

Washington County School District

Parent and Family Engagement Policy

2020-2021
Revised August 18, 2020
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What is Family and Parent Engagement?

Washington County believes that Parent and Family Engagement means the participation of parents and family members in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:

- (A) That parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning.
- (B) That parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education.
- (C) That parents 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.



About the Parent and Family Engagement Policy

In support of strengthening student academic achievement, the Washington County School District (WCSD) has developed this parent and family engagement policy that establishes the district's expectations and objectives for meaningful family engagement and guides the strategies and resources that strengthen school and parent partnerships in the district's Title I schools. This plan will describe WCSD's commitment to engage families in the education of their children and to build the capacity in its Title I schools to implement family engagement strategies and activities designed to achieve the district and student academic achievement goals.

When schools, families, and communities work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and enjoy school more. Title I, Part A provides for substantive family engagement at every level of the program, such as in the development and implementation of the district and school plan, and in carrying out the district and school improvement provisions. Section 1116 of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) contains the primary Title I, Part A requirements for schools and school systems to involve parents and family members in their children's education. Consistent with Section 1116, the WCSD will work with its Title I schools to ensure that the required school-level parent and family engagement policies meet the requirements of Section 1116(b) and each include, as a component, a school-parent compact consistent with Section 1116(d) of the ESSA.

Washington County High School is a Non-Title I school that has joined the District-wide initiative along with the District's Title I schools to build staff and parents' capacity for strong family engagement.

Jointly Developed

All parents are invited to participate and provide feedback on the 2019-2020 district Parent & Family Engagement Policy during the school sponsored parent engagement activities provided throughout the school year. The district sent an emails to all parents informing them about these meetings and posted announcements on each school's website. During these meetings, parents also reviewed and discussed the Comprehensive LEA Improvement Plan (CLIP). Additionally, each Title I school used its Parent Advisory Council to review the district parent and family engagement policy before the end of the school year.

Parent are encouraged to submit comments and feedback regarding the plan and CLIP at any time by submitting written comments to their child's school. All feedback received by June 4th was considered during the revision of the plan for this school year. Upon final revision, the district parent and family engagement policy was incorporated into the CLIP which was submitted to the state.

The district parent and family engagement policy is posted on district and school websites. It will also be distributed during the annual Title I school meetings early this school year, and made available in the schools' parent resource centers.



Strengthening Our School

The District Family Engagement Coordinator will provide assistance and support to all Title I schools to ensure family engagement requirements are being satisfied and that family engagement strategies and activities are being implemented. Title I schools will receive notifications and resources from the district and the PIC to help them improve and strengthen family engagement. In addition to frequent communication and school visits, the district and the FEC will hold monthly meetings and trainings with its Title I schools' principals and school FECs to review family engagement plans and activities.

Additionally, the district will convene a summit in June for principals and FECs to review parent and family engagement requirements and plan opportunities for family engagement activities and meetings for the remainder of the school year.

Reservation of Funds

The WCSD will reserve 1 percent from the total amount of Title I funds it receives in FY21 to carry out the parent and family engagement requirements listed in this policy and as described in Section 1116 of the ESSA. Furthermore, the WCSD will distribute 90 percent of the amount reserved to Title I schools to support their local-level family engagement programs and activities. The district will provide clear guidance and communication to assist each Title I school in developing an adequate family engagement budget that addresses their needs assessment and parent recommendations.

Each Title I school will host an annual School Improvement Forum in May for parents to provide suggestions how these family engagement funds will be used in the upcoming year at the district and school-level. Comment cards and minutes from these meetings will be reviewed by the district to determine areas of need for the upcoming school year and consider changes to the family engagement budget.

