

Decatur County Schools

District Parent and Family Engagement Policy

2020-21

In support of strengthening student academic achievement, Decatur County Schools receives Title I, Part A funds and therefore must jointly develop with, agree on with, and distribute to parents and family members of participating children a written parent and family engagement policy that contains information required by Section 1116(a)(2) of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The policy establishes the district's expectations and objectives for meaningful parent and family engagement and describes how the district will implement a number of specific parent and family engagement activities.

The Decatur County School District agrees to implement the following requirements as outlined by Section 1116:

- The school district will put into operation programs, activities, and procedures for the engagement of parents and family members in all of its schools with Title I, Part A programs. These programs, activities, and procedures will be planned and operated with meaningful consultation with parents and family members of participating children.
- Consistent with Section 1116, the school district will work with its schools to ensure that the required school-level parent and family engagement policies meet the requirements of Section 1116(b) of the ESSA, and each include as a component a school-parent compact consistent with Section 1116(d) of the ESEA.
- In carrying out the Title I, Part A parent and family engagement requirements to the extent practicable, the school district and its schools will provide full opportunities for the participation of families with limited English proficiency, limited literacy, disabilities, of migratory children, who are economically disadvantaged, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background, including providing information and school reports required under Section 1111 of the ESSA in an understandable and uniform format including alternative formats upon request and, to the extent practicable, in a language families understand.
- If the district plan for Title I, Part A, developed under Section 1112 of the ESEA, is not satisfactory to the families of participating children, the school district will submit any parent comments with the plan when the school district submits the plan to the state department of education.
- The school district will be governed by the following definition of family engagement and expects that its Title I schools will carry out programs, activities, and procedures in accordance with this definition in Section 8101 of the ESSA:
Family engagement means the participation of families in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:
 - (A) families play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
 - (B) families are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
 - (C) families are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and
 - (D) other activities are carried out, such as those described in Section 1116 of the ESEA.

Description of how the district will implement required district parent and family engagement policy components:

JOINTLY DEVELOPED

The **Decatur County School District** will take the following actions to involve parents and family members in jointly developing its LEA plan under Section 1112, and the development of support and improvement plans under paragraphs (1) and (2) of Section 1111(d) of the ESEA:

1) Parent representatives from each school within the district will meet semiannually to review/revise the Family Engagement Policy. 2) Parent and school representatives will meet multiple times during the system planning process to review plan sections and discuss responses and ways to better serve populations such as EL and Homeless. 3) Parents will play a critical role in reviewing school improvement plans by providing input on school-based activities that will increase parent participation at various academic and enrichment activities held within the schools.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The **Decatur County School District** will provide the following coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist and build capacity of all Title I, Part A schools in planning and implementing effective parent and family engagement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance, which may include meaningful consultation with employers, business leaders, and philanthropic organizations, or individuals with expertise in effectively engaging parents and family members in education:

1) The Federal Programs Supervisor, who also serves as the Title I Director, will make every effort to attend the meetings held at each of the schools on a monthly, quarterly, and/or annual basis. 2) The Supervisor will review improvement plans for clarity and thoroughness in addressing the different components of the plan. 3) The Supervisor will serve on each of the school family engagement committees to provide suggestions on how family participation might be improved at each of the schools. Parent representatives are also active business/community members that provide insight pertaining to trends in the workforce.

ANNUAL EVALUATION

The **Decatur County School District** will take the following actions to conduct, with the meaningful involvement of parents and family members, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of this parent and family engagement policy in improving the academic quality of its Title I, Part A schools. The evaluation will include identifying barriers to greater participation by families in activities (with particular attention to families who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background). The evaluation will also include identifying the needs of parents and family members to assist with the learning of their children, including engaging with school personnel and teachers and strategies to support successful school and family interactions. The school district will use the findings of the evaluation about

its parent and family engagement policy to design evidence-based strategies for more effective family engagement, and to revise, if necessary, its parent and family engagement policies.

The Federal Programs Supervisor will continue to attend parent and family engagement meetings in the fall at each of the schools at which time parents, teachers and other community members that may be in attendance will review the district engagement policy and offer suggestions on items that need to be added or revised to better serve the students and families within the district. The policy will be updated as needed and posted on the school system website and school specific websites that are available.

Parent surveys will be distributed in the spring of each school year to assess opinions on school environment, instructional activities, safety, and other issues that are relevant to provide a strong educational foundation for Decatur County students.

It is the goal of Decatur County Schools to provide all parent policies and relevant documents in the dominant language spoken in the home. At present, the dominant languages in the school system are English and Spanish.

RESERVATION OF FUNDS

The Decatur County School District will involve the parents and family members of children served in Title I, Part A schools in decisions about how the 1 percent of Title I, Part A funds reserved for parent and family engagement is spent and will ensure that not less than 90 percent of the 1 percent reserved goes directly to Title I schools.

