

# **Family and Community Engagement Plan**

## **Outline of Contents**

### Introduction

#### I. District FACE Activities

##### A. School-Based Activities

##### B. Central District Activities

##### 1. FACE Department

###### a. Planning and Coordination

###### b. Training and Instruction

###### c. Support and Monitoring for School-Based Activities

###### d. Family Resource Centers

###### e. FACE Department Support for Other Departments

##### 2. FACE Activities By Other District Departments

#### II. Staffing and Accountability

##### A. School-Based Activities

##### B. Face Department

## **Introduction**

This Family and Community Engagement (“FACE”) Plan is intended to serve as an operating plan for the District’s efforts to promote and enhance family and community engagement in the education of students in the District. It may also serve as a guide to, and overview of, those efforts, for those who wish to understand (a) the scope and focus of those efforts, (b) who in the District is involved in those efforts, and (c) who is accountable for the success of those efforts.<sup>1</sup>

The goal of the plan is to maintain and increase the overall level of family and community engagement in the education of students in the District. To the extent that any identifiable group appears to be underrepresented in family engagement activities, it is also a goal of the plan to focus efforts on that group to increase the relative level of participation of that group.

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<sup>1</sup> This plan is forward looking, and thus does not refer explicitly to specific requirements of the current Unitary Status Plan, or the FACE Plan created pursuant to the USP, though the District believes that most of the relevant areas from those USP-related plans are addressed or covered in this plan, though perhaps not in the same way. The District understands that those requirements continue to apply as long as the Court continues to exercise supervision over the District.

## **I. District FACE Activities**

The District's FACE efforts can be grouped into two broad categories: individual school-based activities, and activities undertaken by central District staff. Each category is described below.

### **A. School-based Activities.**

The **Guidelines for Family and Community Engagement at School Sites** (copy attached as Exhibit 1) describe (a) the specific activities expected at each site, (b) the roles and responsibilities of those involved, and (c) the reporting requirements to track implementation and enable analysis and accountability. Underlying the Guidelines and all school-based activities is the central concept of two-way communications, in which school staff learn from parents and parents learn from school staff. These two-way communication activities include opportunities for school to share written information with families, families to share written information with the school, and meetings where school and families engage in conversations where families and school staff learn from each other. Additionally, the guidelines provide multiple opportunities for professional development to help school staff engage in best practices to facilitate two-way communication.

The Guidelines include multiple opportunities for schools to provide written information to families through various avenues such as email, online, and in hard copy. These school-to-home communications include newsletters with information about school and District events, policies, learning opportunities, specific events, leadership and volunteer opportunities, calendars, meeting notices and minutes for decision-making groups, and other topics related to student achievement. These communications ensure families stay abreast of important school and District information and opportunities for involvement.

The Guidelines provide opportunities for families to provide written communication of ideas, concerns, and impressions to the schools by providing conferencing feedback surveys, suggestion boxes at the schools, and annual family

engagement surveys. The District also provides an “online suggestion box” on all school webpages. Surveys and suggestion boxes are specifically designed to allow families to provide information anonymously, if they so choose, to encourage them to share information they might not be willing to share through other avenues.

The Guidelines provide opportunities for additional two-way communications through 1) decision making activities such as site councils, family engagement teams, and the parent teacher organization, 2) focus groups, and 3) meetings between school and families (both individual family meetings regarding one student [e.g. parent-teacher conferences] and larger meetings more generally about curriculum and other topics.

School site councils and family engagement teams facilitate two-way communication by ensuring parents, students, administrators, certified staff, classified staff, and community members are represented in decision-making groups. All members of these decision-making bodies have an equal say in sharing ideas, planning, and making decisions for the school.

Focus groups provide opportunities for families to share information and ideas about matters specific to their children’s school. Focus groups are facilitated by community members rather than school staff to help participants feel comfortable in sharing their ideas or concerns. Each school site is required to conduct at least one curricular-focused event per semester. These events facilitate two-way communication by allowing the school to share information about the curriculum and provide strategies for families to support the learning at home, as well as opportunities to engage in direct, curriculum-related conversations with teachers.

