

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TIP SHEET FOR SCHOOLS

Montgomery County Board of Education Policy ABC, *Parent and Family Involvement*, and MCPS Regulation ABC-RA, *Parent and Family Involvement*, provide the framework for the school system's family involvement efforts and include six research-based national standards for effective home-school partnerships for student success.

**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 school staff, and to what students are doing in class.

- Signs help visitors find parking spaces and the main office.
- The entrance to the building is inviting to visitors with signage in multiple languages.
- Visitor and volunteer sign-in process is user-friendly.
- School has attractive and colorful displays of student work and art.
- Main office arrangement is planned to feel open and inviting and has a comfortable, clean, and well-kept place for visitors to wait.
- All staff members are friendly and inviting. Questions are answered politely and pertinent information is provided.
- Schools provide a variety of opportunities for parents to volunteer from home and at school.

**Communicating effectively**—families and school staff members engage in regular, meaningful, communication about student learning.

- School promptly follows up with parents if they have questions or concerns.
- School has an “open door” policy.
- School uses the Language Line and provides interpretation services at meetings.
- School hosts meet and greet events, open houses, and parent coffees.
- School administration sends welcome home letter for the new school year before the start of the school year.
- Schools use multiple methods and languages, as appropriate, to provide effective and timely communication including but not limited to newsletters, the school website, listservs, Edline, and Connect-ED.

**Supporting student success**—families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

- Principal sets tone and expectations for the school emphasizing working together for student success.
- Back-to-School Night provides a time for parents to find out about their child's instructional program and encourages parents to be involved in school.
- School communicates the availability of parent-teacher conferences throughout the school year, based on the needs of the student and requests from the parent or teacher.
- School provides information and meetings for parents on how to help them support their children's learning and development and shares systemwide services available to families.
- School has processes in place to intervene if students are experiencing difficulties. Parents are made aware of the resources.

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**Speaking up for children**—families are empowered to advocate for their children to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

- Parents are aware of how to contact teachers and counselors to discuss their child's education.
- Principal develops relationships with students and families.
- Parents are encouraged to talk with staff members and administration.
- School staff members demonstrate sensitivity for the students' home and school experience.
- Parents have the right to request and discuss additional resources and support for their child.

**Sharing power**—families and school staff are important and valued partners with unique information regarding decisions that affect children. Families and school staff together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs including full engagement in the school improvement process.

- School staff members see parents as partners to support children's learning and healthy development.
- Parents are encouraged to join the PTA and other parent organizations and are informed on how to get involved.
- The school improvement team should include parents who reflect the diversity of the school community and who are given the opportunity to participate meaningfully on the team.
- School uses multiple methods to collect feedback from parents, including but not limited to the Survey of School Environment, and to share the feedback with the parent community.
- All parents have access to the school improvement plan.

**Collaborating with community**—families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

- School administration and staff members are accessible and visible in the community.
- School and PTA actively seek to establish partnerships with community organizations and businesses.
- School meetings for parents are held a few times a year in community locations.
- The school shares opportunities offered in the school community that will benefit families.
- Staff members are familiar with school community and the demographics of the neighborhood.

Before we can create strong and effective partnerships with families, we have to believe not only that it's important but also that it can be done—and that we can do it. That means it is necessary to hold a set of positive beliefs about family engagement.

It is vital for educators to understand that the families who send their children to them each day want their children to succeed in school and in life.

Quote from the book - *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*  
Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson & Dave Davies