

Early Childhood Center
Prekindergarten Family Engagement Plan
2016-2017

The Flour Bluff Early Childhood Center recognizes that effective school-family partnerships are critical to student learning and success in school.

Research shows that students receive the following benefits from a collaborative partnership with the school, the family, and the community: higher grades and test scores, better attendance, and homework completion, fewer placements in special programs, more positive attitudes and behavior, higher graduation rates and greater enrollment in post-secondary education. The gain for families includes: improved understanding of their child's development, improved ability to parent, improved ability to assist their children with school and learning, and improved relationships among all stakeholders

Definitions of Family and Family Engagement

- i) Family- adults responsible for the child's care and children in the child's life who support early learning and development of the child.
- ii) Family engagement- The mutual responsibility of families, schools, and communities to build relationships to support student learning and achievement and to support family well-being and the continuous learning and development of children, families, and educators. Family engagement is fully integrated in the child's educational experience, supports the whole child, and is both culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate.

Components and Strategies of the Family Engagement Plan

(A) facilitate family-to-family support using strategies such as:

- (i) creating a safe and respectful environment where families can learn from each other as individuals and in groups;
- (ii) inviting former program participants, including families and community volunteers, to share their education and career experiences with current families; and
- (iii) ensuring opportunities for continuous participation in events designed for families by families such as training on family leadership;

(B) establish a network of community resources using strategies such as:

- (i) building strategic partnerships;
- (ii) leveraging community resources;

- (iii) monitoring and evaluating policies and practices to stimulate innovation and create learning pathways;
- (iv) establishing and maintaining partnerships with businesses, faith-based organizations, and community agencies;
- (v) identifying support from various agencies, including mental and physical health providers;
- (vi) partnering with local community-based organizations to create a family-friendly transition plan for students arriving from early childhood settings;
- (vii) providing and facilitating referrals to family support or educational groups based on family interests and needs; (viii) communicating short- and long-term program goals to all stakeholders; and
- (ix) identifying partners to provide translators and culturally relevant resources reflective of home language;

(C) increase family participation in decision making using strategies such as:

- (i) developing and supporting a family advisory council;
- (ii) developing, adopting, and implementing identified goals within the annual campus/school improvement plan targeting family engagement;
- (iii) developing and supporting leadership skills for family members and providing opportunities for families to advocate for their children/families;
- (iv) collaborating with families to develop strategies to solve problems and serve as problem solvers;
- (v) engaging families in shaping program activities and cultivating the expectation that information must flow in both directions to reflect two-way communication;
- (vi) developing, in collaboration with families, clearly defined goals, outcomes, timelines, and strategies for assessing progress;
- (vii) providing each family with an opportunity to review and provide input on program practices, policies, communications, and events in order to ensure the program is responsive to the needs of families; and
- (viii) using appropriate tools such as surveys or focus groups to gather family feedback on the family engagement plan;

(D) equip families with tools to enhance and extend learning using strategies such as:

- (i) designing or implementing existing home educational resources to support learning at home while strengthening the family/school partnership;

- (ii) providing families with information and/or training on creating a home learning environment connected to formal learning opportunities;
- (iii) equipping families with resources and skills to support their children through the transition to school and offering opportunities for families and children to visit the school in advance of the prekindergarten school year;
- (iv) providing complementary home learning activities for families to engage in at home with children through information presented in newsletters, online technology, social media, parent/family-teacher conferences, or other school- or center-related events;
- (v) providing families with information, best practices, and training related to age appropriate developmental expectations;
- (vi) emphasizing benefits of positive family practices such as attachment and nurturing that complement the stages of children's development;
- (vii) collaborating with families to appropriately respond to children's behavior in a non-punitive, positive, and supportive way;
- (viii) encouraging families to reflect on family experiences and practices in helping children; and
- (ix) assisting families to implement best practices that will help achieve the goals and objectives identified to meet the needs of the child and family;

(E) develop staff skills in evidence-based practices that support families in meeting their children's learning benchmarks using strategies such as:

- (i) providing essential professional development for educators in understanding communication and engagement with families, including training on communicating with families in crisis;
- (ii) promoting and developing family engagement as a core strategy to improve teaching and learning among all educators and staff; and
- (iii) developing staff skills to support and use culturally diverse, culturally relevant, and culturally responsive family engagement strategies; and

(F) evaluate family engagement efforts and use evaluations for continuous improvement using strategies such as:

- (i) conducting goal-oriented home visits to identify strengths, interests, and needs;
- (ii) developing data collection systems to monitor family engagement and focusing on engagement of families from specific populations to narrow the achievement gap;
- (iii) using data to ensure alignment between family engagement activities and district/school teaching and learning goals and to promote continuous family engagement;

(iv) ensuring an evaluation plan is an initial component that guides action;

(v) using a cyclical process to ensure evaluation results are used for continuous improvement and adjustment; and (vi) ensuring teachers play a role in the family engagement evaluation process.

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