

## Parental Engagement, Responsibilities, and Rights

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### **A. Introduction**

The School and parents are collaborators in each student’s educational experience. The quality of a student’s experience depends heavily on both the School and the parents fulfilling their roles in this collaborative relationship. American courts have often noted that a school serves *in loco parentis* – in the place of the parent – while the parent’s child attends school.

As of August 2023, according to Session Law 2023-106 (Senate Bill 49), North Carolina public schools are required to implement various parent-related measures. This policy’s purpose is to implement that law and, in general, to help foster a more informed, engaged, and collaborative parent community via the provisions and procedures set forth herein.

Throughout this policy, the term “parent” includes a person with legal custody of a child, including a natural parent, adoptive parent, or legal guardian.

### **B. School Policies and Procedures: General Requirements**

In general, state law requires that the School Board, in consultation with parents, teachers, administrators, and community partners, develop and adopt policies to promote parental involvement and empowerment. Such policies shall provide for parental choices and establish parental responsibilities. Generally, the policies should:

1. Link parents to community services;
2. Involve parents in developing, implementing, and evaluating family involvement programs;
3. Enable parents to participate in volunteer programs, and other school activities.

Also required are the following:

1. Procedures for a parent to notify the Principal regarding concerns about a School procedure or practice and a process for resolution within seven days of the parent’s notification.
2. Provide for parental participation in their child's education to improve parent and teacher cooperation in areas such as homework, school attendance, and discipline that aligns with the parent guide for student achievement.
3. Require the Principal to effectively communicate to parents how textbooks are used to implement the school's curricular objectives.
4. Establish a procedure for parents to learn about their child's course of study and the source of any supplementary instructional materials, including a process for parents to inspect, review, and object to textbooks and supplemental instructional materials that will be used in their child's classroom (consistent with the requirements of [G.S. 115C-98](#)). The policy/procedure shall be available for in-person review by parents at the School site and publicly available on the School's website.
5. Establish a process for parents to review materials for and to consent or withhold consent for participation in reproductive health and safety education programs consistent with the requirements of G.S. [115C-81.30](#).
6. Establish a process for parents to learn about the nature and purpose of clubs and activities offered at their child's school, including curricular and extracurricular activities.

### **C. Parent Responsibilities**

Effective education requires parental responsibility and engagement. Parents have responsibilities to their children and the School for a sound partnership in education. The School Board believes the following are some of the more important characteristics and requirements for responsible parental involvement:

1. Read with your children
2. Ensure completion of homework
3. Discuss school events and activities
4. Attend school functions, including parent-teacher conferences
5. Participate in school events and activities
6. Actively participate in understanding and supporting your child's graduation requirements
7. Encourage positive behavior to foster student academic success and overall well-being

#### **D. Parent Rights in General**

G.S. 114A-10 affords parents the right to:

1. Direct the education and care of their child.
2. Direct the upbringing and moral or religious training of their child.
3. Enroll their child in a public or nonpublic school and in any school choice options available to the parent for which the child is otherwise eligible by law to comply with the state's compulsory education laws.
4. Access and review all education records relating to their child.
5. Make healthcare decisions for their child except as otherwise provided by law.
6. Access and review all medical records of their child except as otherwise provided by law.
7. Prohibit the creation, sharing, or storage of a biometric scan of their child without the parent's written consent.
8. Prohibit the creation, sharing, or storage of their child's blood or DNA without parental consent.
9. Prohibit the creation by the State of a video or voice recording of their child without parental consent.
10. Be promptly notified if an employee of the State suspects a criminal offense has been committed against a parent's child.

A parent is entitled to see, inspect, and request documents or services as follows:

1. To request an evaluation of their child for identification as a child with a disability.
2. To inspect and purchase textbooks and other supplementary instructional materials.
3. Access the School's promotion or retention policies, including high school graduation requirements.

To receive regular student report cards that depict and grade the student's academic performance, conduct, and attendance.

### **E. Parent Advanced Consent Requirements**

The following actions by the School shall require advanced written consent by a parent:

1. The creation, sharing, or storage of a biometric scan of their child or the child's blood or DNA;
2. A video or voice recording by the School of their child, except if the recording will be used solely for any of the following purposes:
  - a. A safety demonstration, including one related to security and discipline on educational property.
  - b. An academic or extracurricular activity.
  - c. Classroom instruction.
  - d. Photo identification cards.
  - e. Security or surveillance of buildings, grounds, or school transportation.
3. For a minor child to participate in reproductive health and safety education programs, consistent with the requirements of [G.S. 115C-81.30](#)
4. For a minor child to participate in any survey, analysis, or evaluation involving Protected Information of the child or child's family. Protected Information includes any of the following:
  - a. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parents.
  - b. Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family.
  - c. Sex behavior or attitudes.
  - d. Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior.
  - e. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships.
  - f. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers.
  - g. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parents.
  - h. Income other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such a program.

At least ten days before the survey's administration, the School shall make available to parents and adult students, electronically and in person, (1) the process for providing consent to participate and (2) the full text of the protected information survey.

