



SUMTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

1345 Wilson Hall Road • PO Drawer 2039 • Sumter, South Carolina 29151-2039 • (T) 803.469.6900 • (F) 803.469.3769

Sumter School District Family Engagement Policy

Sumter School District believes that families and schools are partners when it comes to the education of our children. Studies show that when families are more involved, students are more successful inside and outside the classroom and have:

- a. higher test scores, grades and graduation rates;
- b. better school attendance and attitudes toward schoolwork;
- c. increased motivation and self-esteem;
- d. lower rates of school suspension;
- e. decreased use of drugs and alcohol.

Sumter School District's 25-26 Title I Family Engagement Policy has been developed jointly with, and distributed to, the families of participating students. Families identified the following as goals of the family engagement policy:

- a. Encourage the child's family (mother, father, grandparents, guardians, etc.) to become actively engaged with their child's education;
- b. Open lines of communication between families and schools;
- c. Families take responsibility for promoting high academic achievement of their children; and
- d. Remove or prevent barriers between the school and:
 - economically disadvantaged families;
 - families with limited English proficiency and/or limited literacy;
 - families with special needs or disabilities; and
 - families of any racial or ethnic minority background.

This policy reflects the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds (ESSA) Act for Title I, Part A. Sumter School District agrees to implement the following statutory requirements:

1. Sumter School District will put into operation programs, activities and procedures for the engagement of families in all of its schools with Title I, Part A programs, consistent with ESSA. Those programs, activities and procedures will be planned and operated with meaningful consultation with families of participating children.
2. Sumter School District will be governed by the following statutory definition of family engagement, and expects that its Title I schools will carry out programs, activities, and procedures in accordance with this definition:

Family engagement means the participation of families in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring—

(A) that families play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;

(B) that families are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;

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(C) that families are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child;

(D) the carrying out of other activities, such as those described in ESSA.

3. Consistent with ESSA, Sumter School District will work with its schools to ensure that the required school-level family engagement policies meet the requirements of ESSA, and each include, as a component, a school-home compact consistent with ESSA.
4. Sumter School District will incorporate this districtwide Title I family engagement policy into its LEA plan developed under ESSA. The plan will be included in the Title I, Part A grant that is Board approved and submitted to the South Carolina Department of Education each year. The District family engagement policy will also be included in information materials distributed to the parents at all Title I schools and will be posted on the Title I web site.
5. In carrying out the Title I, Part A family engagement requirements, to the extent practicable, Sumter County School District and its schools will provide full opportunities for the participation of family members with limited English proficiency, family members with disabilities, and family members of migratory children, including providing information and school reports required under ESSA in an understandable and uniform format, and including alternative formats upon request, and, to the extent practicable, in a language family members understand. Onsite and document translation services may be available if requested through Sumter School District's Department of Federal Programs.
6. If the LEA plan for Title I, Part A, developed under ESSA, is not satisfactory to the families of participating children, the school district will submit any family comments with the plan when the school district submits the plan to the South Carolina State Department of Education. Families are informed of their rights to submit comments regarding the Title I, Part A plan. Those comments will be included with submission of the plan.
7. Sumter School District will involve the parents of children served in Title I, Part A schools in decisions about how the 1% of Title I, Part A funds reserved for family engagement is spent, and will ensure that not less than 95% of the 1% reserved goes directly to the schools.
8. Sumter School District will provide guidance, coordination, technical assistance, and other support to assist Title I, Part A schools in planning and implementing effective family engagement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance. As such, the Department of Federal Programs staff will provide schools with a Title I School Family Engagement Policy Checklist to help schools gauge their progress in meeting the Title I, Part A provisions for family engagement. District staff will conduct an onsite review of family engagement activities and documents to provide individualized technical assistance to each Title I school.

Below is a description of how Sumter School District will implement or accomplish each of the following components outlined below in accordance to ESSA:

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9. Sumter School District will take the following actions to involve families in the joint development of its districtwide family engagement plan under ESSA:
- Request family participation in the development of a written family engagement policy and engagement requirements.
 - Engage families and Family & Community Engagement (FACE) Facilitators in an organized, ongoing and timely way in the joint development of the policy.
 - Conduct a minimum of one annual District Title I Family Engagement Policy meeting with family and school representation dedicated to formulating or revising the district's Title I Family Engagement Policy.
 - District staff and families will identify barriers to increase family engagement in activities (with particular attention to families who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, have limited English proficiency, limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background) and will use the findings of the evaluation to design strategies for more effective family engagement and revise the family engagement policy/procedures/plan as necessary.
 - Upon completion of the final draft, the policy will be sent to Title I schools to share with families and posted on the District's web site. Families and staff will be encouraged to submit their feedback and comments to be included in future revisions, if needed.
10. Sumter School District will take the following actions to involve families in the process of school review and improvement under ESSA:
- Involve families in the planning, review and improvement of the school family engagement policy.
 - Involve families in the joint planning and development of each school's Title I schoolwide program plan and school improvement plan. School committees, including the School Improvement Committee (SIC) and teams, meet throughout the year to review progress toward meeting goals and plan for improvement. The school's PTA and PTO organizations and Parent Advisory Council, if applicable, also provide input and support during the year.
 - Offer all families the opportunity to participate in the districtwide Title I planning meetings through shared information at school events/activities, community events, newsletters, and the District web site.
 - Establish communication between families and teachers by asking Title I schools to schedule at least two family data conferences with parents or guardians of children per school year, or as many as deemed appropriate.
11. Sumter School District will provide the following necessary coordination, technical assistance, and other support to assist Title I, Part A schools in planning and implementing effective family engagement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance:
- Provide technical assistance to revise, with family involvement, home-school compacts to use as an influential tool to communicate with families about student progress and outline how families, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student achievement and the means

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by which the school and families will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the state's high standards.