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Building Capacity of Families and Staff

Washington County School District will take the following measures in order to build the staff' and parents' capacity for strong family engagement, that will improve student academic achievement, through the following districtwide activities and strategies:

- Quarterly trainings for principals and PICs to learn and discuss strategies to strengthen family engagement and build ties with families and the community. All staff will be trained on the importance of parent engagement and how to reach out to and work with parents as equal partners in order to improve student academic achievement through districtwide activities and programs.
- Staff development is also provided to school personnel through conferences, workshops, publications, etc. to educate teachers, student services personnel, administration and other staff on the utility of contributions of parents in the educational process of their child.
- District and school lever PICs will provide a three to five minutes highlight, or Parent Tip for building home school relationship at each district and school staff meeting.
- Sharing vital information to Title I schools and parents on the Georgia Standards of Excellence, state and local academic assessment including the Georgia Milestone, as well as the required assessment for students including alternative forms of assessment. The dates and location for these workshops will be posted on the district's parent webpage as well as school's websites. Parents will also receive workshop notification via flyers, email, REMIND, and Infinite Campus.
- The district's Parent webpage as well as each Title I school's webpage will contain additional information such as guides and effective strategies that will assist parents in helping their children at home.
- Copies of these materials will be made available by request for parents who may have limited Internet access as well as those in need of translated versions.
- Collaborating with Bright from the Start, GaDOE, Head Start and Community In-Schools programs to share school information about parent engagement activities that will help prepare parents and their child for kindergarten and improve school transition.
- Ensure that all information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is available to all parents in an understandable and uniform format such as flyers, newsletters and calendars and posted on the district and/or school website. Parent notifications and resources will be sent home in parents' native language, where applicable, and interpreters will be available at parent events and meetings. Information posted on the district Web site will be translated to the extent practicable. The district will also utilize school telephone systems, web sites, local news media, and other school message systems to post information for parents.
- Conducting three professional development training to Parent Engagement Professionals and Title I Principals to communicate and build partnerships with parents. The district's parent Engagement Director will also train appropriate school staff and faculty on creating a welcoming environment and improving school-parent communication.
- Establish a School-Community Advisory Council composed of parent representatives from each Title I school to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement as well as planning and developing relevant district level parenting trainings and events and helpful presentations to educate our staff on the important of parent and family engagement. Community members and business leaders will also be invited to serve on this council. The district will encourage collaboration between all stakeholders by posting meeting information on the district's website.
- The WCSD will coordinate and integrate the district's family engagement programs with the local preschool program and other federal and state funded preschool programs in the district by inviting faculty and staff from those programs to attend planning meetings focused on family engagement activities. In the spring, the elementary schools will host Kindergarten Ready days so parents may tour the schools and receive information to help prepare them and their children for kindergarten. The WCSD will also coordinate with these programs to ensure that parents are informed about available resources.

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Opportunities for Meaningful Parent Consultation

Input and suggestions from parents and family members are an essential component of the district and school improvement plans that are developed each year. All parents of students eligible to receive Title I services are invited to attend two meeting opportunities described in this section to share their ideas and suggestions to help the district, schools, and students to reach our student academic achievement goals.

State of the District Revision Meeting ~ May 25, 2021

All parents are welcome to hear the latest updates from the Washington County School District as well as review and provide input into the district parent and family engagement policy and the Comprehensive LEA Improvement Plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Notices regarding this meeting will be emailed to all parents in advance of the meeting. The district will also communicate information regarding this meeting on the school district website.

School Improvement Forums ~ May 3-5, 2021

During this week, each Title I school will host a forum for parents and family members to participate in roundtable discussions to review the schoolwide plan, the school's parent and family engagement policies as well as provide input on the family engagement budget and programs. Each Title I school will send invitations home and email and text parents notifying them about the date and time of the forum. Information regarding the School Improvement Forum will also be made available on the school websites.

Parent input on the use of Title I funds to support family engagement programs may also be provided through the annual district survey. The survey will contain questions related to the family engagement budget as well as a section for parents to provide their comments.



Parent and Family Engagement Evaluation

Each year, the WCSD will conduct an evaluation of the content and effectiveness of this parent and family engagement policy and the family engagement activities to improve the academic quality of the Title I schools through an annual parent survey and the School Improvement Forums.

Beginning in February, each Title I school will send home a survey and email a link to the survey for parents to provide valuable feedback regarding the parent and family engagement activities and programs. These surveys will also be posted on the district and school websites for parents to complete. In addition to the annual survey, each Title I school will also use the School Improvement Forum to facilitate group discussions. These discussions will focus on the needs parents, of children eligible to receive Title I services, identify in order to design strategies for more effective family engagement.

The WCSD will use the findings from the school forums and the survey results to design strategies to improve effective family engagement, to remove possible barriers to parent participation, and to revise its parent and family engagement policies.

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