



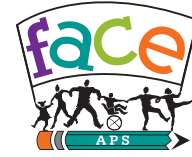
Arlington
Public
Schools

FACE: Family & Community Engagement

BRIEFING REPORT

APRIL 2019





family and community engagement



FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2014, Arlington Public Schools adopted an innovative Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Policy recognizing the importance of creating meaningful partnerships with families and community organizations to support student success and well-being. The FACE policy directs APS to work actively and collaboratively to achieve the following six goals:

Goal 1 – Welcoming all families into the school community

Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to APS staff, and to what students are learning and doing in school.

Goal 2 – Communicating effectively

Staff and families engage in regular, meaningful, two-way communication about student learning and social emotional development.

Goal 3 – Supporting student success

Staff and families have opportunities to collaborate and strengthen their knowledge and skills to support student learning and social and emotional development at home and school.

Goal 4 – Advocating for every student

Families and students are empowered to be advocates, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities, resources and supports that will ensure their success.

Goal 5 – Sharing responsibility

APS staff, families, and students are partners in decisions that affect students and together inform and influence policies, practices, and program.

Goal 6 – Collaborating with community

APS staff, families, and community members connect students to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

APS FACE Policy Implementation Procedure (I-11.1 PIP-1) provides guidelines to support school leaders and staff in achieving these goals and identifies main tasks and areas of responsibility for implementation at both the central and school levels.

MAJOR SERVICES PROVIDED

The FACE Office in the Department of Teaching and Learning contributes to achieving the goals of the 2018-24 Strategic Plan by focusing on the following areas:

- Educate stakeholders about FACE as an essential strategy for student and school improvement through a variety of means, including the creation and maintenance of a robust webpage and social media presence, presentations and updates about FACE work in APS.
- Provide a menu of learning opportunities for staff to build their capacity to engage families in ways that support student success.
- Expand the menu of learning opportunities for families with a focus on helping families of English learners navigate the school system to support and advocate for students, and supporting the development of a diverse parent leadership cadre and social networks.
- Provide tools, technical assistance and resources for school communities to assess their practice, develop strategies for engaging families as true partners, and measure their progress and impact.
- Contribute to creating a culture of collaboration and coordination across departments and with community partners for FACE to become integrated, systemic, and sustained.

BRIGHT SPOTS

FACE CHECKLIST

In previous years the FACE Office, with input from the FACE Action Team, produced and piloted a few checklists for schools to evaluate their practice around the six FACE goals and identify areas in need of improvement. Based on the feedback received, these tools were consolidated into a single comprehensive Checklist: Is Your School Using High-Impact Practices to Engage Families? The checklist includes key questions to consider under each of the FACE goals addressing the policy guidelines and offers examples of high impact strategies schools can consider under each goal as they to strengthen their partnerships with families and community partners.

CROSSWALK OF FACE CHECKLIST AND YOUR VOICE MATTERS (YVM) SURVEY

An important contribution of the FACE Office and the Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families this year was to generate a crosswalk of the indicators on the YVM survey with the FACE Checklist described above. Some schools used the crosswalk to see how the results of their self-assessments compared with the feedback from the YVM surveys as they planned for the new school year.

FACE STRAND IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FRAMEWORK

APS now has a strand of FACE learning opportunities using various formats--face-to-face, blended and on-line--that staff can enroll in to strengthen their capacity to partner effectively with families in their classrooms and schools. In 2018-19 we offered a new on-line Introduction to FACE module required for all new teachers and open to others. We also revamped the FACE Seminar, High Impact Strategies for Engaging Our Diverse Families for school teams, which now consists of 4 sessions and showcases high impact strategies being implemented in our schools.

ACADEMIC PARENT TEACHER TEAMS

APTT is a nationally recognized high-impact system of family engagement that aligns grade level learning concepts, student performance data, and family-teacher communication and collaboration. After piloting APTT on a limited basis at Carlin Springs (Teamwork) and Kenmore, we are building capacity to grow this approach in APS. Carlin Springs is implementing Teamwork schoolwide for the first time, and two other elementary schools, Barcroft and Hoffman-Boston are doing so at one grade level. Kenmore piloted APTT last year with a small group of 6th graders and is extending the strategy with the same group of families into 7th grade. School champions and grade level teams are receiving training and coaching from APTT creators.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TELENOVELA

We are in the final stage of production of a 5-episode telenovela, La Sopa de la Abuela/Grandma's Soup, to be used as an educational tool to help prepare immigrant families to participate effectively in the special education process. At every step of the way, this initiative has modeled true collaborative practice, both across departments and with families. The FACE office and the Parent Resource Center have partnered since the outset, conducting focus groups with parents to identify key themes and forming a design team composed of staff and parents who together wrote the script. AETV embraced the project and has provided its expertise, and teachers and parent volunteers auditioned for the cast. We have been invited to share this innovative project at the 2019 National Family Engagement Conference.

NEW LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EL PARENTS

Working closely with ESOL/HILT, we have expanded the learning opportunities for parents of English Learners to strengthen their capacity to support their children's learning. The FACE office identified Padres Comprometidos as a complementary curriculum to APS' Participa for the secondary level. It also commissioned the design of two additional trainings for immigrant parents--on higher level thinking skills and on growth mindset. The latter will be offered for the first time in the Spring of 2019.

DATA THAT PROVIDES INSIGHT



274 teachers took the new Introduction to FACE online session

40 staff from 11 schools

participated in the revamped FACE Seminar: **High Impact Strategies for Engaging Families**



Participants said:

"The five conditions for creating engaging activities was eye-opening. It makes you think about the various family activities in a new light."

