

**Effective: July 1, 2023**

## **UP Academy Parent Engagement Policy**

UP Academy believes that family and student engagement is an integral part of the student success equation. Families, students and schools need to be in partnership to maximize opportunities for students to achieve their full potential. To that end, this policy fosters proactive communication, student voice, education and support for the roles families can play that best support their students' learning, as well as collaboration and shared decision making among all stakeholders. It also provides guidance on capacity building in schools and with families in order to realize high quality engagement.

### **Communication**

Our school commits to communication methods that are welcoming and accessible to our student and family populations. This includes translation into high incidence languages, as well ensuring that messages are jargon free. While some messages by necessity call for mass-communication methods, such as those regarding the ongoing promotion of events, weather cancellations or whole school community incident reports, to the extent possible, communications should be personalized and provide for two-way dialogue or response. To that end, the district and its schools shall:

- Prioritize methods of communication with families that allow for direct, personal and two-way communication, such as phone calls, in person meetings, and the use of texting technology
- Assure that the school staff communicates clear expectations for performance to both students and parents
- Ensure that every document shared with families is translated and available in high incidence languages
- Ensure that an interpreter (staff, contracted or community partner-provided) is available to support interpretation requests by families whose first language is among those identified in the district as high incidence, and for essential conversations, such as IEP meetings, in the language requested regardless of incidence level
- For families whose first language is a low-incidence language, include in important messages home a notation translated in the appropriate language that encourages the family to have the entire notice translated
- Use multiple methods to reach families about activities or resource offerings, such as, but not limited to, outreach in the community, social media and website promotion, school newsletters, in backpacks through the schools, and automated calls, as necessary.
- Extend frequent and clear invitations for parents and other caregivers to be involved in student- or school-related activities, volunteer opportunities and related events, providing realistic lead times and reminders for families, as well as expressing the value of said opportunities as it correlates to student success. To the extent possible, at least one touch point per invitation should provide for two-way communication, such as a phone call, texting application, or similar.

## **Family Partnerships**

To foster family partnerships, our school must:

- Initiate proactive two-way communication with families and students. This may include, but is not limited to, personal calls, home visits, email, or physical mail that includes a reply mechanism, such as who to call or email for questions.
- Strive for regular touch points with families, such as, but not limited to, during student entry points (including for those who begin after the start of the year), semester, and/or mid-term check-ins.
- Frequent reports to parents on their children's progress.
- Encourage and create opportunities for families and educators to share information, discuss student needs and strengths, develop relationships and, as needed, build collaborative plans for safety and academic success.
- Schedule parent/teacher or student led conferences in accordance with the school's operational plans.
- Plan for meaningful meetings and conferences with families that include clearly stated objectives and, as needed, proper interpretation as well as translated materials, as outlined in the Communications section of this policy.
- Welcome the advocacy of parents and students seeking access to differentiated learning, alternative coursework or pathways (i.e. early college, credit recovery, AP coursework), as opportunities exist.
- Collaboratively plan with their school community to host welcome to school opportunities for new students in order to welcome, orient, and support their successful transitions. Said activities should support community building and the sharing of critical school level information and related resources.

The district shall identify and make available opportunities for development that build capacity of school leaders, staff and families in ways that enable and foster said partnerships.

## **Shared Decision Making**

Successful school improvement is best accomplished through a shared decision making process that involves all stakeholders. Equitable engagement requires school leaders to share power with students, families and staff. In such a model, school decisions are centered on students and inclusive of considerations for context, community, and capacity.

To ensure equitable opportunities for additional stakeholder contributions, the school must:

- Foster and maintain regular opportunities for parent, student, educator and school leader input and feedback. These should include regular meetings with principals, the establishment and maintenance of a student advisory (see JIB) and a districtwide stakeholder council, and the hosting of community dialogues as appropriate.
- Maintain a district entity to provide capacity building for schools and families, support schools in their related efforts, and bolster stakeholder engagement.
- Implement an annual school climate survey for parents and students, with resulting school-level data shared with individual schools for the purposes of whole school improvement planning.

Nothing in these guidelines should be construed as a mandate to establish a new entity if an existing structure exists that meets the guidelines provided herein.

Research points to five caretaker roles that are proven strategies for supporting students' academic success. Schools must maximize opportunities to inform, encourage and foster these roles:

- Monitoring their child's performance
- Guiding their child's education
- Communicating high expectations
- Supporting learning at home
- Advocating for their child

To this end, UP Academy should be intentional in the building of their school year calendar to identify opportunities for one-to-one conversations, messaging and events that feature one or more of these roles so that schools help families build their own capacity in each of these areas.

Further, parent/guardian access to a student's assignments, grades and attendance must be made consistently available, utilizing the parent portal or similar technology so that parents may monitor frequently their child's performance.

Utilizing proactive communication strategies (see above), schools can support learning at home, with suggestions about curriculum questions to ask their children or tips on how to extend learning at home.

### **Building Capacity**

The district must provide school leaders and staff annual guidance, regular professional development opportunities, and/or ongoing coaching to help schools build capacity for these authentic efforts.