

I. Policy Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County believes that the well-being and academic achievement 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 cultivating an inclusive and nurturing learning community that engages all parents of students in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) regardless of demographic indicators and to promote parent engagement in their students' education.

The Board encourages collaboration with parents and a diverse representation of community members as participants in school governance and as active partners in discussing and 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, 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.

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- 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) or has been issued a U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Verification of Release form entering into a custodial arrangement with the federal government.
 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.
- G. Stakeholder – Any person or organization that has an interest in the success of students and/or the organization.

IV. Standards

- A. HCPSS employees will establish programs, partnerships, and practices to cultivate a safe, engaging and supportive school environment, promote open communications, and provide opportunities for effective parent and community engagement.
- B. HCPSS employees will develop appropriate programs, partnerships, and practices to promote the engagement of all students, parents, families and the community.
- C. The HCPSS will comply with the requirements of federal and state regulations related to parent and family engagement.

- D. HCPSS Title I school employees will involve their schools' parents in the development, implementation, and annual review of the Title I Parent and Family Involvement Plan, associated HCPSS policies, and Title I School Level Parent and Family Engagement Plan and School Parent Compacts.
- E. HCPSS employees will encourage and support parents and families to be involved in their student's education and to be effective partners in ensuring success in school for their students.
- F. HCPSS principals will include students, parents, families and community members, in decision-making groups that impact school culture, climate, and the academic success of students when possible.
- G. HCPSS employees will provide methods by which students, 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 and through various digital platforms.
- H. HCPSS employees will provide services to ensure access for all families to information, translation and interpretation services, technology support, opportunity to meet with support liaisons, and additional services as needed.

V. Responsibilities

- A. The Superintendent/designee will ensure that employees 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 employees will include and provide formal and informal processes for addressing concerns of students, parents, families, and community members, and for providing input on HCPSS policies and procedures.
- C. HCPSS employees will demonstrate a commitment to student, parent, family, and community engagement in the education process and will take appropriate steps to meet the mandates of this policy.
- D. Principals and Central Office employees will develop and distribute information about opportunities for student, parent, family, and community engagement.
- E. The Superintendent/designee will determine annually whether to recommend revision to this policy and implementation procedures based on employee and stakeholder input.
- F. The Superintendent/designee will provide annually to the Board a report detailing system-wide and school-level efforts on student, parent, family, and community engagement.

VI. Delegation of Authority

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

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - COMAR 13A.01.04.06
 - Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) 2015
- B. Other Board Policies
 - Policy 1000 Civility
 - Policy 1040 Safe and Supportive Schools
 - Policy 1060 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, or Intimidation
 - Policy 1070 Protections and Supports for Foreign-Born Students and Families
 - 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 2070 Ethics
 - Policy 9050 Student Records
 - Policy 10010 Distribution and Display of Materials and Announcements
 - Policy 10020 Use of School Facilities
 - Policy 10030 Contests Sponsored by Outside Organizations
 - Policy 10040 Charter Schools
- 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 Program data
 - HCPSS Educational Partnerships Annual Report
 - Title I Parent, Family, and Community Involvement Plans
 - Title I School Level Parent and Family Engagement Plan and School Parent Compacts
 - BRIDGES 21st Century Learning Centers Evaluations of Family Involvement Initiatives
- D. Other
 - The Elementary and Secondary Education Act
 - HCPSS Supports and Information
 - HCPSS Parent Formal Concern Form & Process
 - HCPSS Bullying Reporting Options
 - HCPSS School Safety & Security

VIII. History

ADOPTED: November 22, 1994

REVIEWED: July 1, 2014

MODIFIED:

REVISED: November 9, 2006

February 13, 2013

June 13, 2019

EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2019

I. The Superintendent will Communicate Expectations that Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Employees:

- A. Provide engaging opportunities for students, parents, families, and community members to be involved in HCPSS schools by publicly promoting opportunities and encouraging participation to the greatest extent possible.
- B. Support students, parents, families, and the community as participants in appropriate decision-making processes and facilitate their leadership in governance, advisory, and advocacy roles.
- C. Monitor the maintenance of quality engagement practices across HCPSS schools through the review of feedback from students, parents, families, and community stakeholders.

II. The School Principal or Designee is Responsible for Ensuring that HCPSS school-based Employees:

- A. Establish and maintain opportunities for systematic, balanced, two-way communication with students, parents, families, and the community that includes strategies designed to engage and inform the various communities of that school.
- B. Consider students, parents, families, and community members with limited access to technology, communication methods, language barriers and other situations which may prevent families from receiving and sending communications.
- C. Provide parent education opportunities such as workshops and forums that will positively impact student achievement.
- D. Ensure that students, parents, and families have access to schools, their student's classroom, and/or school-sponsored activities, consistent with HCPSS policies and procedures.
- E. Coordinate and integrate parent and community engagement within the school.
- F. Encourage and facilitate volunteerism by parents, families, 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 including, but not limited to, training for reporting child abuse and neglect and student confidentiality.
- H. Provide space for parents and volunteers in the school when feasible.
- I. Provide resources to parents, families, and community members which enable them to support the curriculum in a positive home learning environment.
- J. Encourage students, 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 students, parents, families and community members to share feedback with school-based employees and administrators by establishing a safe and receptive environment.
- L. Collect and analyze feedback from students, parents and other stakeholders on engagement practices.
- M. Support parent groups that reflect the diversity of the school's community.
- N. Establish school improvement teams that include students, parents, families and community members who participate in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the school improvement plan. Membership on the team should reflect the diversity of the school/community.
- O. Involve the parents from Title I schools in the development, implementation, and annual review of the Title I Parent and Family Involvement Plan, HCPSS policy, and Title I School Level Parent and Family Engagement Plan and School Parent Compacts.
- P. Foster community engagement to develop relationships at the school level with interested community members and community groups to achieve school goals.
- Q. Ensure that parents, volunteers, advocates for students, members of committees, or other visitors adhere to school and HCPSS policies and procedures.
- R. Collect data and feedback from school-level engagement activities to be provided to the Superintendent/designee for inclusion in the annual report to the Board.

