Federal Head Start and State Pre-Kindergarten grants. All programs follow the Head Start Performance Standards which include a high level of parent and family involvement and engagement in the programs. Parents with children in early childhood education programs will also be included in the school-based parent and family involvement and engagement.

### **PTO/PTSO**

Parents and families in schools may organize and participate in activities of a locally organized Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) for greater involvement 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. Meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:00 PM at Achieva, 711 Bingham Street, Pittsburgh, PA (South Side).

Right to Education Task Force members include parents, public agencies, and school officials. Pittsburgh 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 group is part of the State Local Task Force System comprised of 29 parent-led task forces, one in each Intermediate Unit in Pennsylvania.

For more information, call the Parent-to-Parent Special Education Helpline at 412-323-3996.

### **SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS**

While the District's Parent and Family Involvement Policy largely defines mandated legal parental involvement 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 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. Volunteers are required to have both Criminal Background History and Child Abuse History clearances before volunteering in schools. Volunteers inactive for a two-year or more time period must reapply for clearances.

### **PARENT HOTLINE**

The District has established a "Parent Hotline" that can be accessed for concerns, complaints, questions, and information. The number for the Hotline is 412-622-7920.



# School District of Pittsburgh

## Parent and Family Involvement Policy

### Section V—Capacity Building for Parental and Family Involvement

The District will build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement by implementing strategies outlined in this document. *ESEA Section 1118(a) (2) (C)—20 USC 6318(a) (2) (C)* The District, with the assistance of the Division of Communications and Marketing, will support all capacity building and opportunities for parent and family involvement. "Capacity building" within the District shall be defined as creating conditions and the welcoming environment for successful parent and family involvement to flourish. This includes examining internal structures, staff alignment, staff development, communication, programs, and resources to sustain effective parent and family involvement. Professional development opportunities for staff, parents and family will be provided through District-wide meetings, trainings, and workshops. Any employee designated as parent engagement specialist or anyone that serves as a parent liaison shall support and assist the District in its mission to build opportunities for parent and family involvement.

#### **STAFF DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

The District shall, with the assistance of its schools and parents, educate its teachers, administrators, principals and all other staff. *ESEA Section 1118(e)(3)—USC 6318(e)(3)* The District will involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of such training. *ESEA Section 1118(e)(6)—USC 6318(e)(6)* Such training will include, but not be limited to:

- The value of parent and family involvement as a research-based practice that leads to school improvement and student achievement;
- The value of parent and family contributions;
- How to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents and families as equal partners;
- How to implement and coordinate parent and family involvement programs; and
- How to build ties between parents, families, and the school.
- 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 involvement of other parents. *ESEA 1118(e)(9)—20 USC 6318(e)(9)* The District will be given responsibility for facilitating workshops and training for parents and families of children in the Pittsburgh School District, inclusive of parents with children in Pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

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. *ESEA Section 1118(e) (1)—20 USC 6318(e) (1)* In order to do so, the District will provide the following:

- Timely information about programs under No Child Left Behind; *ESEA 1118(c)(4)(A)—20 USC 6318(c)(4)(A)*
- 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; *ESEA 1118(c) (4) (B)—20 USC 6318(c) (4) (B)* Parents and families shall be part of a Book Selection Advisory Committee under the Division of Curriculum and Instruction.
- Frequent reports to parents on their children's progress; *ESEA 1118(d)(2)(B)—20 USC 6318(d)(2)(B)* When report cards or progress reports are distributed to parents in a school or District mailing, relevant information on educational activities, parent and family involvement—initiated by the school, the District, or the parents—is encouraged to be included.

