

## Loudon County Schools Family Engagement Plan

### *Family Involvement Standards*

#### *Executive Summary and Background*

The Loudon County Schools Family Involvement Standards are based on the overwhelming body of research that confirms the positive impact family involvement has on student achievement. They are also based on best practices already in use by principals, teachers, families, and others in our district and nationwide.

These standards are for those who have a vested interest in ensuring that all students achieve their fullest potential. They were launched in the fall of 2005 as part of the Loudon County Schools Family Involvement Campaign: "Stronger Together!" Every parent, teacher, administrator, Board member, or district employee who reads these standards will know his/her part in helping to increase the level and quality of family involvement in education.

Every school has received a copy of these standards, along with indicators for implementation. Since these standards are most effective when they are integrated into comprehensive school improvement plans, a district expectation, our principals and other staff receive training and support to this end. These standards are an integral part of the District Consolidated Plan action steps included therein.

The Family Involvement Standards are a living document and will continue to evolve as the Loudon County School District moves ahead with standards implementation. We welcome your feedback as well. Thank you for supporting our students and families.

#### *Purpose*

The Loudon county Schools Family Involvement Standards were developed to:

- Create a common vision of what needs to be in place for there to be quality family involvement across the district.
- Set expectations for everyone in the district concerning the level of family involvement necessary for student success.
- Increase and improve the involvement of family members in their children's education.
- Specify what needs to happen at the district, school, classroom, and home levels.

#### *Use*

The attached format of the Loudon County schools Family Involvement Standards is primarily intended for discussion and information. The document can also be used to:

- Conduct a family involvement audit of any or all four levels.
- Develop family involvement programs.
- Set goals and priorities related to family involvement.

### **DISTRICT LEVEL**

Q: Who IS responsible for making it happen?

A: The district leadership defined as the Board of Education, Director of Schools, and central administration staff.

**Standard D1: There is a district policy adopted by the Loudon County Board of Education that identifies clear and measurable goals for family involvement.**

Indicators:

1. There is a written document that is made public through intentional, strategic, thorough, and frequent notifications.
  - a. Posters and flyers at schools and key community settings.
  - b. Website posting
  - c. Designated parent portals on system website
2. The district's family involvement policy document is clear and understandable by all families, community members, and staff.
3. The district's family involvement policy is written and disseminated in English and other languages.
  - a. Policy, posters and flyers in Spanish as well.

**Standard D2: The district leadership actively supports district staff and promotes efforts that increase the level and quality of family involvement.**

Indicators:

1. Measurable goals for increasing the level and quality of family involvement are required as part of every School Improvement Plan.
  - a. Addendum as needed in each SIP
  - b. Integration of family engagement in all SIP goals
2. All district-level departments, offices, and staff are expected to be friendly, knowledgeable, and open points of contact for all families.
  - a. District level assessment of customer service.
  - b. Development of customer service pledge.
  - c. Posting of pledge at all work stations.
  - d. Total staff commitment to customer service by signing off on pledges.
  - e. Accountability plan for customer service by each district level staff member.
3. The district has adequate staff and resources to implement the family involvement standards.
  - a. Assignment of a district level liaison for family engagement.
  - b. Development of job description for district level liaison and Family Engagement School Level Coordinators.
  - c. Request funding for items to support actions as developed in this plan per year.
4. Funding is provided to schools to increase the level and quality of family involvement.
  - a. Request funding to meet the needs of the schools' family engagement actions each year.
5. Schools that make significant progress in increasing the level and quality of family involvement are recognized.
  - a. Development/attainment of a rubric for school level family engagement efforts.
  - b. Development of plan to recognize school and individual efforts supporting family engagement.
6. Staff development is provided for teachers, families, administrators, staff, and others on how to increase the level and quality of family involvement.
  - a. Administrative training
  - b. Customer service training for "greeters".

