

The following procedures are intended to support principals, teachers, staff, parents, and students in developing a common understanding of family and community engagement and in implementing best practices at each school level. They are informed by the most recent research on family engagement and current Parent Teacher Association (PTA) guides for school implementation and assessment of the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. They are also informed by consultations with stakeholder groups on what strong family and community engagement looks like day to day.

**A. Definition**

School Board Policy I-11.1 Family and Community Engagement defines family and community engagement as a shared responsibility of families, schools, and the community to support students and their learning and to nurture students’ intellectual, personal, social, and emotional development to help them achieve their full potential.

Arlington Public Schools recognizes that effective family and community engagement is fundamental to the success of every student; is a process that changes as children grow; and calls for a variety of pathways for engaging families. Schools and community organizations are committed to communicating with and engaging families in meaningful ways, and families are committed to actively supporting their students’ learning and development.

Figure 1 depicts the six main Family and Community Engagement (FACE) goals that Arlington Public Schools is actively working to achieve. It also highlights some key conditions for success that are embedded in the policy. These conditions are key to the design of programs that strengthen the capacity of families and school staff to partner in ways that support student success.

The policy recognizes the need for initiatives to be systemic, i.e. designed as a core component of educational goals; integrated into educational structures and processes; and sustained with adequate resources and infrastructure support. It also recognizes the importance of building relationships, promoting collaboration, and having a transparent system of accountability to track progress in meeting the family and community engagement goals.



**B. Guidelines for Implementing the Family and Community Engagement Goals**

The School Board supports a family and community engagement process that honors the dynamic, multiple, and complementary ways in which students learn and grow. Working collaboratively with families and communities, schools leaders and staff will actively work to achieve FACE goals using the following guidelines:

**Goal 1 – Welcoming all families into the school community**

Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to APS staff, and to what students are learning and doing in school.

1. Using physical spaces to create a welcoming atmosphere
2. Creating a family-friendly, respectful, and helpful school climate
3. Building trusting relations between school staff and families
4. Facilitating connections among families
5. Removing barriers to participation

**Goal 2 – Communicating effectively**

Staff and families engage in regular, meaningful, two-way communication about student learning and social emotional developmental.

1. Using multiple paths to communicate with families
2. Keeping families informed about important issues and events
3. Connecting families to what students are doing and learning in school
4. Surveying families and creating opportunities for listening and open dialogue
5. Addressing barriers to communication

**Goal 3 – Supporting student success**

Staff and families have opportunities to collaborate and strengthen their knowledge and skills to support student learning and social and emotional development at home and school

1. Communicating regularly about each student progress, development, and behavior
2. Providing information about what students are learning, academic standards, and school progress
3. Sharing resources to reinforce the learning at home
4. Engaging families in school learning
5. Planning for the future

**Goal 4 – Advocating for every student**

Families and students are empowered to be advocates, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities, resources and supports that will ensure their success.

1. Smoothing transitions
2. Helping parents understand how the school and the school system function
3. Sharing information about rights and responsibilities
4. Developing families' and students' capacity to be effective advocates
5. Connecting to resources in the school system

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**Goal 5 – Sharing responsibility**

Arlington Public Schools staff, families, and students are partners in decisions that affect students and together inform and influence policies, practices, and program.

1. Having a voice in decisions that affect children
2. Supporting parent leadership development
3. Addressing equity issues
4. Developing parent organizations that represent all families

**Goal 6 – Collaborating with community**

Arlington Public Schools staff, families, and community members connect students to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

1. Linking to community resources
2. Promoting after-school activities
3. Partnering with community groups to support students and their families

**C. Areas of Responsibility for Implementation**

At the school division and/or central office level, under the overarching guidance of the Assistant Superintendent, Instruction, the tasks outlined in the table below will occur.

At the school level, the school principal and/or program manager has overall responsibility for ensuring that effective family and community engagement best practices are in place and that these practices reflect how the process changes as children grow.

| <b>Task</b>                  | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Responsibility</b>  |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Enhance Communication</b> | Provide information in a variety of forms – brochures, website, newsletters, social media, etc. and offer multiple avenues for input and participation by families, students, and community members. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School and Community Relations</li> <li>• Information Services</li> <li>• Student Services and Special Education</li> <li>• Principals</li> <li>• School Staff</li> </ul> |
|                              | Ensure that outreach, communication, and capacity building strategies are user friendly, varied, and responsive to the diversity of APS families and community members.                              |  |
| <b>Develop Budget</b>        | Develop and maintain a line item in the APS budget for family and community engagement activities and learning opportunities.  | • Instruction  |
|                              | Develop school budget proposals for family and community engagement programs and learning opportunities.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals</li> <li>• School Staff</li> <li>• Parents</li> </ul>  |

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| <b>Implement FACE Action Teams in Schools</b>    | Provide guidelines for schools in forming and maintaining building-level FACE Action Teams.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction</li> </ul>   |
|  | Form and maintain building-level FACE Action Teams.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals</li> <li>• School Staff</li> <li>• Parents</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Develop FACE Resource Handbook</b>            | Provide practical information on actions that school leaders and staff can take to achieve the FACE goals in order to help all students reach high levels of social and academic achievement.                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Share Successful FACE Strategies</b>          | Maintain a compendium of successful FACE programs and provide opportunities for schools to learn from peers in these programs and develop options for action  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Plan and Implement Learning Opportunities</b> | Provide resources and learning opportunities for families and APS staff to build their capacity to work in partnership in order to support student learning and social and emotional development.                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction</li> <li>• Student Services</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Make Schools into Community Hubs</b>          | Work with community, business, and service organizations to respond to needs of students and families and find creative ways to provide funding and staff.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School and Community Relations</li> <li>• Instruction</li> <li>• Student Services</li> <li>• Principals</li> <li>• School Staff</li> </ul> |
| <b>Develop Accountability System</b>             | Develop/identify a variety of FACE rubrics that will allow APS and schools to have a transparent system of accountability, with indicators of the effectiveness of family and community engagement programs and strategies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction</li> </ul>   |
|  | Provide guidelines for Smart Goals  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning and Evaluation</li> </ul>   |
|  | Develop and include FACE Smart Goal for Management Plans  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principals</li> </ul>  |

**References**

PTA and *everychild.one* voice, PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships: An Implementation Guide, 2009

Anne Henderson, Karen Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies, *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*, New York: The New Press, 2007.

Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. A publication of SEDL in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, 2013

**Policy Implementation Procedure Adoption and Revision History**

Adopted June 2015

*Renumbered (former PIP-10-9.01) effective July 1, 2018*