

## 909 FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

### I. PURPOSE

The Duluth School Board honors the diversity of families and recognizes the important role parents, guardians and families play in the education of their children. The Board encourages partnerships between the district administration, schools, and families in order to share the responsibility of educating our students. The board recognizes that academic achievement and success of our students depends on the strength of the partnerships developed among students, parents, families, schools, and community.

### II. GENERAL STATEMENT

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) defines Family and Community Engagement as a process and a practice rooted in relational-trust which creates opportunities for equitable partnerships between families and school and district staff. These partnerships, from birth to graduation, nurture shared responsibility for students' academic and social success and honor the lived experiences, expertise, and cultural knowledge of all partners - students, teachers, families, and communities.

The district values and encourages face-to-face relationships that:

- Create safe spaces where everyone is welcomed and valued as an expert in their role.
- Encourage families, schools and communities to work together to improve student success.
- Enable a range of voices to be heard by decision-makers.
- Are accessible to parents and community leaders from diverse backgrounds.
- Devote sufficient resources to parent engagement and community outreach.

### III. MINNESOTA STANDARDS OF FAMILY/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

#### A. Welcoming, Communicating, and Supporting Success

1. **Sustain high-trust, and reciprocal relationships:** Schools initiate communication with families and invite them to be a meaningful part of students' learning experience by providing a welcoming, reliable, humble and productive interaction each and every time. They honor every family by acknowledging them as equal partners.
2. **Amplify family voice:** Schools lead with listening. Families know their children and want to advocate for and facilitate their child's learning. Obtaining and action on family feedback, prioritizing families from groups that have been historically and persistently marginalized, is essential to maximizing student and school success.
3. **Link families to learning:** Partnering with families is a prerequisite for students' academic success. Everyone is a teacher and everyone is a learner. Schools, families and communities bolster learning when they co-create and share expectations for students' growth and development.

4. **Expect all departments and staff to partner with families and communities:** High expectations, high support and accountability for all school staff members lead to meaningful family engagement. Coherent district family engagement infrastructure embeds high-quality, culturally responsive professional development at all levels of the system and within all major functional areas (e.g. budgets, facilities, curriculum adoptions, staff unions, etc.)
5. **Commit to continuous improvement:** As family engagement practices become widely implemented, understood and valued within your school, family and community feedback develops essential data that deepens decision-making processes and continuous improvement efforts. Family Engagement action plans, even those integrated within programmatic improvement plans, are regularly refreshed in response to the needs and desires of education partners.
6. **Use inclusive and transparent communication:** Ensure that all messages are culturally and linguistically appropriate, timely, accessible, and clear by designing communications plans featuring multimodal two-way communications mechanisms based on the references of each family.
7. **See school as a community space:** School buildings and grounds are welcoming, nurturing and openly shared resources for families and community members. Schools leverage other community resources and organizations to expand access to learning opportunities beyond the traditional school day and calendar.

#### **IV. DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROGRAMS**

##### **A. Academic Achievement and Training**

1. **Academic Support:** The district will support parent groups to engage families in promoting increased academic achievement and attendance.
2. **Capacity Building:** The district will provide opportunities for family learning that builds understanding and capacity of families to be involved in school review and improvement.
3. **Accountability:** Information on each school's progress in meeting accountability measures will be shared with families.
4. **Family Materials and Training:** The district will provide materials and training, such as literacy and technology instruction, by:
  - a) Developing and offering programs such as family nights and parent/guardian academies.
  - b) Providing information on improving academic performance at events

like back-to-school nights, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences.

- B. The district will educate staff on how to work with families as equal partners by:
1. Developing curriculum and offering training for staff on engaging families to increase achievement.
  2. Producing and disseminating materials on family engagement successes.
  3. Normalizing family engagement as part of the discourse on improving academic achievement.
  4. Recognizing and publicizing family engagement successes and their impact.
- C. Communication Standards
1. **Accessibility:** Information related to school and parent programs must be sent in an understandable and uniform format.
  2. **Language and Format:** To the extent practicable, communications will be provided in a language families can understand and in alternative formats upon request.
  3. **Surveys:** The District will conduct a Climate Survey each fall and spring to survey families' perceptions regarding feeling welcome, communication, and involvement opportunities.
- D. Expectation for Parent-Teacher Organizations
1. **Independent Status:** Organizations must be legally constituted as independent, non-profit entities with their own tax identification number, bank account, and liability insurance.
  2. **Bylaws and Leadership:** Each organization shall adopt bylaws that do not conflict with district policies or laws.
  3. **Fundraising and Financials:** All fundraising must align with district policy; organizations are responsible for the proper management of all funds.
  4. **Alignment and Communication:** Activities must support the mission of the school and district; organizations must maintain open communication with the principal.

5. **Non-Partisan Status:** Organizations shall remain non-commercial, non-sectarian, and non-partisan.

**V. EXPRESSING MATTERS OF CONCERN**

When parents/guardians have concerns about their child, staff, or policy issues, they are encouraged to address the concerns as soon as possible to avoid issues escalating. Often, simple respectful communication will resolve an issue. The district believes that issues are best resolved at the level closest to the occurrence. Therefore, parents/guardians should first contact the staff member closest to the situation, usually a teacher or coach.

- A. If a resolution can not be found, the principal is the second contact.
- B. At the district level, the elementary or secondary director of education can be the third contact if a resolution can not be found with the building principal.
- C. If resolution cannot be found at the principal or director level, the assistant superintendent is the next level of contact.
- D. The superintendent is to be the last level of contact.

**Legal Reference:** [LEGAL REFERENCES]

**Cross Reference:** MnMTSS Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Framework