

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors to encourage and support family engagement in education at home and in our schools and communities. The board recognizes the diversity of family structures, circumstances, and cultural backgrounds and respects families as important decision makers for their children's education. The board is committed to the creation and implementation of culturally inclusive and effective school-family partnerships throughout the school district and in each school, and believes these partnerships to be critical to the success of every student. The district's family engagement efforts will be comprehensive and coordinated.

The board recognizes that family engagement in education has a positive effect on student achievement and is an important strategy to assure that all students realize their full potential. The intent of this policy is to create and maintain a district-wide climate conducive to the meaningful engagement of families, and to develop and sustain partnerships that support student learning and positive child and youth development in all schools.

The board is committed to professional development opportunities for staff and leadership to enhance understanding of effective family engagement strategies. The board also recognizes the importance of administrative leadership in setting expectations and creating a climate that takes into consideration the backgrounds, culture and circumstances of families when developing school-family partnerships. The district will provide support and guidance to teachers and administrators as they plan and implement effective family engagement efforts.

The Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors supports the development, systemic implementation and regular evaluation of family engagement efforts that include parents and family members at all grade levels in a variety of roles that support student achievement.

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PROCEDURES:

Definitions:

The term “family” is used to denote parents, extended family, guardians, or other persons with whom the student lives with. “Parent” or “family” may also include community members, community organizations or other concerned adults involved in the student’s life, pursuant to state and federal laws surrounding confidentiality.

“Family Engagement” refers to family-school partnerships. It is the collaborative interaction between educators and families in activities that promote parental and guardian agency, student learning and positive child and youth development at home, in school, and in the community. These activities include regular, two-way and meaningful communication between parents and school personnel, initiated by either; outreach to families; parent education; volunteering; school decision making; and advocacy. Our family engagement efforts will rely on family expertise and knowledge in developing family/school partnerships.

Implementation:

The superintendent will identify a district administrator to supervise the implementation of this policy and procedure, and each school in the district will develop a family engagement plan aligned with their academic goals and/or school improvement plan and, if applicable, Title I family involvement plan. Each plan will be tailored to the realities of school families, be culturally and historically relevant to the school population and delineate strategies to increase family participation and rebalance power in decision making for their student’s education. Diverse strategies should be utilized to include families with differential needs, such as those who may be economically disadvantaged, have disabilities, have limited English proficiency and/or limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background.

The district’s family engagement efforts will have six overarching goals. They will include, but not be limited to, the following research-based National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement in schools:

- A. Communicating: Is the primary means to close opportunity gaps and help students to pursue their passion and interests including college and career readiness. This includes effective two-way communication between all parents and schools regarding district policies and

procedures, local school operating procedures, and an individual child's progress.

- B. Parenting: Information and programs for parents on how to establish a home environment to support learning, strengthen families, and practice supportive language;
- C. Student Learning: Information and programs for parents about how they can assist their own children to learn, develop a growth mindset and meet their student's short-term and long-term educational goals;
- D. Volunteering: Activities to encourage a variety of parental volunteer opportunities in all schools both in the classroom and in other areas of the school including attendance at local school programs and events;
- E. School Decision-Making and Advocacy: Diversity of cultural backgrounds involved in promoting parental involvement in educational advocacy, including school district task forces and site based advisory committees; and
- F. Collaborating with Community: Identification and utilization of community resources to strengthen school and family partnerships and student learning.

To achieve these goals, the superintendent, district and school staff will comply with the roles and responsibilities that are outlined below.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Superintendent will:

- A. Provide professional development opportunities for teachers and staff to enhance their understanding of effective family engagement strategies;
- B. Perform regular evaluations of family engagement efforts at each school and in the district. This effort could include a survey of district families.
- C. Provide activities that will educate families regarding the intellectual and developmental needs of their children. These activities may rely on cooperation between the districts and other agencies or school/community groups.
- D. Implement strategies to involve families in the educational process, including information about opportunities for volunteering and encouraging participation in various school and district activities;
- E. Provide access to educational resources for parents and families to support the education of their children.
- F. Keep all families informed of the objectives of district educational programs as well as of their child's participation and progress with these programs through interactive two-way communication in a language that families can understand; and
- G. Enable families to participate in district level decision making opportunities. For example, family members may be invited to provide input into district policies or participate on district level committees.

The school and district administrators will:

- A. Allocate staff, time and resources to ensure effective implementation of this policy and procedures;
- B. Work with staff and families to identify resources needed to implement planned family engagement activities and programs;
- C. Provide time for teachers to share and replicate successful classroom strategies that promote and increase school-family partnerships;
- D. Provide training for school staff to increase their skills in working effectively with all families and to enable them to provide opportunities to link family engagement to student learning;
- E. Conduct both formal, such as Title I parent meetings, and informal, such as coffee chats and breakfast with the principal meetings, to ensure ongoing two way communication with families;
- F. Provide a system where teachers, students, and families can resolve problems that arise in ways that promote the best relationships possible, allowing them to solve problems first before resorting to the inclusion of principals and other administrators;
- G. Provide assistance for families to understand topics such as the state academic content standards, pre-college, and state and local academic assessments, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children.
- H. Work with staff and families to brainstorm possible activities and actions that are consistent with the family engagement policy and, when appropriate incorporate these into schools' annual goals and/or the school improvement plan;
- I. Recognize staff, families and community members who promote school-wide family partnerships; and
- J. Monitor and evaluate with district assistance the effectiveness of family partnership efforts in the district.

School staff will:

- A. Allocate staff, time and resources to implement this policy at the school level;
- B. Help families feel welcome by demonstrating excellent customer service and basic courtesy;
- C. Have an awareness of their positional power which may serve as a barrier to full two-way engagement.
- D. Treat all families and community members with dignity; be sensitive to cultural differences and life circumstances among families;
- E. Be as flexible as possible when scheduling appointments and school events with families;
- F. Communicate early and positively with families and continue these positive contacts throughout the year.

- G. Consider an annual student led conference and/or an annual parents meeting;
- H. Invite parents and family members to observe and assist in classrooms;
- I. Offer families opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children;
- J. Share class/school discipline and homework policies with families and follow through in a timely manner if problems arise; and
- K. Involve diverse families in decision-making committees and other site based councils.

Evaluation:

The content and effectiveness of this policy and procedure, and the individual school plans will be evaluated by the superintendent or designee annually with regard to the quality and effectiveness of the strategies presented in the plan. The findings of the evaluation will be used to design strategies for more effective family involvement, and if necessary to revise this policy and procedure.