



# *Huntingdon Special School District*

## *Family Involvement Plan*

**Adopted 2005-2006 School Year**

**Revised 2011-2012 School Year**

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## **Background**

In January 2005, the state of Tennessee in partnership with Family Friendly Schools began training Tennessee teachers for increased emphasis in engaging parents, guardians, and families in student activities. Dr. Steve Constantino, founder of the Family Friendly Schools Institute, helped to lead the state of Tennessee toward the engagement of all families in every district, school, and classroom. Workshops were held across the state to insure that districts, schools, and individual teachers had the necessary information and positive attitudes to make their environments family friendly.

Huntingdon Special School District sent district administrators and representatives from families in the district to these trainings. After the training sessions were over, district administrators, teachers, and staff along with family representatives met to discuss how the Huntingdon Special School District could become more family friendly. Discussions were held, surveys were distributed, and research was accomplished to work toward ensuring family engagement was taking place.

This plan was developed as a result of the trainings and meetings to ensure that all family members and students have equal access to all schools as well as ensuring a family friendly atmosphere. Standards were developed to make sure that happened. These standards are addressed in this plan.

This Family Involvement Plan is a living, working document and will continue to evolve as the Huntingdon Special School District moves ahead with future emphasis on family involvement.

## **Purpose**

The Huntingdon Special School District Family Involvement Plan was developed to:

- Create a common vision of what needs to be accomplished 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 across the district
- Identify what needs to be accomplished at the district, school, classroom, and home levels

## **Benefits**

### **For Students:**

- Higher grades and test scores
- Better attendance and homework completion
- Fewer placements in special education

- More positive attitudes and behavior
- Higher graduation rates
- Greater enrollment in post-secondary education

#### **For Families:**

- Improved understanding of their child's development
- Improved ability to parent
- Improved ability to assist their children with school and learning
- Improved relationships among all stakeholders

To better understand how to engage students in school, we must understand that family involvement practices are an integral part of school culture, and we must recognize their influence on individual students and their engagement in school.

### **Part I – General Expectations**

#### **LEA Board Policy**

In conjunction with the Tennessee Code Annotated 49-6-7001 thru 7003 and the State Board of Education *Tennessee Parent Family Involvement Policy*, Huntingdon Special School District has developed a School Board Policy to support Parent/Family Involvement. This policy may be found in any LEA policy manual and is represented by the Descriptor Code: 4.502.

#### **Family Involvement Plan Development**

Huntingdon Special School District has developed this Family Involvement Plan to establish the expectations for parent and family involvement. This plan was developed by a team composed of district administrators, teachers, staff, and family members. This plan will include the specific details necessary to carry out Huntingdon Special School District Board Policy 4.502, Parent/Family Involvement.

#### **Parent Involvement in Plan Development**

As with any plan development, much forethought must be given to the construct of the appropriate program and how the program affects students. The parent involvement plan was no different. The initial phase of plan development included three distinct training sessions provided by the State of Tennessee Department of Education. In conjunction with Dr. Steve Constantino and the Family Friendly Schools Institute, district administrators and several parents attended workshops delineating how the proper set-up of a good family involvement plan should take place. After attending these workshops, the district administrators and attending family members met with other personnel (teachers and staff) from the school district and interested stakeholders to determine the next course of action. The interested stakeholders included parents, family members, business members, local government leaders, and other interested

parties. At this meeting, the district administrators and family members that attended the state training outlined the family friendly program and asked for ideas and input concerning how to make the school district more family friendly. After the meeting, the information was compiled and the plan was well on its way to being written.

### **Coordination/Technical Assistance**

Coordination and/or technical assistance will be provided by the school district to insure proper notification procedures. Coordination of Parent/Family Involvement activities will be handled by the District Family and Community Engagement Team Leader. Several methods may be used to coordinate activities. These methods may include, but are not limited to:

- District/School Web Sites
- District Newsletters
- Workshops provided by the district
- Telephone calls
- Surveys

### **Building School and Parent Capacity for Involvement**

Building the capacity for involvement will take a joint effort on the part of both school personnel and family members. The first step in building this capacity is to ensure that family members feel welcome in the schools of the Huntingdon Special School District. Family members must feel as though they can play a part in their child's education. Education is not solely the responsibility of the classroom teacher, and family members must feel welcome to take part in the education of their child. Huntingdon Special School District will ensure a welcoming atmosphere in all schools and will provide constant monitoring of this avenue of the parent involvement activities of each school. Activities outside of the regular school day will include:

- Family Friendly Nights (Family Night Out) – Huntingdon School District will host at least two (2) Family Night's Out each school year (one in the fall and one in the spring). These nights will allow parents and their children to come out to the schools, enjoy a meal provided by the district, and partake in informative workshops and entertainment provided by the district.
- Open Library – Schools in the district will routinely open the library after school hours to provide parents the opportunity to come to school with their child for the purpose of reading books to them and with them.
- School/District Web Sites – Each school and the district itself will operate a website that will inform and guide parents in activities provided by the district and the school.
- Open School Nights – The schools in the district will provide parent nights for their students so parents and students may spend time together in a nurturing environment to stimulate the growth of the students.

