

6Gx53-4.008 FAMILY INVOLVEMENT:

It is, therefore, the policy of Polk County Public Schools to bring together families, schools, and the community as active partners in the education of children.

The term "parent" refers to any adult--mother, father, older sibling, aunt, uncle, grandparent, guardian, mentor--who plays a significant role in the care of a student or students enrolled in Polk County Public Schools. Although family involvement is the specific focus of this policy, it is recognized that all those concerned with the education of students must work together cooperatively to meet their needs.

When the term "school" is used in this Board rule, it is used in the broadest possible sense. It refers not only to the customary kindergarten through grade 12 programs, but also to the early childhood, adult education, and community schools programs.

I. HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Communication serves as the foundation for all family involvement activities. It is the Board's intent to promote clear, effective, on going communication. To accomplish this, the Board endorses the following practices and programs.

- A. General Communication. The District's Community Relations Office will provide a plan of how it will support schools' communication efforts. This includes the use of television, radio, and electronic and print media to promote home-school communication.
- B. Cooperative Discourse. Communication between parents and the school shall be encouraged at all grade levels, including regular parent/teacher communication, and providing parents with meaningful scope of student work.
- C. Mutual Respect. Parents and students will be treated with respect and courtesy by school personnel. Parents will treat school personnel courteously and respectfully. Parents will instill this kind of behavior in their children.
- D. Linguistic Access. Reasonable efforts will be made to communicate with parents in their primary language or in the language in which they feel comfortable. The mode of transmission should also be adjusted, where necessary, to promote comprehension, acceptance, and trust.

- E. Access to Schools. Reasonable efforts will be made to make the school building a welcoming place, clearly accessible to parents. Parents are expected to recognize, however, that their right to access does not transcend the rights of students and teachers to an orderly instructional environment.
- F. Cultural Sensitivity. School personnel, students, and parents will be afforded opportunities to learn about different cultures, cultural practices, and cultural preferences so that understanding and communication can be promoted.
- G. Sensitivity to Exceptionalities. Reasonable efforts will be made to assist parents in understanding the needs and rights of their exceptional children. Reasonable efforts should be made to assist school personnel in understanding the needs and rights of exceptional children and their parents.
- H. Business Involvement. Businesses will be encouraged to provide flexible time or release time for employees to visit their children's school. The District will establish a program to designate businesses as "school friendly" when they meet established district criteria as annually developed by the appropriate district office. The District will promote the concept by commending businesses that reach this level of commitment
- I. Accommodation to Parent Schedules. School personnel should utilize flexible and creative methods to accommodate the schedules of parents. Every reasonable accommodation should also be made for School Board employees who are parents.

II. PARENTS AS SUPPORTERS

District personnel will support policies that empower parents to become active participants in, and advocates of, education. Board Rule encourages practices such as the following, which will engender parent support of schools' activities:

- A. Support Activities. School principals will provide opportunities for families to be involved in at least one activity that supports student learning each year. Families can support students in their schools by: Attending Parent Teacher Conferences, Media, Computer, Parent Nights participating as a School Advisory Council; volunteering as tutors, mentors, chaperones, classroom assistants.

- B. Space for Parents. While fostering a positive educational environment, school principals should provide a place for parents to meet, post, and review current bulletins, and exchange information.
- C. Parent Orientation. Principals will conduct orientation meetings that provide information about school procedures and programs, as well as opportunities to actively participate. Volunteer procedures and forms will be made available throughout the year to parents (on or before the school's annual open house.)
- D. Planning and Participation. Parents will be included in the planning and implementation of school events, whenever feasible.

III. PARENTS AS LEARNERS

- A. Parent Outreach Liaisons. Each school principal will identify one or more individuals who agree to act as a liaison to all parents in the school community. This person's responsibilities are to ascertain the needs of parents and to communicate this information to the school's principal and the school's advisory group(s). Additionally, this liaison should facilitate informing parents of school and district services, offerings, and programs in their primary language, if needed.
- B. Businesses, Agencies, Organizations, and Post-Secondary Institutions. The active cooperation of the community's businesses, agencies, organizations, and post-secondary institutions should be sought to partner with the district to provide on-site opportunities for parents to learn more about the school district, the educational needs of students, and about parenting in general. These entities may be asked to partner with the district to provide educational experiences at the school sites.
- C. Early Childhood Training Programs. Based on readiness research, special parenting programs and resources will be offered to parents of children from birth to age six.
- D. Provision of Services to Parents. In order to encourage parents to become learners, schools (with the assistance of businesses, agencies, organizations, and community members) should make every attempt to encourage participation by addressing issues such as: child care, resource availability, and transportation; differences in language and culture; and scheduling conflicts.
- E. Schools as Community Centers. Schools will identify and implement community-centered, parent-friendly programs and affiliations designed for parents. Learning opportunities for parents will target

appropriate student age levels. Information and services shall be appropriate for the developmental and cognitive stages of the students.

