

The Open Classroom

134 D Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84103
Office Phone: 801-578-8144/Fax: 801-578-8218

Open Classroom Parent and Family Engagement Policy

Partnering with students and their families is essential. We value and honor the role of parents and other family members in their children's educational experience. The following engagement policy, developed jointly with parents, outlines our efforts to support this partnership between school and home. This policy will be updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school.

How will information about parent programs, meetings, and activities be communicated?

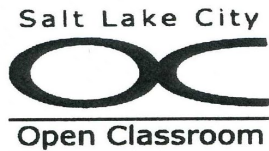
Open Classroom will provide meaningful communication with the parents about student progress via email, phone, written notes, Power School, or media apps and in-person at our PTK (Parent Teacher Kid) conferences. Open Classroom will also communicate through Steering Committee Meetings and Parent Information Nights. This information and other parent notifications, as well as this written policy, will be written in a format which parents can understand and made available in multiple languages.

What are parents' rights and opportunities to be involved?

Parents have rights to provide input on school engagement practices and to be active participants and decision-makers in not only their own students' educational experience, but in the development of school-wide initiatives through participating in school committees, serving on our school's Community Council, volunteering/co-oping at the school, receiving information about school programs, and having questions answered in a timely manner.

How will Open Classroom carry out our plans to enhance and improve parent involvement at the school?

On a yearly basis, parents will not only give input on this policy, but also in developing a School Compact that outlines the roles of teachers, students, and parents in academic success. Parents will also be involved in writing and reviewing the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the school's LAND Trust plans in the School Community Council with support from our Steering Committee. The practices outlined in this document, which is posted on our school website, are supported by building the capacity of each group. For parents, we provide parent evenings which build their capacity to support their children academically. For teachers, we provide professional development to assist them in providing effective instruction and parent outreach. And for students, we provide quality instruction, as well as opportunities for needed interventions. These efforts align not only with best practice, but with the specific academic improvement needs of our school.



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How will Open Classroom address the targeted needs of students and their families?

Open Classroom will provide timely feedback to students and parents on students' academic and behavior performance. Through school behavior plans and systems of support, each student will be provided motivation to learn and try their best. Students will receive 45 minutes of targeted Social Emotional Learning each week. Schoolwide assessment data is shared with parents on our website, in newsletters, at Steering Committee meetings, and at School Community Council meetings. In addition, Open Classroom sets high expectations for students. Students work with parents and their teachers to set individual learning goals during PTK conferences. Individual progress reports will be shared with parents at the end of each quarter. Teachers recognize the needs of students and provide reasonable differentiation, scaffolds, and student extensions to meet individual student needs. Open Classroom consistently supports parents by updating PowerSchool regularly, by communicating students' needs and the supports being provided, and by offering strategies which parents can utilize to support continued learning at home.

How will parents with limited English proficiency, parents of migratory children, and parents with disabilities, or other special needs have access to opportunities to participate?

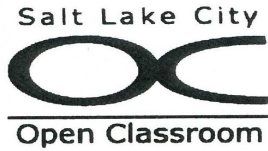
Parents will have reasonable access to staff and will have information presented in ways that are timely and in an understandable format. Written communication published on school websites is ADA accessible and can be translated into many languages. Translation for in-person school meetings is available through either in-person or phone translation services. Parents with all language backgrounds and abilities can fully participate in school meetings, school events, in providing input, and in other parent engagement initiatives outlined above.

What Are the Common Barriers to Family Engagement?

- Lack of awareness/communication regarding opportunities.
- Connection/relationship with the school is lacking.
- Time limitations.
- Work conflicts.
- Childcare needs.

ANNUAL EVALUATION

Open Classroom will use the evaluation findings about its parent and family engagement policy to design evidence-based strategies for a more effective parental engagement school with limited education or engagement policies.



