

COLUMBUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
PLAN
2024



I. COMMUNICATING:

Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

Practices

- Conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed.
- Weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for review and comments.
- Parent/student pickup of report card, with conferences on improving grades.
- Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications.
- Clear information on courses, programs, and activities within schools.
- Clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, and transitions.

Challenges

- Review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and nonprint communications.
- Review the quality of major communications (newsletters, report cards, conference schedules, and so on).
- Establish clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.

Redefinitions

"Communications about school programs and student progress" to mean two-way, three-way, and many-way channels of communication that connect schools, families, students, and the community.

Results for Students

- Awareness of own progress and of actions needed to maintain or improve grades.
- Understanding of school policies on behavior, attendance, and other areas of student conduct.
- Informed decisions about courses and programs.
- Awareness of own role in partnerships, serving as courier and communicator.

Results for Parents

- Understanding school programs and policies.
- Monitoring and awareness of child's progress.
- Responding effectively to students' problems.
- Interactions with teachers and ease of communication with school and teachers.

Results for Teachers

- Increased diversity and use of communications with families and awareness of own ability to communicate clearly.
- Appreciation for and use of parent network for communications.
- Increased ability to elicit and understand family views on children's programs and progress.

II. VOLUNTEERING:

Recruit and organize parent help and support.

Practices

- School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents.
- Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, resources for families.
- Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times, and locations of volunteers.
- Class parent, telephone tree, or other structures to provide all families with needed information.
- Parent patrols or other activities to aid safety and operation of school programs.

Challenges

- Recruit volunteers widely so that all families know that their time and talents are welcome.
- Make flexible schedules for volunteers, assemblies, and events to enable parents who work to participate.
- Organize volunteer work; provide training; match time and talent with school, teacher, and student needs; and recognize efforts so that participants are productive.

Redefinitions

"Volunteer" to mean anyone who supports school goals and children's learning or development in any way, at any place, and at any time -- not just during the school day and at the school building.

Results for Students

- Skill in communicating with adults.
- Increased learning of skills that receive tutoring or targeted attention from volunteers.
- Awareness of many skills, talents, occupations, and contributions of parent and other volunteers.

Results for Parents

- Understanding teacher's job, increased comfort in school, and carry-over of school activities at home.
- Self-confidence about ability to work in school and with children or to take steps to improve own education.
- Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school.
- Gains in specific skills of volunteer work.

Results for Teachers

- Readiness to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school.
- Awareness of parents' talents and interests in school and children.
- Greater individual attention to students with help from volunteers.

III. LEARNING AT HOME

Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

Practices

- Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade.
- Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.
- Information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments.
- Regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class.
- Calendars with activities for parents and students at home.
- Summer learning packets or activities.
- Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.

Challenges

- Design and organize a regular schedule of interactive homework (e.g., weekly or bimonthly) that gives students responsibility for discussing important things they are learning and help families stay aware of the content of their children's classwork.
- Coordinate family linked homework activities, if students have several teachers.
- Involve families and their children in all-important curriculum-related decisions.

Redefinitions

- *"Homework" to mean not only work done alone, but also interactive activities shared with others at home or in the community, linking schoolwork to real life.*
- *"Help" at home to mean encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing -- not "teaching" school subjects.*

Results for Students

- Gains in skills, abilities, and test scores linked to homework and classwork.
- Homework completion.
- Positive attitude toward schoolwork.
- View of parents as more similar to teacher and of home as more similar to school.
- Self-concept of ability as learner.

Results for Parents

- Know how to support, encourage, and help student at home each year.
- Discussions of school, classwork, and homework.
- Understanding of instructional program each year and of what child is learning in each subject.
- Appreciation of teaching skills.
- Awareness of child as a learner.

Results for Teachers

- Better design of homework assignments.
- Respect for family time.
- Recognition of equal helpfulness of single-parent, dual-income, and less formally educated families in motivating and reinforcing student learning.
- Satisfaction with family involvement and support.

IV. DECISION MAKING

Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

Practices

- Active PAWS or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees (e.g., curriculum, safety, personnel) for parent leadership and participation.
- Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements.
- District-level councils and committees for family and community involvement.
- Information on school or local elections for school representatives.
- Networks to link all families with parent representatives.

Challenges

- Include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school.
- Offer training to enable leaders to serve as representatives of other families, with input from and return of information to all parents.
- Include students (along with parents) in decision-making groups.

Redefinitions

- *"Decision making" to mean a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not just a power struggle between conflicting ideas.*
- *Parent "leader" to mean a real representative, with opportunities and support to hear from and communicate with other families.*

Results for Students

- Awareness of representation of families in school decisions.
- Understanding that student rights are protected.
- Specific benefits linked to policies enacted by parent organizations and experienced by students.

Results for Parents

- Input into policies that affect child's education.
- Feeling of ownership of school.
- Awareness of parents' voices in school decisions.
- Shared experiences and connections with other families.
- Awareness of school, district, and state policies.

Results for Teachers

- Awareness of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions.
- View of equal status of family representatives on committees and in leadership roles.

V. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY

Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

Practices

- Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services.

- Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students.
- Service integration through partnerships involving school; civic, counseling, cultural, health, recreation, and other agencies and organizations; and businesses.
- Service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g., recycling, art, music, drama, and other activities for seniors or others).
- Participation of alumni in school programs for students.

Challenges

- Solve turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities.
- Inform families of community programs for students, such as mentoring, tutoring, and business partnerships.
- Assure equity of opportunities for students and families to participate in community programs or to obtain services.
- Match community contributions with school goals, integrate child and family services with education.

Redefinitions

- *"Community" to mean not only the neighborhoods where students' homes and schools are located but also any neighborhoods that influence their learning and development.*
- *"Community" rated not only by low or high social or economic qualities, but by strengths and talents to support students, families, and schools.*
- *"Community" means all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in the schools.*

Results for Student

- Increased skills and talents through enriched curricular and extracurricular experiences.
- Awareness of careers and of options for future education and work.
- Specific benefits linked to programs, services, resources, and opportunities that connect students with community.

Results for Parents

- Knowledge and use of local resources by family and child to increase skills and talents or to obtain needed services.
- Interactions with other families in community activities.
- Awareness of school's role in the community and of community's contributions to the school.

Results for Teachers

- Awareness of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction.
- Openness to and skill in using mentors, business partners, community volunteers, and others to assist students and augment teaching practices.
- Knowledgeable, helpful referrals of children and families to needed services.