- c. Online training courses related to family engagement utilized.
7. There is a clearinghouse to gather best practices, ideas, materials, new approaches, research, and other program information in order to help schools improve their family involvement programs.
    - a. Best practices section on System Newsletter each quarter.
    - b. Development of Family Engagement links on system website

**Standard D3: The district helps schools understand and implement school and classroom level family involvement standards.**

Indicators:

1. The district has established processes for schools to access training, technical assistance, and information.
  - a. Process established for professional development.
  - b. Process established for technical assistance.
  - c. Process established for information sharing.
2. The district office provides information to schools to help them become familiar with and understand the school, classroom, and home level standards for family involvement.
  - a. Sharing of policy and plan.
  - b. Posters, flyers, and signage produced and provided to schools.
  - c. Administrative discussion and open forums as requested by schools.
3. Schools are satisfied with the level of support they receive from the district for their efforts to implement the school level family involvement standards.
  - a. Pre and post assessment of level of satisfaction on an annual basis.

**Standard D4: The district leadership actively raises the community's awareness of how important family involvement is to students' success and academic achievement.**

Indicators:

1. The district office organizes and holds a family involvement public information campaign.
  - a. Stronger Together campaign.
  - b. Development of logo for all communications.
2. There are district-level communications (speeches, website, workshops, etc.) that stress the importance of family involvement in education.
  - a. Updates on Parent Portal.
  - b. Ads in schools and community key sites.
3. The district works in collaboration with community agencies to express and encourage the importance of family involvement.
  - a. Flyers, posters, signage made available.

**Standard D5: Schools' efforts to increase the level and quality of family involvement are documented monitored, and evaluated, and best examples of what works are shared.**

Indicators:

1. The district level office and school officials work collaboratively with schools to document, monitor, and evaluate family involvement initiatives.
  - a. Use of Family and Community Engagement Policy and Plan: Samples of Compliance Evidence document produced by Tennessee Department of Education to help schools meet general expectations for all schools.

- b. Development/securement of rubric for school level family engagement efforts.
  - c. Development of documentation procedures for district and schools.
  - d. Development area on website for schools to share family engagement "best practices".
2. Technical assistance is provided to school by the district level office and other service units as appropriate to monitor and evaluate family involvement strategies that produce specific results for students, parents, teachers, school staff, and others.
    - a. District Level Family Engagement Liaison
    - b. Incorporate monitoring and evaluation components into school, principal, and district level personnel evaluations.
  3. Annual conferences or events are held to allow parents, teachers, administrators, students, community members, and others to share ideas and progress that is made each year, solve problems, share best practices, and plan for future.
    - a. Annual district level stakeholders information forum held each spring.
    - b. Incorporation of feedback into Consolidated Plan and related Family Engagement actions.

**Standard D6: Everyone who works for the district is expected to be friendly and respectful and treat families as partners in their children's education.**

Indicators:

1. People working for the school district are friendly towards, respectful of, and helpful to all families.
  - a. District and school level assessment of customer service.
  - b. Development of customer service pledge.
  - c. Posting of pledge at all work stations.
  - d. Total staff commitment to customer service by signing off on pledges.
  - e. Accountability plan for customer service by each district and school level staff member.
2. All families receive quality customer service from people working for the school district.
  - a. Provide "How are we doing?" feedback cards at each school and district for customer praise and suggestions for improvement.
  - b. District and school level assessments and improvement plans.

**Standard D7: The district has a regular process for involving a wide range of families in district-level efforts such as setting policy and planning.**

Indicators:

1. The district has district-level, decision making, and advisory committees dealing with district concerns such as budget, curriculum, and assessment, and each committee includes parents/guardians.
  - a. Stakeholder committee development and annual Blue Sky meeting.
  - b. Plan for expansion of stakeholder committee to develop advisory committees for policy development and district concerns.
2. The district provides different ways for individual families to voice concerns, raise issues and resolve problems.
  - a. List current lines of communication for families.
  - b. Develop a plan to expand opportunities for 2 way communications.

3. The district has "beyond-the-building" general interest groups where families representing schools can receive information, discuss issues, and make policy recommendations.
  - a. Develop a plan for "beyond the building" offerings on an annual basis. Eg: Board Breakfasts, Dine with the Director, etc.

