

I. Policy Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County believes that the education of children is a responsibility shared by parents, families, the school system, and the community.

The Board recognizes the parent as a student's first and lifelong teacher and that it is essential to create a welcoming climate to involve parents in educational decisions as primary advocates for their students. The Board is committed to engaging all parents of students in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) and to promoting their involvement in their students' education.

The Board encourages collaboration with parents and the community as participants in school governance and as active partners in forwarding the school system's goals and philosophy.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the school system that endorse and encourage meaningful partnerships between and among schools, parents, families, and the community to support the social, emotional and academic growth of students.

III. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Advocate – A person who pleads another's cause; a person who speaks or writes in support of something.
- B. Community – The society at large which includes, but is not limited to, families, businesses, faith communities, government agencies, non-profit service organizations, other organizations, and individuals.
- C. Family – A child's primary care-giving unit.
- D. Governance – A collaborative team approach to setting mutual goals and making shared policy, procedure, and program decisions.
- E. Parent – Any one of the following, recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for the student:

1. Biological parent – A natural parent whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 2. Adoptive parent – A person who has legally adopted the student and whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 3. Custodian – A person or agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 4. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 5. Caregiver – An adult resident of Howard County who exercises care, custody, or control over the student but who is neither the biological parent nor legal guardian, as long as the person satisfies the requirements of the Education Article, §7-101 (c) (Informal Kinship Care).
 6. Foster parent – An adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in their home by a state agency or a licensed child placement agency as provided by the Family Law Article, §5-507.
- F. Partnership – An association of the HCPSS with two or more parties taking part in activities in common with one another or others; two or more parties engaged with the HCPSS in working toward the same outcomes.

IV. Standards

- A. HCPSS staff will comply with this policy and related implementation procedures.
- B. HCPSS staff will establish programs, partnerships, and practices to cultivate a respectful climate and a safe and nurturing environment, promote open communications, and provide opportunities for effective parent and community involvement and engagement.
- C. HCPSS staff will develop appropriate programs, partnerships, and practices to promote the involvement and engagement of all parents and the community.
- D. The HCPSS will comply with the requirements of federal and state regulations related to parent and family involvement.
- E. HCPSS staff will encourage parents and families to be involved in their student's education and assume a vital role in ensuring success in school for their students.
- F. Principals will include students and parents in decision making groups such as the School Improvement Team (SIT).

- G. The HCPSS Central Office staff will provide professional development and resources to enable staff to meet the expectations of this policy.
- H. The HCPSS staff will provide methods by which parents, families, and the community can contribute suggestions for the continued improvement of the school system, including providing opportunities for these groups to communicate directly with the Board, such as at public hearings.

V. Responsibilities

- A. The Superintendent/Designee will ensure that staff are provided professional development and resources to implement this policy and will monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy and procedures.
- B. Principals and central office staff will include and provide formal and informal processes for addressing concerns of family and community members, and for providing input on school system policies and procedures.
- C. HCPSS staff will demonstrate a commitment to parent, family, and community involvement in the education process and will take appropriate steps to meet the mandates of this policy.
- D. The Superintendent/Designee will determine annually whether to recommend revision to this policy and implementation procedures based on staff and stakeholder input.

VI. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - No Child Left Behind Act 2001 (Sections 1112, 1116, and 1118)
 - COMAR 13A.01.04.06
- B. Other Board Policies
 - Policy 1000 Civility
 - Policy 1040 Safe School Environments
 - Policy 2030 Ombudsman
 - Policy 2040 Public Participation in Meetings of the Board
 - Policy 2050 Advisory Committees to Staff and Schools
 - Policy 2060 Advisory Committees to the Board of Education
 - Policy 9050 Student Records and Confidentiality
- C. Relevant Data Sources
 - Black Student Achievement Program Saturday Math Academy Annual Data Report

Climate Surveys
Hispanic Achievement Program Parent Academy data
International Parent Leadership Academy data
HCPSS Educational Partnerships Annual Report
Family and Community Outreach Parent Participation Summary
Title I Family Involvement Plans
BRIDGES 21st Century Learning Centers Evaluations of Family Involvement Initiatives

- D. Other
The Elementary and Secondary Education Act
The Epstein Framework of Six Types of Involvement

VIII. History

ADOPTED: November 22, 1994
REVIEWED: July 1, 2014
MODIFIED:
REVISED: November 9, 2006
February 13, 2013
EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2013

I. All Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) staff will:

- A. Provide engaging opportunities for parents, family, and community members to be involved in HCPSS schools by eliminating actual or perceived barriers to participation.
- B. Support parents and the community as participants in appropriate decision-making processes and facilitate their leadership in governance, advisory, and advocacy roles.

II. All HCPSS school-based staff will:

- A. Establish and maintain systematic, two-way communication with parents, families, and the community that includes but is not limited to regular school newsletters, orientation programs, access to school staff, parent teacher conferences, student progress reports, telephone calls, and electronic communication.
- B. Provide workshops, forums, and other parent education opportunities that will positively impact student achievement.
- C. Inform parents, families, and the community of school system policies, regulations, and other general information through various methods, media, resources, and languages.
- D. Ensure that parents and families have access to schools, their student's classroom, and/or school-sponsored activities, subject to school system policy.
- E. Coordinate and integrate parent and community involvement within the school.
- F. Encourage and facilitate volunteerism by parents and community members in the classroom, in other areas of the school, and in school-based activities.
- G. Provide appropriate training, supervision, and support for all volunteers.
- H. Provide space for a parent/volunteer room in the school when feasible.

