Arlington Public Schools

face APS

Family & Community Engagement (FACE) BRIEFING REPORT

JUNE 2021

FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2014, Arlington Public Schools (APS) adopted the current Family and Community Engagement Policy (I-11.1) that recognizes the importance of creating meaningful partnerships with families and community organizations to support student success and development. The FACE policy directs APS to work actively and collaboratively to achieve the following six goals:

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.

GOAL 2 – COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

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

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.

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.

GOAL 5 – SHARING RESPONSIBILITY

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

GOAL 6 – COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY

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

The APS Family and Community Engagement Policy Implementation Procedure (I-11.1 PIP-1) provides guidelines to support school leaders and staff in achieving these goals and identifies main tasks and areas of responsibility for implementation at both the district and school levels.

ALIGNMENT WITH APS 2018-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

The FACE Office, under the Office Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion contributes to achieving the goals of the 2018-24 Strategic Plan by focusing on the following areas:

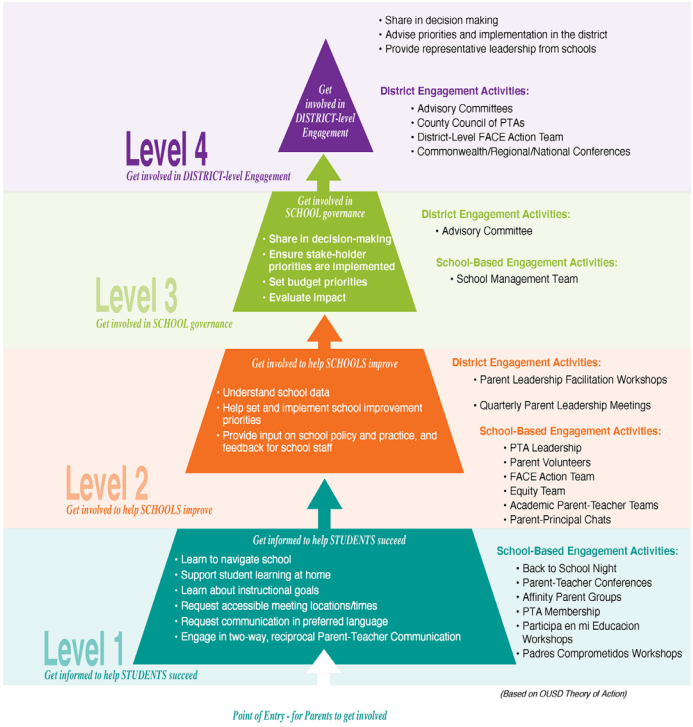
- Educating stakeholders about FACE as an essential instructional strategy for student and school improvement through a variety of means, including the creation and maintenance of an informative, well-developed webpage, presentations, and updates about APS Family & Community Engagement
- Providing all staff growth and leadership opportunities that build and enhance their capacity to engage with diverse families in equal partnership in support of student learning and development and school improvement
- Offering learning opportunities to families with a focus on encouraging families of color navigate the school system to support and advocate for students

- Supporting the development of parent leadership and social networks focused on building learning communities by supporting initiatives that foster peer learning, connections, and communication networks among families and staff
- Build and enhance the capacity of educators and families in the areas of capabilities (skills + knowledge), connections (networks), cognition (shifts in beliefs and values) and confidence (self-efficacy)
- Provide tools and resources for school communities to assess their practice, develop strategies for engaging families as equal partners, and measure their progress and impact
- Contribute to creating a culture of collaboration and coordination across offices, departments, and with community partners for FACE to become integrated, systemic, and sustained

BRIGHT SPOTS

APS FACE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PYRAMID

Developed the Family Engagement Pyramid to visually represent and organize the diverse roles and capacity outcomes for family engagement is APS. The Family Engagement Pyramid guides families to the different ways in which they can engage with APS. It also illustrates for staff the areas where they can engage with families and identifies for FACE areas for skills and knowledge capacity building for staff and family.



ACTION TEAM COORDINATORS

Augmented and enhanced the FACE infrastructure by sponsoring ten FACE Action Team Coordinators (FACE ATCs) stipend positions. FACE ATCs foster systemic, integrated, and sustained family engagement practices at their school/program. They coordinate and lead research-based family engagement efforts with an emphasis on building the capacity of other staff members to engage with all families in equal partnership.

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM TOOLS

Fully developed and piloted two FACE assessment tools to gather data and draft measurable goals: the Inventory of Current Practices and the FACE Policy Goals Checklist. Both tools are designed to monitor performance and measure the quality of engagement practices at the school/program level. Devised to support a transparent systems of accountability, the tools include indicators of the effectiveness of family and community engagement programs and strategies.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Incorporated research-based key communication strategies to enhance the narrative and re-frame family engagement in APS. This initiative supports our stakeholders in accessing FACE ideas and beliefs to foster their support of FACE for more productive, expansive, and equitable engagement practices.