## **School District of Pittsburgh Parent and Family Involvement Policy**

- The District shall provide parents access to materials and training to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy or technology training. *ESEA Section 1118(e)(2)—USC 6318(e)(2)* 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.
- A system for reasonable access to school staff, including accommodations for working parents; *ESEA 1118(d)(2)(C)—20 USC 6318(d)(2)(C)* 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.
- Opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's classroom;  
The Pittsburgh School District will provide volunteers security clearances at District expense. Parents committed to participating in volunteering activities directly related to students should contact their local school for details and clearance procedures. *ESEA 1118(d)(2)(C)—20 USC 6318(d)(2)(C)* Parents and families will be required to have both Criminal Background History and Child Abuse History clearances. Inquiries for obtaining the necessary forms from local schools may be made when students are registered and shall be posted on the School District web 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.
- Opportunities to observe classroom activities; *ESEA 1118(d)(2)(C)—20 USC 6318(d)(2)(C)*
- 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;  
*ESEA 1118(c)(4)(C)—20 USC 6318(c)(4)(C)*
- 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 involvement and participation; *ESEA 1118(e)(10)—20 USC 6318(e)(10)*
- Investment of federal, state, and local dollars to strengthen and sustain parent and family involvement activities such as paying reasonable and necessary expenses associated with local parental involvement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable parents and families to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions;
- A system designed to include appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities. *ESEA 1118(e)(13)—20 USC 6318(e)(13)* 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.

### **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. *ESEA Section 1118(e)(4)—USC 6318(e)(4)*

When possible, all information for parents and families shall be posted on the Parent and Family Site of the Pittsburgh School District web site.

"Your Guide to Offerings and Options in the Pittsburgh Public Schools 2009-2010" a publication which contains information on magnet schools and 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

# School District of Pittsburgh

## Parent and Family Involvement Policy

web 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:

- Academic (Examples include Advanced Placement (AP) options, Center for Advanced Studies (CAS) gifted offerings, and Pittsburgh Scholar Program (PSP))
- Early Childhood Programs
- Tutoring Programs
- Extra-Curricular
- Athletic
- After-School Programs
- Outreach Activities (Example: Intergenerational programs)

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:

- United States Department of Education
- Federal Education Technical Assistance Centers
- National Center on Family Literacy
- National Coalition of ESEA Title I Parents
- National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPPIE)
- National Head Start Association
- PA Title I State Parent Advisory Council (SPAC)
- Pennsylvania Parent Information Resource Center
- Pennsylvania Department of Education
- National PTA and Pennsylvania PTA
- Education Law Center-PA
- Various regional and local community resources

### **ANNUAL SCHOOL DISTRICT AND SCHOOL REPORT CARDS**

The School District shall prepare and disseminate an annual school district report card which reports on the progress of academic achievement, adequate yearly progress, school improvement status, professional qualifications of teachers, and other required information under ESEA law. This information shall also be widely distributed to the media and public agencies. *ESEA 1111(h) (2) (A) (B) (E)—20 USC 6311(h) (2) (A) (B) (E)* the School District will involve parents in the annual development of these report cards. Data shall be presented to parents and families in an understandable format for all schools.

### **FEDERALLY FUNDED STATEWIDE PARENT INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER**

The District shall make parents aware of parental and family involvement resource information available from the federally supported Pennsylvania Parent Information Resource Center *ESEA 1118(g)—20 USC 6318(g)* The center in Pennsylvania is: Center for Schools and Communities, 275 Grandview Avenue, Suite 200, Camp Hill, PA 17011, 717-763-1661--Website: [www.center-school.org](http://www.center-school.org)

## **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: *ESEA 1111(h) (6) (A)—20 USC 6311(h) (6) (A)*

- Whether the teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;

## **School District of Pittsburgh Parent and Family Involvement Policy**

- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which state qualification or licensing criteria have been waived;
- 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; and
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

The District shall mail to each individual parent the following: *ESEA 1111(h) (6) (B)—USC 6311(h) (6) (B)*

- Information on the level of achievement of the parent's child in each of the state academic assessments as required under the law;
- 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 adequate yearly progress;
- Timely notice that the parent's child has been assigned, or has been taught for four 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:

- 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 adequate yearly progress. *ESEA 1116(b)(1)(E)(i)—20 USC 6316(b)(1)(E)(i)* 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.
- 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; *ESEA 9532—20 USC 7912*
- 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. *ESEA 1116(e)(1)—20 USC 6316(e)(1)*

Development and Adoption of Local Policies: The District shall develop and adopt policies, in consultation with parents, regarding the following rights: *ESEA Title X, General Provisions, Part F, Section 1061—20 USC 6301*

- 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. *ESEA Title X, General Provisions, Part F, Section 1061(c)(1)(A)(i)(ii)—20 USC 6301*
- 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. *ESEA Title X, General Provisions, Part F, Section 1061(c)(1)(C)(i)(ii)—20 USC 6301*
- 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. *ESEA Title X, General Provisions, Part F, Section 1061(c)(1)(F)(i)(ii)—20 USC 6301*

## **School District of Pittsburgh Parent and Family Involvement Policy**

- To inspect the state assessments (PSSA) 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; *Title 22 Education, PA Code Chapter 4, 4.4 General Policies (4)*
- To review the state assessments (PSSA) 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; *Title 22 Education, PA Code Chapter 4, 4.4 General Policies (7)*
- To review procedures for having their child receive reasonable accommodations when taking the Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA);
- 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. *ESEA Title VI, Part C, General Provisions Section 411(d)(2)—USC 7372(d)(2)*
- 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. *ESEA Title IX, Section 9528(2)—20 USC 7908(2)*
- To participate in parental involvement activities affiliated with programs such as
  - Limited English Proficiency Program *ESEA Title III Section 3102 Purposes (6)—20 USC 6812*
  - Homeless Education Program as appropriate *ESEA Title X, Part C, Subtitle B, Section 722(e)(C)(i)—42 USC 11431*
  - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers *ESEA Title IV Section 4205(a)(10)—20 USC 7175*
  - Safe and Drug Free Schools Programs *ESEA Title IV, Part A, Section 4115(E)—20 USC 7115*

# School District of Pittsburgh

## Parent and Family Involvement Policy

### **SECTION VII—PROCESS FOR TITLE I AND PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT POLICY COMPLAINTS**

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. Examples of violations would be such things as, but not limited to the following:

- (1) An annual meeting was not convened by the principal to explain Title I offerings to parents;
- (2) Parents were refused information on the professional qualifications of their child's classroom teacher; or
- (3) Parents were not notified of opportunities to participate in voluntary school choice program when their child's school was in an appropriate school improvement stage.

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. A complaint is defined by the Pittsburgh School District as a written, signed statement. It must include the following:

- (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 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**

**Referral**—Complaints against schools should be referred to the District's Funding and Compliance Office.  
**Notice to School**—the Assistant to the Superintendent for NCLB Compliance (the "Assistant") will notify the school principal that a complaint has been received. A copy of the complaint will be given to the principal and directions given for him/her to respond.

**Investigation**—After receiving the principal's response, the Assistant will determine whether further investigation is necessary. If necessary, the Assistant may do an on-site investigation at the school.

**Opportunity to Present Evidence**—The Assistant may, at his or her discretion, provide for the complainant and the principal to present evidence.

**Report and Recommended Resolution**—Once the Assistant has completed the investigation and taking evidence, he will prepare a report 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. The Assistant will issue copies of the report to all parties involved. The recommended resolution will become effective upon issuance of the report.

**Follow-up**—The Assistant will ensure that the resolution of the complaint is implemented.

**Time Limit**—The period between the Funding and Compliance Office receiving the complaint and resolution of the complaint shall not exceed sixty (60) calendar days.

**Right to Appeal**—Either party may appeal the final resolution to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The complaint to PDE should include the stated violation, facts to back up the statement, a record of discussions and meetings held, copies of all correspondence, and your signature and contact information. Appeals should be addressed as follows:

Chief  
Division of Federal Programs  
Pennsylvania Department of Education  
333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333