- I. Provide training and resources to parents, families, and community members which enable them to support the curriculum in a positive home learning environment.
- J. Encourage parents, families, and the community to serve as advocates for students; support and encourage this advocacy by assisting them in accessing public information, and appropriate processes.
- K. Encourage parents, families and community members to share feedback with school-based staff and administrators by providing a safe and receptive environment.
- L. Establish and support parent groups that reflect the diversity of the school's community.
- M. Establish school improvement teams that include parent and community members who participate in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the school improvement plan. Membership on the team will reflect the diversity of the school/community.
- N. Develop and implement systems for collecting and analyzing feedback from parents on involvement opportunities.
- O. Involve the parents from Title I schools in the development, implementation, and annual review of the Title parent involvement plan, policy, and Title I School-Parent Compact.
- P. Develop partnerships at the school level with interested community members and community groups to achieve school goals. In support of these partnerships, provide training to promote effective community involvement.

III. The Department of Education and the HCPSS Central Office Staff will:

- A. Identify, develop, share, and support successful parent, family, and community involvement programs. These programs, plans, and activities for use by schools such as School Improvement Plans and Family Involvement Plans, will focus on improving student academic achievement, school performance, and safe school environment.
- B. Educate school system staff, with advisement from parents, in how to effectively reach out to, maintain communication with, and work with parents as equal partners, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to implement and coordinate parent programs and build ties between parents and school-based staff.
- C. Provide workshops, forums, and other parent education opportunities that impact student achievement.

- D. Continuously inform parents, families, and community members about the function and organization of the school system, appropriate directory information, school system policies, regulations, and other appropriate information.
- E. Provide methods by which parents, families, and the community can contribute suggestions for the continued improvement of the school system, including providing opportunities for these groups to communicate directly with the Board, such as at public hearings.
- F. Assist parents, families, and community members with school-related issues, resolving problems, and identifying resources.
- G. Provide training and resources at the school system level to parents and families which enable them to support the curriculum in a positive home learning environment.
- H. Encourage active parent and community representation on standing and ad hoc advisory committees of the Department of Education and its various offices and programs.
- I. Assist schools and school system staff in assessing the effectiveness of their parent, family, and community involvement efforts.
- J. Utilize the HCPSS Ombudsman (a neutral party who collaborates with HCPSS staff and the community to resolve concerns in an equitable and timely manner) to facilitate positive relationships among the Board, school system employees, and the community.
- K. Develop partnerships in collaboration with the HCPSS Partnership Office at the school and system level with parents, interested businesses, organizations, and community members to achieve school system goals. In support of these partnerships, provide training to promote effective community involvement.
- L. Work with businesses, organizations, and other government agencies to gain support and assistance for parent, family, and community involvement efforts.
- M. Coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies with the county, including state and federally funded programs.

IV. Parents and families are encouraged to:

- A. Adhere to and support school and school system policies and procedures as appropriate when involved in school activities.
- B. Take advantage of opportunities, including training, provided by schools and the school system for the involvement of parents in support of their students' education.

- C. Support the goals of the school system in providing a safe and nurturing environment.
- D. Seek appropriate assistance, information, and services from schools, the school system, and the community to help their student to be successful.
- E. In compliance with Policy 9050 Student Records and Confidentiality, refrain from sharing student information without prior approval.
- F. Communicate with the school about their student and about factors which will assist the school staff to best serve their student.
- G. Attend parent conferences.
- H. Visit their student's school, adhering to the following:
 - 1. Prior to a visit to the school, contact the Principal to discuss the purpose of the visit and to establish a convenient time for both the visitor and the school staff.
 - a. The Principal will consult with the teacher in advance, at least 24 hours prior to the visit, to discuss the purpose of the visit and to establish a convenient time for both the visitor and school staff.
 - b. The school may arrange for an escort for the visitor.
 - 2. Upon entering a school, sign in at the main office to receive a visitor badge. Visitors may be required to provide a photo ID before going into other areas of the building.
- I. Volunteer in the classroom, in other areas of the school, and in school-based activities.
- J. Support educators in their efforts to provide quality education for all students.
- K. Support school activities.
- L. Monitor their student's academic progress by checking their student's homework each night, reviewing performance tests and assessments, and discussing the school activities each day.
- M. Participate in governance, advisory, and advocacy roles within the school system.
- N. Participate in activities that promote the health and welfare of students.

V. The community is encouraged to:

- A. Share information, services, and resources that support schools and school system goals.
- B. Take advantage of opportunities, including training, provided by the school system in support of student education.
- C. Adhere to school and school system policies and procedures as appropriate when acting as parent, volunteer, advocate for students, member of committee or governance group, or other role.
- D. Share information, services, and resources that strengthen families.
- E. Engage in two-way communication with schools and the school system in support of student learning.
- F. In compliance with Policy 9050 Student Records and Confidentiality, refrain from sharing student information without prior approval.
- G. Support the goal of the school system in providing a safe and nurturing environment and the individual efforts of employees to implement the Student Code of Conduct.
- H. Participate in and support school volunteer and mentor programs.
- I. Engage in partnerships with schools and the school system in support of student learning and school system goals.
- J. Provide opportunities for students to participate in community service and internships.

VI. History

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