**Standard D8: The district encourages two-way communication with families that is regular, timely, and meaningful.**

Indicators:

1. Families are well informed and up-to-date on important district issues and understand the major goals of the district.
  - a. Assessment of families' access to district level information.
  - b. Development of action plan for better communication concerning district issues.
2. The district has a variety of publications and other regular communications with families.
  - a. System website
  - b. Parent letters
  - c. Signage, flyers, posters, broadcasts.
3. Written communications are clear, understandable, and available in languages other than English as appropriate.
  - a. Printed information translated in Spanish.
4. The district has several ways of listening to parents and engaging them in two-way communication (for example, giving time to families at Board meetings, holding open forums.)
  - a. Time available at Board meetings to address items on the agenda.
  - b. Annual Blue Sky Stakeholders Spring forum.
  - c. District level speakers available for community groups.
  - d. Development of advisory committees.
  - e. "Beyond the Building" offerings implemented.

## **SCHOOL LEVEL**

Q: Who is responsible for making it happen?

A: Members of the school community including the principal, teachers, clerical and support staff, educational assistants, social worker(s), family/community liaison, family members, and community representatives.

### **Standard S1: Family involvement is incorporated as a strategy to achieve any goal in the School Improvement Plan.**

Indicators:

1. Goals in the School Improvement Plan have action items and desired outcomes related to family engagement that are measurable.
2. The School Improvement Plan is developed with input from school staff, teachers, families, and community members.

### **Standard S2: Everyone who works at the school strongly believes that family involvement is important to students' success and academic achievement.**

Indicators:

1. The school has formal, written policies or vision statements describing its commitment to increase the level and quality of family involvement in appropriate language(s).
2. The school has a family liaison responsible for promoting family involvement and school-family-community partnerships.
3. Funding is allocated to family involvement initiatives.
4. There is staff allotment to work on increasing the level and quality of family involvement.
5. The school provides and clearly defines multiple opportunities for all families to be involved in their children's education at home and at school.
6. Home visits are made as appropriate.

### **Standard S3: School staff use creative ways of reaching out to families who have not been involved in their children's education.**

Indicators:

1. There is a family liaison to make contact and develop relationships with families.
2. Resources are committed to boost involvement such as childcare, transportation, weekend and evening meetings at school and in the community, and stipends.
3. Resources are committed to pursue the involvement of families from diverse cultures.
4. There is a comprehensive family education program to meet the needs of families.
5. Parent education is made available for family members in parenting roles.

6. The school actively experiments with off-site neighborhood-based activities that meet families' needs.

**Standard S4: There is a strong partnership among school staff, students, families, and community members that increases students' success and academic achievement.**

Indicators:

1. Everyone who works at the school is expected to be knowledgeable and friendly towards all families and treat them with respect.
2. There is a group of people—teachers, administrators, school staff, family members, students (as appropriate), and others—who work together on increasing the level and quality of family involvement (for example, site council sub-committee, family involvement action team).
3. Family members are included as participants in staff development activities as appropriate.
4. Resources and services from the broader community (e.g.: parks, agencies, churches, etc.) are identified and drawn upon to strengthen student learning and development.
5. Activities are held at varied time to accommodate families' needs.
6. Everyone who works at the school is expected to understand, value, and encourage the many ways that families support their children's learning.

**Standard S5: The principal and site council provide active leadership increasing the level and quality of family engagement in children's education.**

Indicators:

1. The principal and site council direct adequate resources (financial, time, human) toward family engagement initiatives.
2. The principal and site council set high expectations of staff and families to work together to increase student success and academic achievement.
3. The principal and site council monitor the results of the school's initiatives to increase the level and quality of family involvement.
4. The principal and the site council are approachable and provide opportunities for dialogue with families (for example, monthly breakfasts with the principal).

**Standard S6: The school is responsive to the needs of its families.**

Indicators:

1. Handbooks, newsletters, report cards, and other communication are easy to understand and translated as appropriate.

2. Information is provided to families on how to meet their basic obligations such as providing shelter, proper nutrition, clothing, and creating a home environment that supports academic success.
3. Guidance and information is provided to families on how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.
4. School staff are familiar with options and resources available through the district (e.g.: parent education, adult literacy, work skills enhancement) and actively connect families with these resources.

**Standard S7: School staff, families, and community members work together to plan, put into action, and evaluate family involvement efforts.**

Indicators:

1. The school has a plan and process in place to identify and implement those family involvement standards that are given highest priority and communicates this plan to the larger school community.
2. In-service education and staff development opportunities related to working effectively with families are provided for school staff, family and community members (for example, making schools family friendly, working with diverse cultures, communicating with families, designing homework that engages families).
3. Family engagement initiatives are based on identified needs and desired outcomes.
4. There is a group of people—teachers, administrators, school staff, family members, students (as appropriate), and others—who work together on increasing the level and quality of family involvement (for example, site council sub-committee, family involvement action team).