III. The Superintendent/designee is responsible for ensuring that HCPSS Central Office employees:

- A. Identify, develop, share, and support successful student, parent, family, and community engagement programs. These programs, plans, and activities for use by schools such as School Improvement Plans, will focus on improving student

well-being, academic achievement, school performance, and safe school environment.

- B. Educate HCPSS employees, with advisement from parents to effectively reach out to, maintain communication with, and work with parents as equal partners, value and utilize the contributions of parents, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and school-based employees.
- C. Provide workshops, forums, and other parent education opportunities that impact student achievement.
- D. Continuously inform students, parents, families, and the community about the function and organization of the HCPSS, appropriate directory information, HCPSS policies, procedures, and other appropriate information through various methods, media, resources, and languages.
- E. Provide opportunities and encourage students, parents, families, and the community to contribute suggestions for the continued improvement of the HCPSS, including direct communication with the Board, such as at public forums, public hearings, and online.
- F. Assist students, parents, families, and community members with school-related issues, resolving problems, and identifying resources consistent with HCPSS policy and best practices.
- 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 school and HCPSS workgroups and advisory committees.
- I. Assist schools and HCPSS employees in assessing the effectiveness of their school-based parent, family, and community engagement efforts.
- J. Utilize the Board's Ombudsman, Executive Director of Community, Parent and School Outreach, Special Education Parent Liaison, and other employees to facilitate positive relationships among the Board, HCPSS employees, and the community.
- K. Develop formal partnerships in collaboration with the HCPSS Partnership Office at the school and system level with interested businesses, and organizations to achieve HCPSS goals.
- L. Work with businesses, organizations, and other government agencies to gain support and assistance for student, parent, family, and community engagement efforts.

- M. Coordinate and integrate parental engagement strategies with the county, including state and federally funded programs.
- N. Develop a system for principals to give feedback in an annual report.

IV. Parents and Families will:

- A. Adhere to school and HCPSS policies and procedures when involved in school activities.
- B. Contact the principal/designee prior to a visit to the school to discuss the purpose of the visit and to establish a convenient time for both the visitor and school employees.
 - 1. 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 employees.
 - 2. The school may arrange for an escort for the visitor.
- C. Be required to provide a photo ID and sign-in at the main office upon entering the school before going into other areas of the building.

V. Parents and Families are Encouraged to:

- A. Take advantage of opportunities, including training, provided by schools and the HCPSS for the engagement of parents in support of their students' education.
- B. Support the goals of the HCPSS in providing a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment.
- C. Seek appropriate assistance, information, and services from schools, the HCPSS, and the community to help their student to be successful.
- D. Refrain from sharing student information in compliance with Policy 9050 Student Records and Confidentiality.
- E. Communicate with the school about their student and about factors which will assist school-based employees to best serve their student.
- F. Participate in student's educational experience by taking advantage of opportunities to conference with teachers.
- G. Volunteer in the classroom, in other areas of the school, and in school-based activities.
- H. Support educators in their efforts to provide quality education for all students.

- I. Support school activities.
- J. Monitor their student's academic progress by checking daily homework, the learning management system, and taking advantage of opportunities to conference with teachers.
- K. Participate in governance, advisory, and advocacy roles within the HCPSS.
- L. Support the social-emotional well-being of children so they may be able to thrive academically.

VI. The Community is Encouraged to:

- A. Share information, services, and resources that support schools and HCPSS goals.
- B. Take advantage of opportunities, including training, provided by the HCPSS in support of student education.
- C. Adhere to school and HCPSS policies and procedures as appropriate when acting as a parent, volunteer, advocate for students, member of a committee, community partner, or other role.
- D. Share information, services, and resources that strengthen families.
- E. Engage in two-way communication with schools and the HCPSS in support of student learning.
- F. Support the goal of the HCPSS in providing a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment and the individual efforts of employees to implement the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct.
- G. Participate in and support school volunteer and mentor programs.
- H. Engage in partnerships with schools and the HCPSS in support of student learning and school system goals.
- I. Provide opportunities for students to participate in community service and internships.

VII. Announcement/Dissemination

- A. Notification regarding the provisions of Policy 10000 and these implementation procedures will be provided to students, parents, families, and the community. Principals are responsible for notifying students, parents, families, and community members in their schools. Supervisors are responsible for notifying those under their supervision. Notification may be through these customary channels:

1. Published in school and system newsletters and/or handbooks.
 2. Posted in commonly used areas of the school and through digital channels.
 3. Posted on school and HCPSS websites and digital tools.
 4. Provided to new parents through the registration process.
- B. Notification regarding the provisions of Policy 10000 and these procedures will be provided to all HCPSS employees and will include, but not be limited to:
1. Review of applicable laws and policies with regard to community notifications and engagement.
 2. Duties and responsibilities as HCPSS employees to involve parents, families, and community stakeholders.

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