- b. Provide all families of the students receiving Title I services with a home-school compact.
- c. Provide specific technical assistance that includes help with analyzing data from the assessments, and other examples of student work.
- d. Encourage schools to provide Title I funding for school-level FACE Facilitators to implement family workshops and activities during different times of the day to accommodate families' schedules.
- e. Provide regularly scheduled meetings and technical assistance for FACE Facilitators.
- f. Encourage FACE Facilitators to participate in in-service days and other professional development opportunities.

12. Sumter School District will coordinate and integrate family engagement strategies in other district programs. The school district will coordinate and integrate family engagement strategies in Title I, Part A with family engagement strategies that are integrated in the following programs:

- a. Early Head Start
- b. Early Childhood programs
- c. Title III Language Program
- d. Literacy Intervention programs

13. Sumter School District will take the following actions to conduct, with the engagement of families, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of this family engagement policy in improving the quality of its Title I, Part A schools. The evaluation will include identifying barriers to greater participation by families (with particular attention to families who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, and have limited English proficiency and literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background). The school district will use the findings of the evaluation about its family engagement policy and activities to design strategies for more effective family engagement, and to revise, if necessary (and with the involvement of families) its family engagement policy.

- a. Conduct, with families and district staff, an annual evaluation to identify activities and actions that are successful and support effective family engagement.
- b. Conduct school and districtwide surveys and share the results at meetings and update the school and district Title I plans to include new activities to meet identified needs.
- c. Analyze survey data and disaggregate the data and results by school.
- d. Share data results with stakeholders.
- e. Review data results, identify areas of improvement, and incorporate needed changes in the Title I project and plan.

14. Sumter School District will build Title I schools' and families' capacity for strong and effective family engagement to support a partnership and improved pupil academic achievement through the following activities:

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a. The school district and Title I schools will hold family meetings and family data conferences to help parents understand the following:

1. the state's academic content standards;
2. the state academic assessment standards;
3. the state and local district assessments, including SC READY, alternate assessments, PASS, MAP, benchmarks;
4. how to monitor their child's progress using the parent portal;
5. how to work with educators; and
6. resources for families.

District information will be shared with school and family representatives. Links from the parent portal on the District's web site will continue to provide real-time access for families to their child's grades, attendance, assignments, and district and state information. Individual schools will share information at school events such as Back to School Nights, Open House, and the Title I Annual Meetings. Examples of topics to discuss include school performance ratings and schoolwide improvement strategies.

15. Sumter School District will, with the assistance of its schools, provide materials and training to help parents work with their children to improve their children's academic achievement by implementing the following:

- a. conducting literacy and technology workshops;
- b. purchasing materials to assist families in promoting academics;
- c. encouraging schools to fund, as budget and program needs permit, the positions of FACE Facilitators at schools to assist/train families on a consistent basis;
- d. providing families with online access to their child's updated attendance, grades and other school information through the online parent portal to help them stay involved in their child's education and to provide assistance to their children; and
- e. providing families with workshops and speakers at family meetings to address their needs as described in the family surveys conducted annually.

16. Sumter School District will, with the assistance of its schools and families, educate its teachers, principals, and other staff in how to reach out to, communicate with, and how to build, implement and coordinate effective family programs and build ties between families and schools, by:

- a. conducting annual Back to School Nights;
- b. providing family workshops;
- c. working with the community to share information with families and to market family engagement activities to help increase the number of family members who attend family programs and activities;
- d. providing materials and suggestions to families that will help students retain their reading and math skills over the summer months while helping families promote the education of their children.

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17. The school district will take the following actions to ensure that information related to the school and family programs, meetings, and other activities, is sent to the families of participating children in an understandable and uniform format, including alternative formats upon request, and, to the extent practicable, in a language the families can understand:

- a. Distribution of District Family Engagement Policy both in English and in Spanish.
- b. Distribution of district/school notification letters
- c. Translation of documents.

18. Sumter School District and/or the district's Title I schools, as deemed necessary, will:

- a. provide necessary literacy training for families from Title I, Part A funds, if the school district has exhausted all other reasonably available sources of funding for that training;
- b. pay, budget permitting, reasonable and necessary expenses associated with family engagement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable families to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions;
- c. maximize family engagement and participation in their children's education by arranging school meetings at a variety of times, or conducting in-home conferences with families who are unable to attend those family data conferences at school;
- d. adopt and implement model approaches to improving family engagement;
- e. provide home visits conducted by social workers, as needed, to engage families in the education of their children; and
- f. provide other reasonable support for family engagement activities under ESSA, as parents may request.

This District-wide Parent and Family Engagement Policy has been developed jointly, and agreed on with families of children participating in Title I, Part A programs. This Policy will be distributed to all families of participating Title I, Part A children in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the families understand, each school year and will be posted on the District's web site for all families to access.

Families who wish to comment on the existing policy should contact Pamela Rhodes, Director of Federal Programs, at (803) 469-6900 or Pamela.Rhodes@sumterschools.net.

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