There are several conditions that are important for effective two-way communication with families. For example, it is important that families have access to their child’s academic and personal information; that families are able to provide teachers with information about their child’s development; that information shared

with families is culturally understandable and meaningful; that information is used for positive actions that teachers, families and school leadership can implement.

A valuable opportunity for two-way communication is the parent-teacher conference. The District's Guidelines state goals for participation in both Fall and Spring conferences, and provides protocols for specific for parent-teacher conferences described in an online professional development module required for all school administrators and certified staff.

These protocols support two way communication by describing specific actions teachers and school staff can take before, during, and after conferences to encourage family participation; to communicate to families the value of their participation in conferencing; to present opportunities and encourage families to provide input about what they would like to discuss during conference; to make the environment comfortable and welcoming to families attending conference; to prepare for discussion that encourages families to share information; to present information such as data or student work examples in a manner that families can understand; to reach those families who are unable to participate in conferences in a traditional way; and to build upon the family-teacher partnership after conferencing.

Information provided in this professional development module can be applied to all family-teacher interactions to encourage two-way communication and develop positive working relationships between family and school which builds student success.

Other opportunities for communication include training on use of the District information systems available to families (e.g., (a) the ParentVUE portal to Synergy, the District's student information system, and (b) Family Computer Kiosks at each school to provide access to ParentVUE and the school's website).<sup>2</sup> Though not explicitly required in the guidelines, schools and families communicate regularly

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<sup>2</sup>The District's requirements for maintaining and updating family and community elements in individual school websites are attached as Exhibit 2.

through notes, letters, email, text message, phone calls, and meetings, as a matter of course giving both school staff and families opportunities to share information with each other.

Training for teachers and school staff on best practices regarding two-way communication is provided each year. Trainings include Dr. Joyce Epstein's Six Types of Family Involvement, which specifically addresses two-way communication; Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Instruction, which addresses cultural awareness in communicating with students and families; Parent-Teacher Conferencing, which includes actions teachers can take to facilitate and encourage two-way communication during conferences and other face-to-face interactions; site-based and training about the Guidelines for Family and Community Engagement, which include a definition, rubric, required tasks, and promising practices to encourage and facilitate two-way communication; and training for other school personnel about outreach, parent leadership, focus groups, and promising practices to help schools learn from families.

The *Guidelines for Family and Community Engagement at School Sites* were developed by the District's central Family and Community Engagement Department, in conjunction with Dr. Joyce Epstein<sup>3</sup>, and the National Network of Partnership Schools. Using these guidelines, schools file monthly reports on FACE activities with the District's FACE Department and use a District-designed tracking system to identify and report on family participation in FACE events at each school, enabling assessment of the degree to which those activities are successful in engaging all of the school's constituent communities.

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Epstein is a Professor at Johns Hopkins University; Director, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships; Director, National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS); and Co-Director/Directorship Team-CSOS.

**B. Central District Activities.**

**1. FACE Department**

**a. Planning and Coordination.** The FACE Department provides overall planning and coordination for the District's family and community engagement activities, together with an annual assessment of their effectiveness. This protocol follows an annual cycle: (a) in the fall of each school year, the specific plan for that year is implemented and relevant data is collected; (b) in mid-spring, along with the budgeting process for the following year, FACE Department staff analyze available data, review any new publications in the area, and assess the success of the family engagement activities; and (c) prior to the beginning of the next school year, FACE Department staff develop the specific plan for the following year, including any redeployment of resources desired, based on the assessment. To the extent that this operating plan needs modification or updating, it will be revised as part of this annual process.

**b. Training and Instruction.** FACE Department staff provide annual training and instruction to school site and other District staff on family engagement best practices and activities, again focusing on two-way communication and Dr. Epstein's Six Types of Involvement.

The Guidelines provide multiple opportunities for professional development to build best practices and ensure all schools facilitate opportunities for two-way communication and parent involvement. The Guidelines require that each school meet with FACE staff no later than October 31 for training about the Guidelines, and to receive support or guidance specific to the needs of the school. School-community liaisons or school site family engagement contacts are required to participate in quarterly meetings where they receive and share information on best practices for family engagement. FACE staff coordinates and facilitates quarterly meetings with support from Title I/Grants and Federal Programs staff. Meetings address many topics including Dr. Epstein's Six Types of Family Involvement, which include two-

way communication, understanding and implementing the Guidelines, reporting requirements, and general best-practices.