Decatur County School District is required to reserve the 1% due to the amount of the Title I allocation for the 2020-21 school year. The principals within the school district have given permission for the federal programs supervisor to expend the funds on a district-wide basis as opposed to per school. The funds are used to purchase magnetic calendars for parents which include key dates for parents/students during the school year, partial renewal of TransAct to provide mandated parent notifications on ESSA required documents in the school system's dominant languages of English and Spanish, and backpacks which are distributed during the annual Back-to-School Bash. Given restrictions due to COVID-19 for the current school year, the backpacks were distributed to each school to give to students during registration.

COORDINATION OF SERVICES

The Decatur County School District will coordinate and integrate parent and family engagement strategies with other relevant federal, state, and local laws and programs with parent and family engagement strategies, to the extent feasible and appropriate, *such as Voluntary and Locally funded PreK programs and the Ayers Foundation* that encourage and support families in more fully participating in the education of their children by:

1) School Title I parent meetings at the elementary level are open to PreK parents/students along with other activities such as reading night, family information nights, etc. that are held throughout the school year to promote a smooth integration into Kindergarten and to expose the PreK population to the various programs that are available.

2) Ayers Foundation provides parent meetings for high school students in preparation for post-secondary attendance. Meetings are held on financial aid documents to assist parents in knowing how and what is required to pursue financial assistance for post-secondary enrollment.

BUILDING CAPACITY OF PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

The Decatur County School District will, with the assistance of its Title I schools, build families' capacity for strong family engagement by providing materials and training on such topics as literacy training and using technology (including education about the harms of copyright piracy) to help families work with their children to improve their children's academic achievement. Assistance will also be provided to parents and families in understanding the following topics:

- The challenging state academic standards;
- The state and local academic assessments including alternate assessments;
- The requirements of Title I, Part A;
- How to monitor their child's progress; and
- How to work with educators.

Each of the K-8 schools host activities multiple times throughout the school year to address academic standards, how to prepare for state assessments, and question/answer sessions with teachers. Decaturville Elementary hosts FFIN (Family Fun Informational Nights); Parsons Elementary hosts PEACE (Parents/Educators Academic Collaborative Effort); and Decatur County Middle hosts SPIN (Student Parent Informational Nights). There are a variety of meetings held at Riverside High School targeted to specific grade levels especially for 11th and 12th grade students that are involved in dual credit and other post-secondary activities. Each school hosts a back to school night at the beginning of the school year. The elementary schools host each of the grade levels at back to school night while the middle school focuses on 5th grade and new students, and the high school focuses on 9th grade and new students. Riverside also hosts an 8th grade night in the spring to help students become familiar with the career technical programs that will be available to them when they enter high school. Parents and students have the opportunity to tour the school buildings and meet with teachers not only during the back to school activities, but by appointment at any time during the school year. Parent meetings were also held at the beginning of the school year at each of the schools for students that opted for the virtual education program through the school district to provide information on how the virtual school component will operate and relate to in-person instruction. Decatur County Schools has an open door policy for all parents through an appointment process.

BUILDING CAPACITY OF SCHOOL STAFF

The Decatur County School District will, with the assistance of its schools and families, educate its teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, principals, and other school leaders, and other staff in the value and utility of contributions of families, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with families as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between families and schools by:

***Establishing a districtwide parent advisory council to provide advice on all matters related to parent and family engagement in Title I, Part A programs.**

- Decatur County Schools will continue to use a district parent advisory council consisting of parents, business leaders, and school system administrators. This group will discuss progress and challenges within each of the schools and district to improve the involvement of parents and families in the educational process. The council will provide input on the annual parent involvement survey document and participate in activities that are sponsored at the schools throughout the school year.

***Developing appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses, including faith-based organizations, in family engagement activities.**

- Community groups including Scouts, local churches, Shepherd's Fund, hair salons, etc. participate in the Back-to-School Bash held annually on fall registration day. The event is sponsored by Coordinated School Health and brings many organizations together to provide needed supplies to help students begin the school year in a positive way. Title I parent engagement also participates in the event by providing backpacks to all students that attend.
- The local 4-H agents are very involved in the school system by serving on parent advisory committees and working with parents and students in activities not only during the school day, but also in extended school programs and community activities held throughout the school year.

ADOPTION

This district parent and family engagement policy has been developed jointly and agreed on with parents and family members of children participating in Title I, Part A programs, as evidenced by the attached sign-in sheets.

This policy was adopted by the Decatur County School District on 08/27/20 and will be in effect for the period of the 2020-21 school year. The school district will distribute this policy to families of participating Title I, Part A children via annual parent meetings and on the district website www.decalurcountyschools.org on or before 10-01-2020.