Students shall be permitted to participate in a protected information survey with the parent's or adult student's prior written or electronic consent.

Nothing in these provisions shall impede the work of the school counselor, school nurse, or other school personnel in assuring the safety of a student pursuant to federal and state laws and regulations.

## F. Parent Guides

Annually, at the beginning of the school year, the School will provide a written Parent Guide to all parents regarding their child's achievement, educational progress, and how parents can help their child succeed. The Guide will be understandable to students and parents and discussed at the beginning of each school year in meetings with students, parents, and teachers.

The Parent Guide will conform to any current requirements established by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction annually by May 1 and minimally address the following:

1. Requirements for a parent's child to be promoted to the next grade;
2. The School's course of study, textbooks, and other supplementary instructional materials and policies for inspecting and reviewing those materials;
3. Progress of the parent's child toward achieving State and unit expectations for academic proficiency, including policies for student assessment and their child's assessment results, report cards, and progress reports;
4. Qualifications of their child's teachers, including licensure status;
5. School entry requirements, including required immunizations and the recommended immunization schedule;
6. Services available for parents and their children (e.g., family literacy services, mentoring, tutoring, college planning);
7. Opportunities for parental participation (e.g., parenting classes, adult education, school advisory councils, and school volunteer programs);
8. Opportunities for parents to learn about rigorous academic programs that may be available for their child (e.g., honors programs, Career and College Promise and other dual enrollment opportunities, advanced placement, Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) courses, International Baccalaureate, North Carolina Virtual High School courses, and accelerated access to postsecondary education);
9. Public and non-public school options available to parents in the community
10. Rights of students who have been identified as students with disabilities;
11. Contact info for school and unit offices;
12. Each health care service offered at the School and the means for the parent to consent to any specific service.
13. Resources for information on the importance of student health and other available resources for parents, including available immunizations and vaccinations, recommended immunization schedule (according to the United States Centers for Disease Control), prevention recommendations; and meningococcal meningitis and influenza information;
14. Parental actions that can
  - a. Strengthen the child's academic progress, especially in the area of reading.
  - b. Strengthen the child's citizenship, especially social skills and respect for others.

- c. Strengthen the child's realization of high expectations and set lifelong learning goals.
  - d. Foster effective communication between the school and the home.
15. The Special Procedures for Resolving a Parent Concern (outlined in this policy)

## **G. School Notifications to Parents**

The School, by law, must notify parents about the matters set forth below.

### **1. Name or Pronoun Changes**

The School will notify a parent before any changes in the name or pronoun used for a parent's child in school records or by school personnel, as required by G.S. 115C-76.45.

### **2. Suspicion of Criminal Offense**

The School will notify a parent if a School employee suspects that a criminal offense has been committed against the parent's child unless the incident has first been reported to law enforcement or the county child welfare agency, and parent notification would impede an investigation.

### **3. Limitations on parental notification**

The School shall not disclose information, health or education records created, maintained, or used by the School pursuant to G.S. 114A-10(6)(a) or when a reasonably prudent person would believe that disclosure would result in the child becoming an abused or neglected juvenile as defined in G.S. 7B-101.

## **H. Special Procedures for Parent Information Requests, Curricula and Textbook Reviews, and Student Health Procedure Concerns**

According to state law, the following requests and concerns require specific school measures and afford particular appeal rights. These appeal rights are distinct from the School's General Grievance Procedures, which apply to all other matters.

### **1. Parent Information Requests**

**Initial Request to the Principal's Designee for Information.** A parent may request via email or regular mail, copying the Principal, from the Principal's designee any information the parent has the right to access as contained in this Parental Rights policy or by law. The Principal's designee, within ten business days, shall either (i) provide the requested information

or (ii) provide an extension notice to the parent that, due to the volume or complexity of the request, the information will be provided no later than 20 business days from the date of the parental request.

**Parent Information Request Appeals.** If the Principal's designee denies or fails to respond to the request for information within ten business days, or 20 business days following an extension notice, the parent may make a similar request to the Principal. This request shall specify the time frame of the denial or failure to provide information by the Principal.

If the Principal denies or does not respond to the request for information within ten business days, the parent may appeal the denial or lack of response to the School Board. Such appeal must occur within twenty business days of the request to the Principal as provided in subsection (b) of this section. The governing body shall place the parent's appeal on the agenda for the next meeting of the body occurring more than three business days after submission of the appeal.

A decision by the Board is final and is not subject to judicial review.

## **2. Curricular and Instructional Materials: Parental Review and Resolution Process**

**Availability of School Instructional Materials.** The School shall strive to use the best available instructional curricula, textbooks and supplementary materials to fulfill the School's mission. All decisions about what curricula and materials to use and have available to students will be based on the educational suitability for the age and maturity of students at each grade level. It is a normal and desirable part of the teaching practice that teachers discover and implement supplementary instructional material after the start of school, during the course of the school year. These supplementary instructional materials will be referenced on the teacher's website or via email.