All staff who come into contact with students receive annual training on the McKinney-Vento Act. Staff learn the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act and how to identify, request services, and advocate for students and families who may be experiencing a housing crisis.

All school site staff who come into contact with families receive annual online training about Dr. Epstein's Six Types of Family Engagement. The Six Types of Family Engagement Training addresses the benefits of each type of involvement, the challenges schools may face in providing opportunities for all six types of involvement, and promising practices to help schools address those challenges.

All school site administrators and certified staff receive annual online training on effective two-way communication through conferencing. This training provides protocols for conferencing which facilitate two-way conversation, guidance in how to create an atmosphere where parents are comfortable to share ideas, planning for conversations which encourage parents to share, providing opportunities for parents to choose topics they would like to discuss, and offering information to parents to help them prepare to make good use of their conferencing opportunities.

**c. Support and Monitoring for School-Based Activities.** FACE Department staff are responsible for support and monitoring of family engagement activities at school sites, to ensure that school sites are implementing the Guidelines. Monitoring and support includes review of monthly reports, review of data input into the District's family engagement participation tracking system, reviewing school websites, remedial training and instruction where needed, and fostering collaboration across schools in family engagement activities. FACE department staff regularly inform regional assistant superintendents about the compliance of each school within the region.

In March 2019, the FACE director and program coordinators attended the National Network for Partnership Schools (NNPS) Leadership Institute for family and community engagement at Johns Hopkins University. At the Institute, Dr. Epstein and her team provided training on how to help schools to organize their school-based Family Engagement Teams and to write goal-linked plans to engage all students' families in ways that support student success in school (e.g., to improve attendance, behavior, achievement, attitudes) and to improve the schools' welcoming climate for all families. FACE staff will begin working with schools to employ the methods learned at the Institute during SY2019-20 and continue its support in subsequent years.

The District, using NNPS guidelines and materials, is working to ensure that increasing numbers of schools will be able to reach out to engage parents, both at the school and at home, in their children's education. The NNPS guidelines focus explicitly on equity of outreach and inclusion of all families, with special attention to communications and connections of new immigrant groups and parents with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The vast majority of schools in NNPS serve diverse families, including new and earlier immigrants with differing languages and cultural backgrounds, and are working to reach out to and engage these families in their children's education. NNPS materials include examples of promising practices used by these schools to effectively engage all families.

FACE staff, with the advisement of Dr. Epstein, will work with school site staff and other District departments to expand on the parent involvement and leadership training already taking place, and develop training to help parents successfully participate in school life and decision-making, with a particular focus on the needs of various immigrant groups.

**d. Family Resource Centers.** FACE Department staff operate the District's four Family Resource Centers, which provide a broad range of family educational opportunities in support of students' learning. Many other departments



host events and workshops at the Family Resource Centers. A representative calendar of events for these activities, showing the nature and breadth of these activities, is attached as Exhibit 3. The FACE department also operates the District's clothing bank at the Duffy Center, and the McKinney-Vento office, which provides administrative support and services for homeless students eligible under the McKinney-Vento Act.

The Family Resource Centers are open 8:00-4:00pm Mondays, Wednesdays and Friday's and 9:30am to 6:30pm Tuesday's and Thursday's. Services and educational opportunities are available at all Family Resource Centers during regularly scheduled hours.

The FACE Department provides information and training to families to help them take active roles in their children's education and decision-making at school sites in further support of the two-way communication model. Workshops are provided at all four Family Resource Centers, two times per year, to help parents participate in parent-teacher conferences effectively. The workshop discusses the importance of the parent's role in a child's education, how to ask meaningful questions, the importance of sharing information with the teacher, parents' rights to additional conference opportunities, and how to follow up if more information is needed or the conference is not satisfactory.

The Family Resource Center also provides workshops to teach parents how to be active participants in their children's education. The workshops include information about site councils, advisory councils, departments and resources, how to participate, the importance of the parents' role, and how they can support their children's academic success.