COUNTY COUNCIL OF PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

Collaborated with the CCPTA to explore meaningful representation of all families in PTAs. Designed presentations and activities to help pursue equity and inclusion in PTA membership and leadership.

FAMILY WORKSHOPS

Established a partnership with the Office of English Learners, the Office of Equity and Excellence, the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education, and Edu-Futuro to expand the menu of workshop offerings for families. New workshops are based on family feedback and are designed to strengthen family capabilities (skills + knowledge), connections (networks), cognition (shifts in beliefs and values) and confidence (self-efficacy).

DATA THAT PROVIDES INSIGHT

STAFF CAPACITY

- **153** staff members enrolled in the online course **Introduction to FACE**
- **177** staff members enrolled in the online course **Family Engagement and Distance Learning**
- **1.5 hours of professional learning** provided to **Bilingual Family Liaisons**
- **1.5 hours of professional learning** provided to **FACE Action Team Coordinators** each month
- 5 staff members participated in 18-month **Family Engagement Academy** hosted by the University of William and Mary

FAMILY CAPACITY

- **12 hours of Virtual parent workshops** offered throughout SY 21; attended by 32 parents
- **100%** of activities sponsored by the FACE Office build the capacity of families in capabilities, connections, cognition, and confidence
- Designed, implemented, and delivered **6 virtual parent meetings and workshops**

SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS CAPACITY

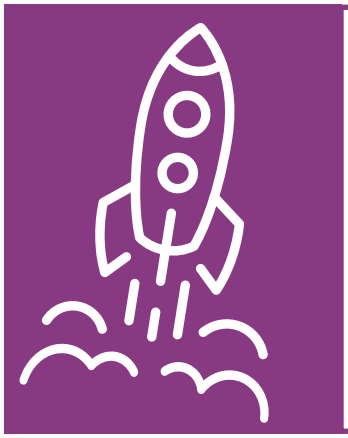
- **FACE Action Team Coordinators stipend positions** established at 10 schools/programs to ensure growth towards the Strategic Plan goal of at least 90% of FACE school-based activities build the capacity of staff and/or families
- Established **FACE Action Teams at 10 school/program sites** to support meaningful partnerships among APS staff, families, and the community

WHAT WE LEARNED

- As part of the William & Mary School of Education Family Engagement Academy, we conducted an internal audit of the APS FACE program. The internal audit identified areas for growth and the need to conduct a comprehensive audit of our family engagement practices.
- Partnerships between home and school develop and thrive when both families and staff have the requisite collective capacity to engage in partnership. Adding stipend Action Team Coordinators to ten school/program sites has brought us closer to this goal. To continue supporting the sustainability of the FACE program, additional resources are needed.
- The evidence-based Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnership provides FACE a compass that lays out the goals and conditions necessary to chart a path toward effective family engagement efforts that are linked to student achievement and school improvement. We need to continue unpacking the Framework to identify actionable items for implementation in APS classroom, schools, and programs.
- Our staff has a strong desire to work with families from diverse backgrounds and cultures and to develop stronger home-school partnerships of shared responsibility for children's outcomes. We need to broaden our professional learning offerings to build our staff's capacity to reach all families.
- Historically marginalized families may have had negative experiences with schools in the past, leading to distrust or to feeling unwelcomed. We need to continue to reach out to all our families and research more effective ways to counter personal, cultural, and structural barriers to engaging in productive partnerships with APS staff.
- For effective cradle-to-career educational partnerships between home and school to be implemented and sustained with fidelity in our schools, FACE initiatives must include a concerted focus on developing adult capacity through pre- and in-service professional learning for our staff and academies and workshops for families, or as an integrated part of parent–teacher partnership activities.
- Very few teacher training programs offer classes that prepare teachers and administrators to build strong partnerships with families. By establishing a FACE Action Team Coordinator stipend positions in all our schools and programs, we can provide professional learning at the school level for all our schools and programs.
- Professional learning for our administrators must be a focus for the Office of Family and Community Engagement. Strategies for building mutual and supportive partnerships with families are more likely to be implemented, integrated, and sustained when leaders are knowledgeable about evidence-based practices and supportive of engaging families.

MOVING FORWARD

The Office of Family and Community Engagement has contracted with an outside organization to conduct a comprehensive audit of our FACE program. Based on the audit's findings and recommendations, we will propose updates to the School Board's FACE Policy and the Policy Implementation Plan. We will also create resources that will allow our staff to explore new and innovative family engagement practices. This addresses our School Board's commitment to "Develop and support strong connections among schools, families, and the community to broaden opportunities for student learning, development, and growth.



Helping all our children succeed is like working at NASA mission control. Just like a space launch needs astronauts, mathematicians, and scientists to work together, in APS, we need all families, staff, and the community to work together to ensure that learning for Arlington's children takes off!