

POLICY

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Related Entries: ABA, ABC-RA, ACA, ACG, BFA, BMA, FAA, IEA, IEB, IED, IFB, IGK, IGP-RA, IRB-RA, KBA, KBA-RA, KBA-RC, KLA, KLA-RA

Responsible Offices: Office of Communications; Office of School Support and Well-being; Office of Well-being, Learning, and Achievement

Family-School Partnerships

A. PURPOSE

1. To establish inclusive, culturally responsive, and antiracist processes for parent/guardian engagement in educational decisions¹ affecting their students and their students' schools
2. To affirm a framework for family-school partnerships in alignment with the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and in compliance with federal requirements
3. To build the capacity of staff and parents/guardians/families to engage in meaningful, two-way partnerships to support the education and well-being of all children

B. ISSUE

Families are children's first teachers and, as students reach school age, families and school staff have the opportunity to become partners working toward the shared goal of successful students and healthy, resilient, and competent young adults.

¹ For the purposes of this policy, the terms "parent/guardian" and "family" are not always interchangeable and have been intentionally used in the following ways: "parent/guardian" is used where there is a reference to the legal authority to make educational decisions on behalf of a child; "family" is used where there is a reference to the many roles family members, in addition to the student's legal custodian, perform on behalf of children and their school communities.

C. POSITION

1. The Board expects all Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) employees to promote and demonstrate a commitment to high expectations for achievement for all students.
2. The Board believes a strength-based approach to family engagement is essential to student success. A strength-based approach means affirming –
 - a) all parents/guardians have dreams for their students and want the best for them;
 - b) all parents/guardians have the capacity to support their students' learning, with an awareness of resources and opportunities available for their students at school and in their communities;
 - c) the responsibility for making partnerships possible between school and home rests primarily with school staff, and especially school leaders who encourage parents/guardians and school staff to have confidence that all are committed to the student's best outcomes, and all can be equal partners in encouraging student success; and
 - d) significant relationships and social networks among families in a school community help create strong school-family connections.
3. The Board affirms the following six principles to guide family-school partnerships for student success, based on the National Parent/Teacher Association's *National Standards for Family-School Partnerships*:
 - a) *Welcome all families:*

As affirmed in Policy ACA, *Nondiscrimination, Equity, and Cultural Proficiency*, the Board promotes the engagement of all parents/guardians in their children's education and works to remove barriers that impede their active participation, without regard to actual or perceived personal characteristics.² MCPS and local schools will create welcoming, responsive, and inclusive environments where –

² Personal characteristics include race, ethnicity, color, ancestry, national origin, nationality, religion, immigration status, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family structure/parental status, marital status, age, ability (cognitive, social/emotional, and physical), poverty and socioeconomic status, language, or other legally or constitutionally protected attributes or affiliations.

- (1) families and students feel heard and respected and enjoy a sense of belonging and connectedness to the community;
- (2) family engagement activities are purposefully designed to meet families' needs for high-quality, relevant information that supports their students' academic, social, and emotional development; and
- (3) school communities are enriched by the diverse traditions, identities, and experiences of all MCPS families.

b) *Communicate effectively:*

To promote early and thorough awareness for families, MCPS and local school staff and families will engage in regular, meaningful two-way communication about student learning and development through multiple, strategically implemented mechanisms and tools.

- (1) Two-way communication tools and processes must encourage opportunities for parents/guardians to communicate with, and request information from, their local schools about their student's achievement and well-being at school.
- (2) As set forth in the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act*,³ the Board is consistently mindful of parents/guardians who may need interpretation or translation, meeting facilitation, or other enhanced communication to advocate for their students and
- (3) Through effective, inclusive, culturally responsive, and antiracist communication, all families will be provided with opportunities to learn the critical educational benchmarks, course sequences, service-learning requirements and opportunities, timelines, and applications processes required for their students to access rigorous instruction and educational opportunities (e.g., magnet, gifted and talented, language immersion, and dual enrollment programs; courses leading to college and career readiness, including industry-recognized career credentials and other professional certification; scholarships; and leadership-development opportunities).

³ Federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA; 2015) Title I, Title III, and Title IV programs, such as those for low-income and migrant students and emergent language learners, include specific requirements for building the capacity of parents/guardians/families and school staff to engage in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning.