To facilitate accessibility to educational opportunities and services to all families, Family Resource Center Staff has taken several steps. First, workshops and classes are available at multiple centers, at various times of day and evening, and throughout the year. This way, parents who are unable to attend a workshop at one time or location may be able to attend at a different time or location. Additionally, the Family Resource Center staff provides childcare to families so they can attend workshops at the centers. Staff also provides transportation support to families to attend workshops, as needed. Furthermore, schedules of workshops and other informational literature is offered in multiple languages and interpreters are provided to those participants whose primary language is other than English.

Scheduling of workshops is dependent on several factors including parent interest, availability of space, and availability of presenters. Staff also takes into consideration the time and circumstance when most families are likely to participate. For example, parents who do not work outside the home are most likely to attend classes in the mornings, after getting their children off to school, while parents who do work outside the home are most likely to attend evening classes. However, in scheduling evening classes, Family Center staff considers the time it will take a parent to pick up children and make it to the center for classes, as well as the family's need to have dinner, complete homework, and have children in bed early enough for them to get ample sleep. As such, evening classes are usually scheduled to begin between 5:30 and 6:00, and end at 7:00 or 7:30.

When possible, organizations who can provide food for participants and families are scheduled in the evenings to help relieve some of the parents' time and financial concerns. Additionally, fewer workshops are scheduled during the first and last weeks of school, during the holiday season, immediately preceding and following holidays and long breaks, or during testing and conference times, since these tend to be busy times for families.

In the event that a family is not able to access services at one of the family resource centers, staff makes every effort to bring the services to the family. For example, a family may not have transportation to a center to access the clothing bank or food pantry. In that situation, family center staff will work with the family and the student's school to bring items to the family. This can be accomplished in a number of ways including direct delivery, school staff pick-up, interoffice mail, or delivery to the school site.

The family centers are also made available to families and students outside of business hours, as needed and in consideration of staff availability. Some examples include: parent workshops offered before or after business hours; tutoring offered by Mexican-American Student Services on Saturdays at Catalina Family Resource Center; the Tutoring Center for Refugee Students in conjunction with Refugee Services and Lutheran Social Services at Catalina Center two evenings per week; Mexican American Parent Advisory Council meetings held at Palo Verde and Wakefield Centers; Native American Student Services parent meetings at Southwest Center; student mentoring at Palo Verde Center before and after hours and on weekends provided by African American Student Services. Finally, Student Services Directors have access to the centers to access resources for families during off hours, including clothing bank, food pantry, computer labs, classrooms, informational literature, and hygiene and school supplies and regularly provide services during evenings and weekends using these resources as needed

**e. FACE Department Support for Other Departments.** The FACE department also works with other District departments to provide guidance and support for their family engagement events and needs - including the magnet, ALE, student services, language acquisition, health services, counseling, and curriculum and instruction departments. That support includes event co-ordination, use of the Family Resource Centers, and provision of childcare and transportation

services. A chart showing representative cross-departmental activities and events, and the role of each department in those activities, is attached as Exhibit 4.

## **2. FACE Activities By Other District Departments.**

In addition to the FACE Department, other district departments undertake family and community engagement activities of their own. The AASSD and MASSD Operating Plans detail the family and community engagement activities undertaken by each of those departments. The ELL Dropout Prevention plan contains family engagement strategies. The Magnet and ALE Departments have a common Addendum addressing family engagement and outreach. Each of these departments is primarily responsible for the specific family engagement activities identified in those plans. In many instances, those plans call for support from the FACE Department.