**Charter School Exemption.** A charter school is exempt from statutes and rules applicable to a local board of education or local school administrative unit. As such, the School determines its own curriculum and textbooks and is not bound by the laws governing local boards of education and local school administrative units. The School has the sole authority to select and procure curriculum, textbooks, supplementary instructional materials, and library materials. Further, the School has the sole authority to determine if the materials are related to and within the curriculum's limits and when the materials may be presented to students during the school day. In general, supplementary books and other instructional materials shall neither displace nor be used to the exclusion of basic textbooks where the School has selected textbooks.

**Requests for Review.** A parent shall have a right to review the curricula, textbooks, and supplementary materials for any grade level at the annual beginning of the year Open House event. Supplemental instructional material will be made available on the class website or via email. Any parent request for such items shall, minimally, be addressed within the general

procedural framework contained in this policy in the section titled “Parent Information Requests.”

**Age-Appropriate Instruction for Grades Kindergarten Through Fourth Grade.**

Instruction on gender identity, sexual activity, or sexuality shall not be included in the curriculum provided in grades kindergarten through fourth grade, regardless of whether the information is provided by school personnel or third parties.

For the purposes of this section, the curriculum includes the standard course of study and support materials, locally developed curriculum, supplemental instruction, textbooks, and other supplementary materials but does not include responses to student-initiated questions. Further, students may discuss gender identity, sexual activity, and sexuality with the school counselor and/or social worker, or any adult they feel comfortable with. This provision shall be implemented consistent with Title IX, and where a conflict arises between the two laws, federal law will control. Nothing in this provision prevents school staff and teachers from appropriate classroom displays not inconsistent with any school policy on such displays.

**Addressing Parental Concerns.** If a parent has a concern regarding School curricula, textbooks, supplementary and library materials, the parent may use the [School’s General Grievance Policy](#) found on the Woods Charter School website, under the Board of Education tab. Note that decisions made by the Board are final and unappealable. The Board always has sole authority and discretion to determine whether a challenge has merit and whether challenged material should be retained or removed.

**3. Parent Concerns Regarding School Procedure or Practice Related to Student Physical and Mental Health.**

A parent has the right to notify the Principal of a matter addressed in G.S. 115C-76.45 through G.S. 115C-76.60. The parent concern shall be stated in writing and in a form as the Principal may require. Minimally, the concern must specifically address the following:

1. How the concern directly involves a matter of student physical or mental health (collectively, a “Health Concern”) addressed in G.S. 115C-76.45 through G.S. 115-76.60. The parent must identify the specific statutory provision(s) in question.
2. All essential information, documentation, or other evidence supporting the concern.
3. A proposed resolution.

**Principal Response.** The Principal shall determine whether the concern involves a matter addressed in the Health Notice Statutes. If it is, the Principal and parent shall make every reasonable effort to resolve the concern within seven days from the date the parent files the written concern. If the matter is not resolved within seven days, the Principal shall notify the parent of the status of the matter (“Status Notice”). If the matter is addressed in the Health Concern Statutes, the Principal shall identify further steps for resolving the concern within 30 days from when the concern was filed. If the matter is not addressed in the Health Notice Statutes, the Notice shall so state. The Principal may choose to use applicable procedures from



the School's [General Grievance Policy](#) or propose an alternative process for resolution within 30 days.

**Final Notice.** Upon resolution or at the end of the 30 days, if the matter is not resolved, the Principal shall provide written notice of the outcome ("Final Notice") of the matter in reasonable detail regarding the resolution or lack thereof and the reasons.

All written notices may be by email, regular mail, or any other reasonable written form so that the parent may reasonably understand their content.

**Subsequent Parent Appeal Rights.** G.S. 115C-76.60 affords a parent whose concern is not resolved within 30 days the right to (a) request a Parent Concern Hearing with the State Board of Education or (b) file a suit for declaratory judgment under G.S. 1, Article 26.

#### 4. Regular Grievance Procedures

Any other matter not requiring a Special Procedure described in this subsection shall be subject to resolution and appeal rights in the [School's General Grievance Policy](#).

1. **Parental Notice/Discussions.** School personnel may sometimes become aware of a matter significantly affecting or potentially affecting a student's mental, emotional, or physical well-being that a parent should be aware of, consistent with the parental rights set forth in this policy. In such instances, the school personnel shall do one or both of the following:
  - a. encourage the student to discuss such issues with their parents or
  - b. facilitate discussion of the issue with the student's parents
2. **Dissuading Parental Notification.** Any School employee who does or attempts to encourage or coerce a child to withhold information from their parent may be subject to employee disciplinary action.

#### J. Annual School Reporting

By September 15 of each year, the School will report to NC DPI the following information:

1. The School's current Parent Engagement, Rights, and Responsibilities policy and procedures, including delineation of any modification from the prior year's reported policy;
2. The number of appeals to the School Board related to parental requests for information as required by G.S. 115C-76.40, and the percentage of appeals decided in favor of the parent and in favor of the administration in the prior school year;
3. The number of statements to parents (of reasons for not providing the requested information (as required by G.S. 115C-76.60(a));
4. The number of parental concern hearings;

5. The number of actions brought against the School and declaratory judgments entered against it.

Adopted: December 14, 2023

Modified: \_\_\_\_\_