"I learned to rephrase questions to better understand parents, not to judge them based on my beliefs."

"I valued working with colleagues and my school to identify areas for change and to develop better partnerships with our community of parents."

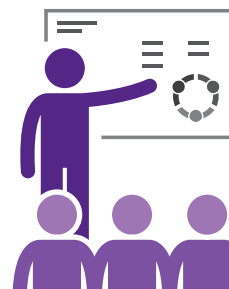


Harvesting Dreams for Our Children attendance doubled in 2018:

740 participants:

335 students, 286 parents, 82 staff and 37 community members; 99.9% reported all of the meeting results were met.

18 Hispanic parents graduated as new **Parent Leader Facilitators** in 2018



Participants said:

80% strongly agreed they have a better understanding of the role and characteristics of an effective facilitator

73% strongly agreed they have new tools to help them design and facilitate meetings

60% strongly agreed they feel better prepared to facilitate upcoming meetings in their community



Students at Carlin Springs whose families attended all three APPT/Teamwork sessions last year made

more significant progress

in the foundational skills addressed at the parent meetings, as compared to those who did not.



PARENT LEADERSHIP FACILITATION INITIATIVE

The FACE office continues to offer a highly evaluated Parent Leadership Facilitation (PLF) Training—in collaboration with ESOL/HILT, Office of Equity and Excellence and this year, for the first time the Office of School and Community Relations, as a means of cultivating and growing a cadre of diverse parent leaders. In 2019, the FACE specialist trained a new team of coach facilitators to build capacity for delivering the PLF training in Spanish. Parent Leader Facilitators are contributing to APS in many capacities, such as leading Hispanic parent groups in schools and joining parent to parent group chats to share information, joining PTAs and advisory committees, and being active in Engage APS.

HARVESTING DREAMS FOR OUR CHILDREN

The FACE office chairs the design team—composed of staff from various departments and schools—that plans this yearly event hosted by the Superintendent in celebration of Hispanic Heritage. It also facilitates two co-design sessions with parent leaders from various schools. A truly collaborative and strength-based approach is exemplified at every stage and contributes to the event’s success. In 2018, Hispanic parent leaders from 12 schools created displays of Inspiring Latinos for a Museum of Our Roots; high school students dressed up as Living Figures to support the exhibits; staff from ESOL/HILT, World Languages, Office of Excellence and Equity created a Language Heritage room with interactive Spanish language games run by Spanish Honor Society students; student volunteers also helped with set up and other logistical tasks; students, staff and community partners managed 12 resource tables with information related to the theme.

FRIDAY CAFÉS (COMMUNITY AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT)

This year we launched the Arlington Friday CAFés, an idea that originated in Connecticut and has since then been adopted by other localities around the nation. The CAFés are a morning discussion and networking opportunity for people who work at the intersection of families and learning in order to build connections, expand thinking, and develop a robust professional identity. They are meant for people who work directly with families, as well as educators, administrators and community partners who want a deeper understanding of family and community engagement. An advisory group consisting of APS and Arlington County staff and community partners was formed to assist with choosing topics, speakers and venues for the CAFés, which will be held quarterly. The theme of the first CAFÉ, to be held at the Arlington Arts Center, is Parent Voices: Mongolian Families in Arlington.

WHAT WE LEARNED

- The Dual Capacity Building Framework continues to be a powerful lens for APS to craft a more balanced and holistic strategy to deepen FACE. It points to the need to work on two fronts, building the capacity both of families AND school staff to partner well with each other to support student success. The 5 process conditions for effective partnerships have been particularly helpful to guide the planning of programs and initiatives to have a greater impact.
- Very few teacher training programs offer classes that prepare teachers and administrators to build strong partnerships with families. The FACE office is effectively filling in this gap. Teachers and administrators participating in FACE learning opportunities expressed a strong desire to forge stronger partnerships with families and a large majority continue to report they have acquired both a new lens for engaging families, as well tools and practical information they can use in planning their activities for engaging families in their classrooms and schools.
- Strategies for building mutual and supportive partnerships with families are more likely to be implemented, integrated, and sustained when leaders are enthusiastic, knowledgeable about essential conditions and evidence-based practices, and supportive of engaging families. In its absence, impact and change still happens from the bottom up albeit on a more limited basis.
- Cultivating and supporting parent engagement and leadership among English learner families is a necessary and critical investment to grow and diversify parent voices who engage with APS in decision-making processes. Supporting the strengthening of parent networks and affinity groups who gather in schools is helping disseminate important school information and increasing parent voice among Hispanic parents.

MOVING FORWARD

We intend to continue expanding APTT, an approach that is well-aligned with the 2018-24 APS strategic plan goals, well-received by staff and parents, and has shown very positive results. Based on our experience to date, we anticipate the need to devote more resources to continue building capacity both centrally and at the school level to provide technical support for grade level teams in planning successful APTT meetings.

We are about to embark on Phase II of the Special Education Novela project. We want to produce a training module to go hand in hand with La Sopa de la Abuela that can be used by bilingual family liaisons in schools when conducting sessions with Hispanic parents to help them effectively navigate the special education identification process. We intend to continue modeling genuine collaboration with families by forming a group of staff and parents who will jointly design and help implement Phase II of this project.

We will continue to work in collaboration with other APS offices, departments and schools to address the policy directive for FACE to “be systemic, integrated, and sustained with adequate resources and infrastructure support.”

Specific recommendations made by the FACE Action Team that still need to be considered are the following:

1. Select FACE performance measures for schools to begin to track regularly;
2. Provide training for front office staff on FACE goals and standards; and
3. Integrate high impact FACE strategies into School Management Plans.