The contributions by the student services departments are particularly important in two major respects: First, the student services departments assist and provide specific family outreach needed for students in the course of interventions under the MTSS and behavioral systems. Second, student services departments provide general family engagement opportunities to their respective families and communities, include the following:

### **Mexican American Student Services**

- Impact Tucson: focuses on bullying prevention
- Parent University: focuses on college opportunities/FAFSA
- Student Recognitions: recognizes Hispanic/Latino students for their academic achievements
- College Academy for Parents: focuses on guiding parents to be advocates for their child's college opportunities
- Adelante!: focuses on college and career readiness/awareness

### **African American Student Services**

- Impact Tucson: focuses on bullying prevention

- Parent University: focuses on college opportunities/FAFSA
- Student Recognitions: recognizes African American students for their academic achievements
- African American Parent Conference: provides opportunities for parents to obtain information on requirements for college entrance
- Palo Verde Neighborhood Collaborative: supports students with work and builds connections between families, schools, and the community
- Opportunities.<sup>4</sup>

The FACE department works in a supporting role with many other departments, programs, and schools across the District to plan and implement additional events that support and inform Tucson Unified families. These department include Communications and Media Relations, Asian Pacific American and Refugee Student Services, Native American Student Services, Guidance and Counseling, Title I/ Grants and Federal Programs, Curriculum and Instruction, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Instruction, Multicultural Curriculum, Language Acquisition and Meaningful Access, Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Fine Arts, Interscholastics, Student Health Services, Food Services, Transportation, Magnet Programs, Dropout Prevention, and Two-Way Dual Language Programs.

The FACE Department works with the Curriculum and Instruction Department (C&I) to provide the “TELL ME MORE” workshops for parents, focusing on core curriculum information along with information on related TUSD programs. Each week representatives from C&I and other TUSD departments present a hands on/interactive workshop to help parents learn about what happens in classrooms and how they can support their child’s learning at home. These classes give parents a view of the methods and topics that their students are being exposed to, giving parents a better understanding on how to more effectively help their students

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<sup>4</sup> These family engagement responsibilities appear in the operating plans for the AASSD and MASSD.

succeed in school. Some of the programs that are presented include information on math, English Language Arts, science, social studies, Gifted and Talented Education, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Instruction, dual language, and magnet programs. The FACE Department also created a short video for district personnel to use to promote the workshops.

## **II. Staffing and Accountability**

**A. School-Based Activities.** Primary responsibility for implementing FACE activities at each school lies with the principal. Each school also has either a school community liaison (funded with Title I grant funds), or a designated family engagement contact (paid a stipend from the FACE Department). Principals are held accountable for implementing the Guidelines by the regional assistant superintendent for that school, and in annual evaluations of the principal. The regional assistant superintendent is regularly informed of the status of reports and activities for each school by the FACE department staffer assigned to that school.

**B. FACE Department.** The FACE Department has primary responsibility for (a) supporting, monitoring and conducting training for school-based family engagement activities, (b) operation of family centers, (c) maintaining relationships with national family engagement organizations, and staying abreast of family engagement research and best practices, and (c) supporting the family and community engagement activities of other departments, as needed and requested.

Five coordinators report to the director. Each coordinator is responsible for providing family engagement support to the schools in one region of the District (about 17 schools). Each coordinator also has responsibility for other areas of department operations. In no particular order:

a. One coordinator focuses on developing family engagement content for families, including (a) information about student programs, courses, and services available through the District, (b) adult support services and training that help support student education in the home, and (c) substantive content to assist

families in increasing engagement, from colleges, universities, and community services. This coordinator works with the school community liaisons at each family resource center, and school staff throughout the district, to get the information and content to families.

b. A second coordinator focuses on community engagement, developing partnerships with community organizations, including civic groups, charities, and other educational institutions. This coordinator also works with the school community liaisons at family resource centers and school staff to assist in developing and maintaining community involvement with schools and students in the District.

c. The third coordinator focuses on developing and coordinating family engagement training for school site and District staff and plans and coordinates FACE department participation in District events at locations across the District.

d. The fourth coordinator focuses on the family resource centers, scheduling and planning the classes, events and resources available to families through the centers, developing and communicating information about the centers to families, staff and the community.

e. The fifth coordinator focuses on the department's data collection systems, including the periodic reports from schools, from family resource centers, and the new family participation tracking system, reporting on results to the director and the other coordinators for use in ensuring that schools are implementing the Guidelines properly.

In addition, the main FACE department office has one central administrative assistant, and one data entry clerk. Each of the four Family Centers has a school community liaison staffer and monitor/custodian. A fifth school community liaison acts as a floater to support activities at all of the Family Centers.