**Standard S8: Everyone who works at the school draws upon the knowledge and expertise of all families to support the school as a whole.**

Indicators:

1. Everyone who works at the school draws upon the knowledge and expertise of all families and treats them with respect.
2. Parents or other family members serve on school committees and have meaningful decision-making roles.
3. The school provides a variety of well-planned and well-communicated volunteer opportunities for family and community members.

## **CLASSROOM LEVEL**

Q: Who is responsible for making it happen?

A: Classroom teachers, educational assistants, and other staff who directly engage in instruction.

**Standard C1: Families are seen and treated as partners in their children's education by teachers and other instructional staff.**

Indicators:

1. Teachers and instructional staff provide families with clear information on the school curriculum content standards, class syllabi, class schedules, programs, policies, and procedures.
2. Family members are welcome in the classroom and volunteer opportunities, responsibilities, and expectations are made clear and agreed upon by the teacher and family member.
3. Families are encouraged to support their children's learning at home and given specific suggestions on how they can best do this in order to complement and reinforce what is being taught at school.
4. There is communication between the family and teacher that is regular, two-way, and focuses on building trust and creating a relationship.
5. Families are kept up to date on their children's progress through regular communication such as notes sent home, phone calls, newsletters, report cards, newsletters, and conferences.
6. Teachers are open to feedback from families.
7. Feedback given to families on their child's progress balances the positive and negative.

**Standard C2: Each family's experiences, knowledge, and culture are respected and valued by teachers and other instructional staff.**

Indicators:

1. Interpreters are provided as necessary.
2. Teachers and other instructional staff are knowledgeable about families' culture, background, and experience.
3. Families are invited to share their experience, knowledge, and culture with school staff, teachers, and students.
4. Teachers and instructional staff work to develop partnerships with all families, not just those who volunteer, attend meetings, or are similar in culture, race, or socioeconomic background.
5. Teachers and instructional staff are trained in multi-cultural, gender-fair, and disability-aware practices and use them in working with families.

## **HOME LEVEL**

Q: Who is responsible for making it happen?

A: Parents, guardians, family members, and others who are in parenting roles and the child's primary caregivers.

**Standard H1: The family supports lifelong learning for its members, particularly children.**

Indicators:

1. The home environment actively supports learning through reading, writing, conversations, and discussions among family members.
2. There is a family routine that supports learning such as a set time for studying, watching television, and going to bed.
3. There is a positive communication between family members and children.
4. Parents and family members encourage children by asking about schoolwork and providing an appropriate atmosphere for doing homework.

5. Parents and family members encourage learning and the love of learning.
6. Reading is encouraged.
7. Parents and family members meet their basic obligations such as providing shelter, proper nutrition, and clothing for children to the best of their ability.
8. Parents and family members know what community resources exist and utilize them to meet their family and children's needs.

**Standard H2: The family has high but reasonable expectations of each child's educational achievement and makes these expectations clear.**

Indicators:

1. Children's development and progress in school are encouraged through family discussions, positive reinforcement, and modeling appropriate behavior such as love of learning, discipline.
2. There is a genuine interest in the child's growth and positive development.
3. The family has clear rules and consequences.
4. Parents and family members make sure their children get to school on time and attend school regularly.

**Standard H3: Parents and family members understand what is expected of them in supporting their child's success in school.**

Indicators:

1. Parents and family members are friendly towards and respectful of school staff and treat them as partners in their children's education.
2. Parents and family members respond to communication sent home in a timely manner and ask questions related to their child's academic progress.
3. Parents and family members communicate to school staff what they expect of the school in an appropriate and respectful manner.

**Standard H4: Parents and family members actively support the school and district's efforts to provide quality education to all students.**

Indicators:

1. Parents and family members are actively involved at the school (for example, volunteering in the classroom, serving on committees, attending parent/teacher conferences regularly, organizing events, and helping school staff in other ways).
2. Parents and family members are actively involved in district initiatives (for example, serving on Parent Partnership Councils or attending its meetings, serving on other district committees).