- F. Parenting Skills. The school curriculum should include opportunities for young adults to learn how to be effective parents. Programs to improve parenting skills should be provided for those who are already parents.

IV. PARENTS AS TEACHERS

The child's first and most important teacher is the parent. Home-school partnerships strengthen this role.

- A. Teaching at Home. The importance of parents as teachers shall be recognized and supported by the school. Schools should provide parents with the appropriate support and assistance needed in understanding and meeting the expectations of this role. Schools will familiarize parents with these expectations. Parents are expected to:
 - 1. Set guidelines and clear expectations of good behavior and academic performance;
 - 2. Ensure that their children have a quiet place and time to read, study, and complete homework;
 - 3. Discuss daily work assignments, progress reports, and report cards with their children;
 - 4. Ensure that their children attend school on time every day and promptly report any absences or tardiness;
 - 5. Communicate with the school through written and electronic messages, telephone, and/or conference meetings;
 - 6. Ensure that their children have the materials needed to complete class work and home learning;
 - 7. Take an active part in school activities, such as Back-to School Night, PTA meetings, workshops, parent/student activities, etc.;
 - 8. Keep their children clean, as well as healthy, by ensuring that they get enough sleep, appropriate nutrition, and medical care;

9. Bring to the attention of appropriate School personnel any problem or condition that negatively affects their children, or other children in the school community;
 10. Help their children develop a good self-image by providing care, discipline, support, interest, and concern.
 11. Provide the school with current and accurate home, work, and emergency contact information; and
 12. Foster in their children a positive attitude toward school and learning.
- B. Other Caring Adults. Members of the community should be encouraged to assist students by participating in programs that support tutors, mentors, and adults who act as role models in programs such as Junior Achievement, Great American Teach In, etc.
- C. Volunteers and Tutors. Principals are encouraged to identify staff that will agree to actively recruit, train, appropriately place, support, and monitor parents in instructional and extra-curricular programs.
- D. Resources for Parents. In order to assist parents, resources should be made available for check-out at the school site, such as: audio/visual, print, computer, and web-based programs; "how to" programs broadcast on educational television and radio; pamphlets and books developed especially to aid the parent-as-teacher; copies of course schedules and homework assignments; lists of grade level and course objectives; testing guidelines; and schedules.

V. PARENTS AS RESOURCES

Parents have much to contribute to the school. Recognizing their expertise and involving them in school activities will have mutually beneficial results.

- A. Utilizing Parents' Specific Knowledge. Principals should utilize the special knowledge, abilities, talents, and cultural experiences of parents to enhance school activities and programs.
- B. Employment of Parents. Parents can positively contribute to school programs by performing various jobs in and around the school. School administrators should consider parents as resources for employment opportunities.

- C. Resource Guide. A resource guide should be developed for school staff members, parents, and the community with a directory of contact information for programs and persons with expertise in the area of parental involvement. The resource guide will be linked to the Polk County website.

VI. PARENTS AS ADVISORS, ADVOCATES, AND PARTICIPANTS IN DECISION-MAKING

School staff has a responsibility to reach out to involve parents in the school's decision-making efforts. Parents will be provided the opportunity to function as school advisors and advocates, and to participate equitably with administrators, teachers, and other school personnel in the decision-making process. Parents should be provided with opportunities for timely and substantive participation in the advisory, advocacy, and decision-making processes.

- A. Advisors. Parents will be provided understandable, accessible, and well-publicized opportunities to serve as advisors at the school, region, and District level. In this role, parents will be encouraged to participate in and influence decisions, raise issues or concerns, appeal decisions, and resolve problems.
- B. Advocates. Parents will be encouraged to become advocates for children on issues that affect children. Parents are provided information about student and parent responsibilities and rights, as well as other pertinent issues, in a timely manner in order to advocate effectively.
- C. Shared Decision Making. Parents must be included as active members of School Advisory Councils and in other important decision-making bodies, where required by state and federal statutes.
- D. Parent Involvement Training. District offices will develop and provide training programs to give parents the information, tools, and resources on how to be successful advisors, advocates, and partners in the decision-making process. The District will also facilitate parent-to-parent training programs.

VII. TRAINING OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Training procedures should include the importance of parental involvement. Training programs will be identified by District offices, which will assist administrators, teachers, and other school personnel in acquiring techniques that promote effective communication with parents and the cultivation of parental involvement.

VIII. MEASUREMENT OF PROGRESS

Evaluation. Parental involvement benchmarks will be identified and set by the District Office Family Involvement Committee and assessed through quantitative and qualitative measures and procedures designed to measure parental involvement to support student-learning programs. Annual recommendations will be gathered and published through public input. In addition, the Family Involvement Advisory Committee will assess the progress in implementing this policy using outcome based data, utilizing the School Climate Survey and other measurement means.

Statutory Authority: Florida Statutes 1001.32, 1001.41, 1001.42, and 1001.43

Laws Implemented: Florida Statutes 1001.51, 1002.20, 1003.33, 1008.25, 1012.72, 1012.98

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