## **Coordination and Integration of Parent Involvement Strategies**

Parent involvement strategies will be coordinated through each school principal and ultimately through the Family and Community Engagement Team Leader for the district. Each school in the district will implement strategies to aide in the development of effective community and parental involvement. These strategies will include, but are not limited to:

- Parent resource centers
- Head Start
- Family Literacy Programs
- Preschool programs
- State-run preschool operated by the school district

## **Annual Evaluation**

This plan will be evaluated on an annual basis by district personnel, school personnel, family members, business leaders, community and civic leaders, and other interested personnel. This plan will be updated as needed to update the content and effectiveness of the plan. The plan will be evaluated each year during the last month of the school year, typically in May.

## **Title I Schools**

Huntingdon Special School District, has only one Title I school in the district. Huntingdon Primary School is that school. Because of the nature of a Title I school, parents will be involved in all aspects of the activities of the school. This includes, but is not limited to, regular classroom activities, special occasion activities, special computer lab activities, etc. It is the belief of district personnel that parental involvement in this arena is vital to student success.

## **Professional Development**

Parents will be invited to participate in certain professional development activities. This participation will increase parent understanding as well as teacher understanding when dealing with children. Parents will provide input to increase effective strategies for the daily operations of the schools

## **English Language Learners (ELL)**

Huntingdon Special School District typically has a very small population of ELL students. However, this does not lessen the need for promoting participation among parents. In the case of ELL students' parents, information will be disseminated in the native language(s) where applicable.

## **Progress and Performance**

In accordance with Huntingdon Special School District Board Policy 4.601, parents are notified of students' progress by means of progress reports, report cards, parent/teacher conferences, and individual parent conferences. Student progress on standardized tests will be reported through the student's school when results of the tests are released by the state. LEA progress and performance will be reported annually through use of website, newsletters, newspapers, and other appropriate means.

## **Identification of Barriers**

Huntingdon Special School District will make every effort possible to identify families who face barriers that prevent them from participating in activities of the school district. These barriers include, but are not limited to, economically disadvantaged, disabled, limited English proficiency, limited literacy, racial or ethnic minorities. These families will be targeted by placing special emphasis in web page design, letters, and newsletters, and family friendly nights sponsored by the district.

## **Evaluation Strategies**

Huntingdon Special School District will, from time to time, evaluate the process of family engagement. The evaluation process will include surveys, questionnaires, and like instruments. The evaluation process will then be used to improve family engagement. This will be done by using the evaluation instrument to locate areas of weakness and highlight areas of strength. Areas of weakness will be improved and areas of strength will be strengthened. The overall process is designed to improve family engagement at the class, school, and district level.

## **Activities**

Huntingdon Special School District schools will design activities related to the particular emphasis of the schools. Each school will implement activities that will encourage family engagement. In addition to the school activities, Huntingdon Special School District will schedule, at a minimum, two Family Friendly Nights, one each semester. These nights will showcase the schools in the district. Each Family Friendly Night will consist of a meal provided to the families at no cost, a presentation for family members, and a presentation for students. These nights will be funded by funds generated by No Child Left Behind mandates.

## **Student Improvement Strategies**

Each school in the Huntingdon Special School District will design improvement strategies to help students and parents by providing information concerning homework, attendance, and discipline. Recommendations include homework hotlines, webpage design strategies, and parental notifications.

## **Curriculum**

Depend upon the age group of the child, the schools in the Huntingdon Special School District will provide access to the course of study for their children. All schools will ensure that parents have access to all learning materials provided for their children within the school. Access will include, but is not limited to course syllabi, course profiles and requirements, teacher notes, additional learning materials distributed to parents, etc. Means of notification may include email, letters, newsletters, and the school/district website.

## **Distribution**

On an annual basis, the school district will distribute copies of the Family Involvement Plan. This will be done for all incoming students at the beginning of the school year. Students registering after school commences will be given a copy of the plan at that time.

## **Part II – Family and Community Engagement Team Plan Review**

Huntingdon Special School District will use the Family Friendly School-District Family Engagement Policy Assessment and Development (rubric) as a self-evaluation. Once the self-evaluation is completed, the results of the evaluation will be shared with members of the family engagement planning committee as well as administrators, faculty, and staff of the Huntingdon Special School District. Huntingdon Special School District will provide direct and indirect evidence of the strategic activities being implemented in the district to promote family and community engagement.