- (4) Consistent with Board Policy KBA, *Policy on Public Information*, the Board promotes accessibility of information to the broadest community possible.

c) *Support student success:*

- (1) The Board is committed to building staff members' capacities for effective, inclusive, and culturally and linguistically competent family engagement, and building families' capacity to advocate effectively for their children
- (2) Engagement practices shall be critically examined to identify and develop alternatives to practices that may exclude identifiable groups from meaningful family engagement in student learning decisions, school-home communication, and school community life.
- (3) In critically examining engagement activities, Board members and staff will consider timing and participation options that account for the range and variety of parent/guardian work schedules.

d) *Speak up for every child:*

MCPS and local school staff will encourage efforts of families, students, and staff to recognize and eliminate bias in family engagement practices, and to advocate for fair treatment and equitable access to opportunities and supports for all students.

e) *Share power:*

- (1) Families and school staff are important and valued partners with unique information regarding decisions that affect children. School staff will consult and collaborate with families and students to create school rules, practices, and programs, including school improvement planning, using methods appropriate to the participation goals.
- (2) As set forth in Board Policy ABA, *Community Engagement*, schools will actively seek the participation of parents/guardians who are representative of the school community in school improvement planning and innovation processes as well as community engagement in Board decision-making processes.

f) *Collaborate with community:*

- (1) MCPS and local school staff encourage student involvement in student-led organizations, such as student government and interest/advocacy groups that benefit student academics, interests, and personal development. MCPS and local schools will engage with student leaders and members of such organizations in school-related decisions that are aligned with their interests, using methods appropriate to the participation goals.
- (2) MCPS and local school staff value the support of the many organizations that represent and build relationships among families of students and their essential contributions to student development, parent/guardian advocacy, and school community vitality. The Board seeks every effort to provide equitable experiences for students. MCPS and local schools will engage with the leaders and members of such organizations in school-related decisions and decisions related to their focus area(s), using methods appropriate to the participation goals.
- (3) MCPS and local school staff will collaborate with community organizations in order to connect students to service-learning and career-readiness opportunities as well as to connect families and staff to community services.

D. DESIRED OUTCOME

All MCPS staff will effectively collaborate with all families to build strong family-school partnerships toward the shared goal of nurturing the development of healthy, resilient, and competent young adults.

E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

1. The superintendent of schools will engage parents/guardians as equal partners in student learning and family-school partnerships through effective, inclusive, culturally appropriate, and antiracist practices, as follows:
 - a) Develop and implement regulations and procedures to support this policy, including but not limited to –
 - (1) a definition of documents that are vital to families' access to their students' education program, in alignment with federal and state law; and

- (2) the provision of language interpretation and translation services.
- b) Develop goals, indicators, and metrics for effective and inclusive family engagement; monitor the milestones and data points annually; and identify barriers to participation, with particular attention to parents/guardians who may need additional support to advocate for their students without enhanced communication, such as interpretation or translation or meeting facilitation.
- c) Designate staff responsible for providing coordination, technical assistance, professional development, and other support necessary to build the capacity of MCPS staff to plan and build effective family-school partnerships to improve student academic achievement and school performance.
- d) Where feasible, schools should consider making use of trusted relationships among families to communicate important information about school events, opportunities, and deadlines.
- e) Consult and collaborate, with parents/guardians and families, using methods appropriate to the participation goals, to develop –
 - (1) professional learning for staff, regarding the value and utility of contributions of families and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents/guardians;
 - (2) models for relevant and effective family outreach programs, including those for families who arrive at different times throughout the school year, or who may have little familiarity with MCPS;
 - (3) well-publicized structures for two-way communication with families who do not speak English and other assistance for parent/guardians to make informed choices about their students' academic programs and school activities; understand key academic milestones, options, and implications of those decisions; and access available resources.
- f) Develop templates and tools for school use that effectively communicate the following information to families in a form and, to the extent practicable, in a language they can understand:
 - (1) Student academic progress, attendance, and any other concerns about well-being at school.

- (2) This policy and school improvement plans.
- (3) State academic standards, state and local academic assessments, and tools for monitoring a child’s progress.
- (4) Student rights and responsibilities, student codes of conduct (including restorative justice processes), critical educational benchmarks, academic planning information and course sequences, timelines and applications processes required to access rigorous instruction and educational opportunities (e.g., magnet, gifted and talented, language immersion, and dual enrollment programs; courses leading to college and career readiness, including industry-recognized career credentials and other professional certification; scholarships; and leadership development opportunities).
- (5) Information related to school and parent/guardian/family programs, meetings, and other activities, such as parent/guardian councils and school events.

F. REVIEW AND REPORTING

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Board of Education policy review process.

Related Sources: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; 2015) Title I, Title III, and Title IV

Policy History: Adopted by Resolution No. 66990, November 13, 1990; reformatted September 1996; amended by Resolution 489-02, October 28, 2002, amended by Resolution 417-10, July 26, 2010; amended by Resolution 446-23, October 26, 2023.