Family and Community Engagement

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**General Provisions**

Albuquerque Public Schools has created this administrative procedural directive in order to formalize the significance of community and family engagement. Within this administrative procedural directive there are references to the school district’s goals, expectations, and responsibilities in engaging the community to increase student success in the Albuquerque Public Schools. This procedural directive reinforces the district goals which outline specific actions taken within the Albuquerque Public Schools to meet the intent found within this procedural directive.

Albuquerque Public Schools recognizes the important role families and community play in the improvement of our schools and the wellbeing of our students. Engaged communities and families is a critical component to reach our goal of dramatically increased student achievement. Albuquerque Public Schools affirms also that the involvement of family and community partners is critical to the overall success of our students and is essential to maintain the results of long-term, sustainable reforms in future years.

Albuquerque Public Schools recognizes that to ensure every student is eager to be a world-class citizen we must utilize the histories and cultures of our families, communities and students as the foundation for our educational programs. Our histories should be celebrated.

Albuquerque Public Schools shall strive to actively build partnerships with families and the community by:

- Fostering safe and welcoming environments;
- Strengthening relationships and capacity with families, teachers, school and district administrators and community partners;
- Expanding communication between families, community partners and schools; and
- Cultivating equitable and effective systems.

**Engaging Families and Community Partners in Decisions**

Albuquerque Public Schools will consider the intent of this procedural directive when considering changing existing policies, putting a new policy in place, changing administrative procedural directives, developing district goal actions or taking other actions that will have significant impact on students and their families.

There are a few instances in which a different set of engagement protocols is dictated by law. Please refer to the Title I Parent Involvement Agreement or the Indian Education Procedural Directive for information regarding those engagement plans. Additionally, Albuquerque Public Schools may make decisions without specific community or family input, but will strive to do so only when absolutely necessary.
Promoting Thoughtful Conversations about Engaging Families and Community Partners

Albuquerque Public Schools believes that family and community engagement is not a one-size fits all program. Rather than establish specific programs and rules for engaging families and community partners, Albuquerque Public Schools poses the following questions for consideration. Every member of the Albuquerque Public Schools community – staff, families, community partners and students – should reflect upon these questions when making decisions:

- How should I set the example for students that education is an important priority?
- How can I help emphasize the importance of academics at home, including reading and homework?
- How can I help families work with their children on the homework assignments?
- How can I help create an educational environment at home and in the community that supplements the educational learning that occurs in school?
- How can I help families make sure children get to school on time, rested, nourished and ready to learn?
- How can I guarantee families get involved in the schools where their children are being educated?
- How can I intervene when a child may be struggling?

Safe and Welcoming Environments

Albuquerque Public Schools shall strive to create safe and welcoming environments. A safe and welcoming environment means that all visitors to a school are recognized, greeted, treated respectfully and provided the best information possible about their schools. Albuquerque Public Schools recognizes that a welcoming environment is a balance between open schools and the protection of our students. All visitors will be welcome in our schools, but Albuquerque Public Schools shall continue to require proper identification of visitors to ensure the safety of our students and the proper educational environment for students.

As outlined in the district goal action plans, Albuquerque Public Schools will strive to:

- Have signage at schools and informational materials distributed to students, families and community partners posted in languages spoken by the community of the schools.
- Provide training to staff members, particularly office staff members, which stress behaviors to make visitors to schools, families and community partners feel welcome.
- Support schools to identify strategies to ensure individuals who speak the languages spoken by community members are present in the school and that the individual may help families who require translation services.
- Provide volunteering and other participation opportunities in the schools. For more information on volunteering, please refer to volunteering procedural directive.
• Show appreciation for family and community participation in the schools, be it volunteering or attending a school event, and make families and community feel valued for that participation.

• Identify unsafe situations for students, including violent behavior and bullying, and intervene to control those situations to the best of our ability. Intervention may include, but not be limited to, mediation, mental health services and disciplinary actions. For more information on bullying, please refer to bullying administrative procedural directives.

**Strengthening Relationships**

Albuquerque Public Schools shall strive to strengthen relationships and capacity with families, teachers, school and district administrators and community partners. Albuquerque Public schools recognizes the importance of families as educators in their student’s lives.

Albuquerque Public Schools believes that working together with families and the community is the best way to increase student success. Albuquerque Public Schools, through curriculum selection committees, instructional councils, health and wellness committees, parent organizations, Title I resources and many other committees upon which families and community has representation, will share resources and seek the advice of the community for development of educational programs. These committees represent the epicenter of information sharing and capacity building.

Albuquerque Public Schools recognizes also the importance of continuing education for our families. Albuquerque Public Schools will continue to pursue educational programs that provide educational opportunities for adults, as well as children.

As outlined in the district goal action plans, Albuquerque Public Schools will strive to:

• Stress the importance of family engagement and fostering partnerships with community based agencies.

• Provide educational opportunities for families through the district’s parent university.

• Provide information for families and community partners regarding their legal rights and the rights of their students.

• Hold curriculum evening events when schools explain the educational programs for students, academic standards and expectations to families.

• Receive feedback from families through school climate surveys in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of schools and their family and community engagement.

• Provide opportunities for families to understand and ask questions about school performance.

• Identify and refer families to community resources that may be helpful in the individual situation of the family.
Expanding Communication
Effective communication is a way of sharing information in which both family members and school personnel can discuss ways to improve student success. Communication requires respectful dialogue with all involved parties.

Albuquerque Public Schools accepts the responsibility of communicating district decisions, goals and academic programs. However, families and community partners must also accept the responsibility of actively participating and listening so meaningful dialogue may take place between the district and the community.

As outlined in the district goal action plans, Albuquerque Public Schools will strive to:

- Use a variety of communication tools on a regular basis.
- Use communication that is language-appropriate, culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate to the community. Appropriate translation and interpretation services will be made available to non-English speakers for communication unless there are extenuating circumstances which limit the district’s ability to provide translation.
- Establish both formal structured and informal opportunities for families and educators to share information, including open houses, community forums, parent commitment cards, feedback forms, newsletters, the APS website, school websites, and parent centers.

Equitable and Effective Systems
Equitable and effective systems exist when every school, regardless of geographic location, institutionalizes strategies for ensuring that all students and families are adequately served.

As outlined in Board of Education policy, Albuquerque Public Schools shall strive to integrate innovative educational programs to address the diverse needs of students, ensure that each student succeeds, and close the educational gap. Albuquerque Public Schools must provide the necessary supports to teachers in each school to establish an effective academic environment that supports the success of each student in collaboration with family and community members.

As outlined in the district goal action plans, Albuquerque Public Schools will strive to:

- Celebrate the cultural diversity of our schools and continue conversations about cultural proficiency in the district.
- Collect and maintain records in formats that are accessible and understandable to the appropriate families, community members and students.
- Have a family and community group at every school consisting of school staff and family representatives. These groups might include, but are not limited to Instructional Councils, School Health Advisory Councils, PTA, and PTSA.
- Ensure that family members have an opportunity to be included on appropriate decision-making and advisory committees such as School Health Advisory Councils and Instructional Councils.