

Johnson County Schools  
Mountain City, Tennessee

**Family/Community  
Engagement  
Plan**

October 20, 2005

*Stressing Success for All Students*

**Family/Community Engagement  
Planning Committee**

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Committee Co-Chairpersons

Committee Members

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## **Introduction**

The Johnson County Board of Education encourages and supports family and community engagement in Johnson County Schools. The engagement of family and community members in the schools is vital to the quality of education in our schools and the academic success of each student. Family and community engagement must focus on building collaborative relationships between teachers, administrators, parents and community members. This partnership of shared responsibility must recognize, respect and address the diversity and needs of our families and be based on consistent two-way communication.

The value of effective school-home partnerships is well documented. Benefits for students include:

- higher achievement and improved success on standardized tests.
- increased attendance.
- increased motivation.
- improved behavior.
- decreased use of drugs and alcohol.
- decreased drop-out rate.
- increased graduation rate.
- greater enrollment in post- secondary education.

Additional benefits for families include:

- improved understanding of the development of their child.
- improved positive parent/child communication.
- improved relationships with teachers and school administrators.
- greater understanding of school goals and curriculum.
- increased ability to assist students with learning.

Increased community support for schools is another benefit of an effective family and community engagement program.

The mission and beliefs of Johnson County Schools support the importance of family and community engagement.

### *Mission Statement*

*Johnson County School System will educate all students in a safe, positive environment that enables them to develop and pursue lifelong learning goals.*

### *Beliefs*

*All students have an equal right to a quality education in a safe, positive environment.*

*All students can achieve their potential if provided with appropriate opportunities.*

*Education can empower each student to achieve an optimum level of social, physical, emotional, intellectual and academic success.*

*A strong partnership between school, home and community is essential.*

*Innovation in education is necessary to meet the needs of our youth and society.*

A committee of parents and educators developed the Johnson County Family/Community Engagement Plan. This plan will be distributed to all schools and posted on the Johnson County Schools Website. Schools will be encouraged to share the policy with all parents and to include the policy in future handbooks and newsletters. Parent concerns about the Family/Community plan will be addressed in a timely and respectful manner.

The family/community engagement committee will annually review the family/community engagement plan and revise the plan as needed to support continued successful parent and community engagement. Input from school personnel and parents will be used in the revision of the family community engagement plan. The *Family Friendly Schools* Survey and other parent surveys will also be referenced in district level family/community engagement planning.

Technical assistance and support will be provided to all schools in the implementation of successful family/community engagement. The parent involvement coordinator and the supervisor of Title I will continue in their role of support persons to coordinate and assist Title I schools with technical needs and other support needed to develop effective family/community engagement programs. Training will be provided in all Title 1 schools in effective family/community engagement and in other schools as requested. The *Family Friendly Schools* Survey and other school level surveys will be referenced in planning of family/community engagement activities.

Central Office staff will continue to guide school staff in all schools in development of parent involvement activities, exploring effective staff development in this area and in the strengthening of existing parent/school organization. Stressing the importance of parent/community involvement in school/parent organizations, school improvement planning and other decision-making processes will remain a focus of Central Office staff.

All family/community engagement activities, programs and strategies will be planned at both the district and school level with meaningful consultation with parents. It is important that family/community activities accommodate the diverse needs of families by developing innovative and flexible activities. The importance of family/community engagement from preschool through high school should also be noted.

Family/Community Engagement strategies and programs will be coordinated with other agencies such as Head Start and Pre-School programs. All elementary family/community engagement activities will include these young students and their families.

### **Barriers to Parent Involvement**

Barriers to effective parent involvement were identified as a component of the development of the family/community engagement district plan. Barriers that prevent effective engagement of groups such as economically disadvantaged, disabled, minority or limited English speaking parents are as follows:

- transportation.
- preconception of school.
- miscommunication.
- education not valued.
- children not living with parents.
- addiction.
- lack of medical and dental care for parent.

An ongoing focus of effective family/community at both the school and district level is meeting the challenges of these barriers. Planning at both levels must address these barriers and design strategies that support both effective family and community engagement and begin to decrease these barriers. It must be a goal at both school and district level to eliminate these barriers through honest consultation with parents and the development of partnerships with other agencies such as Johnson County Health Department and Frontier Health. The school social worker can also be a valuable resource in working with individual families to eliminate barriers between home and school.

