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Lincoln Public Schools
Classroom Observation Policy

Purpose

The purpose of the classroom observation policy is to promote parent involvement in the educational process of children while protecting students' rights to confidentiality and privacy, and ensuring minimal disruptions to student learning. To that end, the Lincoln Public School District has established this policy regarding parents' observations of their child or child's program, conducted by themselves, their consultant, or their evaluator.

Guiding Principles

The Lincoln Public School District (the "District") recognizes safety and security of the students and staff, as well as minimal disruptions to the educational process, as a priority. Classroom observations may occur provided the District's policy and regulations are followed. The Superintendent or his/her designee will oversee the implementation of the requirements set forth in this policy regarding a parent's request to observe their child in a classroom setting. Parents are welcome to observe their child in the educational setting in the District. Parents of children in the school district, including educational consultants hired by the parent who may observe a student or students (hereinafter referred to as "Observer") in the classroom, must follow the appropriate expectations and requirements that have been adopted by the school district. Observers may request to observe a classroom and will be required to sign a disclaimer (See Attachment A) that holds the observer accountable for the confidentiality and privacy rights of all students in the classroom. The District/Principal will determine whether approval for a classroom observation will be granted.

Definitions

Educational Consultants – Individuals who are contracted by the parent to provide an educational service or evaluation.

Observers—Parents of students in the school district or educational consultants or evaluators hired by the parent, who may conduct an observation.

Observation—An observation is defined as spending time in the classroom for the purpose of observing and collecting data regarding a child in the educational setting

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – Federal Law which governs the provision of special education services and the rights of parents of a child with a disability. This law protects the privacy and confidentiality rights of students with special needs.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - Federal law that protects the rights and confidentiality of students who qualify for services under Section 504-medical and educational information and records.

RI Regulations Governing the Education of Children with Disabilities - Regulations issued by the Rhode Island Department of Education that protect the privacy and confidentiality of all information written, verbal, and observational regarding a student with special needs.

R.I. Gen. Laws Title 16 -The Rhode Island General Laws governing education, including but not limited to those referencing or protecting student records and confidentiality.

Disclaimer – A signed form which holds an observer accountable for the confidentiality and privacy rights of all students being observed in a classroom.

Parent – Any individual who has legal custody over a minor student within the District.

Requirements

The following requirements have been set forth and adopted by the District to ensure confidentiality and privacy rights of students as guaranteed by the IDEA, Section 504, and Rhode Island Statutes and Regulations, and ensures the safety and security of all students and staff, with minimal disruption to the instructional process. The Superintendent and/or the Principal shall have the sole authority to approve the entry of an observer to observe a student and/or classroom subject to the following requirements.

1. Observers must make a formal written request to the Principal and/or District to observe a classroom and/or student. The written request shall include the child's name, classroom, grade, teacher, duration and purpose of the observation.
2. Principal/District may limit the number of classroom observations when, in their judgment, the frequency of observations is disruptive to the learning environment.
3. If an observation is deemed disruptive for any reason, the observer(s) will be required to immediately leave the classroom and/or school building.
4. Observers shall refrain from the use of photography, and/or video or voice recording during an observation, in accordance with the privacy laws and regulations that serve to protect students and their families.

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5. Observers granted permission by the Principal and/or District shall communicate with the Principal/District within one week to mutually decide the date and time for the observation. Observations are 30 minutes in length.
6. While observing a student in the classroom, the observer is not permitted to enter into a discussion with the teacher(s), other professional staff, the child, or other students in the classroom. The observer is not permitted to ask questions or make comments during the observation period except at the request of, or with approval of, the classroom teacher.
7. Observers who want to conduct in-depth discussions with teachers, other professional staff, or administrators after the observation of a child must make an advance appointment for a mutually convenient time. Such appointments will be made through the Principal's/District office.
8. An administrator and/or designee will be present with the observer in the classroom during the observation of the child.
9. All observers will also, for each observation, be required to sign a disclaimer form to ensure the protection of confidentiality and privacy rights of all students in the classroom.
10. Any report generated as a result of the observation, to the extent it is to be utilized for educational purposes, shall be provided to the District.

Denial of access

When an observer fails to adhere to these expectations (or fails to adhere to the building rules and any applicable policies), the Lincoln School Department superintendent reserves the right to limit or deny that observer's access to a particular school and/or classroom.

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TOWN OF LINCOLN SCHOOL COMMITTEE, Lincoln, Rhode Island