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Each spring, school-level Family Engagement Coordinators and Administration will meet with district personnel to review the previous year’s Parent and Staff Needs Assessments and discuss the goals for the new year’s surveys. The committee will draft new surveys and publish them for review before they are finalized. Upon approval, district Title 1 staff will support schools in preparing the surveys for administration to teachers and parents. Two of the purposes of the surveys are to:

- a. Identify the needs of parents
- b. Identify areas in which teachers require support for working with parents

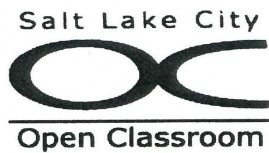
The surveys will be available online and on paper

- Throughout the year, staff will provide parents with formal and informal opportunities to discuss their needs and evaluate programs.
- Staff will provide information to parents in Spanish as well as English as needed.
- Open Classroom will promote parental engagement by offering parent meetings at various times to accommodate parent schedules.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Time	Solution
It’s hard for families to find enough time to attend meetings or join decision-making committees. School functions are often rigidly scheduled at inconvenient times. Often, families have many demands on their time.	Encourage flexibility in meeting and events. Go to the families. Some workshops can be offered in the morning and at night. Some meetings may need to occur at a more convenient location. Be efficient in meetings.
Not Valued	Solution
Some families feel they have nothing to contribute and feel intimidated by school staff. These parents may have had unpleasant experiences when they were in school, they may have limited education, or they may have been treated badly by school personnel.	Survey families about their interests and abilities. Find opportunities for hesitant families to use their hobbies, talents, and experiences for the benefit of the school. They may volunteer to help with school activities.
Childcare	Solution
Childcare often is not offered at school meetings and functions. Thus, families may be discouraged from bringing their children to events or unable to afford childcare.	Hire older students, or paraprofessionals to care for children at after-school or evening meetings. Provide safe and quality childcare.

<p>Language Differences Families for whom English is a second language may not understand newsletters and fliers, or district documents or speakers at meetings.</p>	<p>Solution Translate printed materials into native language. English on one side and the other language on the other. Plan for translation when a parent drops in at the school. Provide telephone messages, websites, and recordings in the languages of the families of the school. Provide an interpreter at workshops and meetings.</p>
<p>Jargon Many families feel put down and confused when school staff uses jargon or expressions they don't understand.</p>	<p>Solution Avoid education jargon in your meetings and publication. For instances, don't refer to a project by its initials. Identify people, projects, and events clearly. Assume that your members are new to the school community and need this basic information.</p>
<p>Transportation Lack of transportation or access to parking at the school during school hours keeps families from various activities at the school.</p>	<p>Solution If families live far from school, provide bus passes to encourage them to attend meetings. Hold meetings in the families' community.</p>
<p>Exclusion Families may feel they are unwelcomed in the school. Many families have met a principal or teacher who sends the message, "Do not interfere" or "Stay away."</p>	<p>Solution Make sure that families are welcome to drop in at school during the day. Provide welcome to our school buttons for staff. Post welcome signs in all languages spoken at the school. Provide direction signs for entering the school and locating the office.</p>
<p>Resources Many families without adequate resources are simply overwhelmed. They barely have the energy to meet their personal needs, much less be involved at the school.</p>	<p>Solution Provide information to help families secure the services they need, such as public assistance or job training. Develop a directory of services such as social service agencies, medical clinics, food pantries, substance abuse counseling, legal services, literacy courses, and tutoring in English as a second language (ESL). After families' personal needs are met, you can begin to help them address the educational needs of their children.</p>



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<p style="text-align: center;">Literacy</p> <p>Families who may not read well cannot understand the lengthy newsletters, brochures, notices, or other written information sent home. Their literacy level may also discourage them from attending meetings or they may not understand that the correspondence in an invitation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Solution</p> <p>Call family members on the telephone or talk to them in person. Encourage and work with the school to provide messages on video. Don't assume that everyone can read.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Diversity</p> <p>People talk about common courtesy, but courtesy is not common; it is culturally determined. American mannerisms, practices and habits can embarrass or offend families from diverse cultures or ethnic groups. Likewise, the beliefs and values of families from other cultures may disturb school staff. School meetings may conflict with religious observances or cultural practices. Some families have different views of schools and their own role in the children's education.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Solution</p> <p>Work to increase everyone's awareness of all cultures represented in your school. Learn about and be sensitive to other cultures' values, attitudes, manners, and views of the school community. Know and respect the religious holidays and observances of all groups in your school. Invite parents to discuss their cultural or ethnic practices</p>