### **Parent Involvement**

Parents are encouraged to become involved in schools by:

- becoming members and participating in local parent-teacher organizations.
- expressing their ideas, questions and concerns by responding to surveys, evaluations and other requests for information.

- serving on committees and/or councils formed for the purpose of school improvement planning, parent involvement plans, school-parent compacts and the review/evaluation of such plans and policies.
- acting as resources for sharing specific talents, skills or vocations to enhance classroom instruction.
- practicing activities and guidance in the home for the support and encouragement of the academic efforts of their child.
- volunteering to assist the schools as needed.
- sharing questions and concerns with school staff in a respectful manner.
- participate in the development of the individualized educational plan of students with disabilities.

### **Family/Community Engagement Activities and Strategies**

It is the belief of Johnson County Schools that all families should be treated in a friendly, respectful and helpful manner by all staff employed in the school system. Parent questions, recommendations and concerns will be addressed in a timely and respectful manner.

It is the responsibility of the school district to provide opportunities for all parents to fully participate in family/community engagement activities including those with disabilities, limited English proficiency and migrant families. All information will be in a written format understandable to all parents and may be provided in an alternative format as requested.

The district wide parent advisory council will continue to meet on a quarterly basis.

Parent input and the inclusion of family/community engagement activities are required components of the school improvement planning process.

Handbooks are sent home at the beginning of each year by each school.

Parent conferences will be scheduled each semester to discuss student progress. *Think Link* data will be used in grades K-8 to review the on-going progress of students.

Additional conferences are encouraged and can be scheduled at any time.

Student progress will be reported through midterm reports, report cards, assessment information, telephone call, letters, email and other appropriate means.

Schools are encouraged to send monthly newsletters as well as frequent information from classroom teachers.

Schools are required to have parents as members of school improvement planning teams, advisory councils and other decision-making bodies.

Each school will provide information to parents concerning the course of study (curriculum) in use at the school along with information concerning the forms of assessment used and the required proficiency level for students. A syllabus will be sent home with the first midterms for students in grades K-8 which will include major units of instruction, a schedule of assessments and the proficiency level expected of students. In grades 9-12, course syllabi will also be shared with parents along with information about when Gateway examinations are administered and the required proficiency levels for those examinations. Additionally, Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) projection data will be shared with parents at the high school level.

The Johnson County Website will also provide links to curriculum information as well as the Johnson County Consolidated Plan and the Johnson County Family/Community Engagement Plan. Links to school and system level assessment data will be provided as well.

Parents will be notified of their right to access all learning materials through the Johnson County Website and through school handbooks and newsletters.

All schools should implement a strategy to involve families in an effort improve the effectiveness of homework. Suggested strategies include:

- listing homework on school websites along with links for suggested websites to help with homework.
- increasing parent awareness of ThinkLink sites that reinforce skills.
- record messages about homework on voicemail.
- afterschool programs for students and parents to complete homework with teacher assistance.
- advise parents of procedure of picking up homework or obtaining make-up work during student absences.
- other strategies developed at the school level designed to address homework concerns specific to that building.

All schools are to implement a strategy designed to involve parent in improved attendance. Suggested strategies include:

- posting attendance policy on school websites.
- including attendance policies in local newspapers and media as well as handbooks.
- use of rewards for improved attendance such as field trips or eating lunch with principal.
- use of rewards for students having perfect attendance for grading period.
- sharing ideas with parents for rewarding good attendance.

- community events for students with high attendance at the end of each semester.
- other strategies developed at the school level designed to address attendance specific to that building.

All schools are to implement a strategy designed to involve parents in improved student behavior. Suggested strategies include:

- increased communication of the discipline policy through school and district websites, handbooks, newsletter, media and during parent conferences.
- include parents in development of behavior programs at the student, class and school level.
- increase parent/teacher communication about behavior through phone messages, letters , email, etc.
- other strategies developed at the school level designed to address behavior concerns specific to that building.

It should be noted that all Title I schools will meet all requirements for parent involvement under Title I of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. Parent involvement activities funded with Title 1 parent involvement funds are developed through meaningful consultation with parents.

### **Summary**

Many benefits for both families and schools come from a successful family and community engagement program. Families who are involved with their children's lives and schools motivate their children to achieve at the highest levels. A partnership between family and school strengthens both home environments and student learning. Johnson County Schools will strive to develop that partnership through interactions and activities based on mutual respect and regard for the diversity and needs of our families.