

# Roane County's Family Engagement Plan

## Background

In the 2004-2005 school year, the State of Tennessee Department of Education began an initiative to involve school systems across the state in examining and improving their relations with the families, communities, and other stake-holders in their districts. This initiative utilized the services of Dr. Steven Constantino, founder of the Family Friendly Institutes. He and his associates provided a year-long professional development program aimed at creating and implementing individualized parental involvement plans.

As part of that initiative, Roane County assembled a Family Engagement Team consisting of system administrators, a school board member, and parents. This team attended the professional development sessions beginning in February in Nashville, continued with the meetings in Knoxville, and worked independently to examine and develop a plan to increase the amount of interaction between families and the school system. The team enlisted the assistance of the district's schools in administering the Family Survey provided and scored by Dr. Constantino's organization. Using the results of the survey and the Roane County Board of Education's Five Year Plan as a guide, the team formulated this Family Engagement Plan.

## Purpose

The Roane County School Board in its Five Year Plan states as Goal 4: "We will engage families and community members in the educational process." This plan will directly address the objective of that goal, to ". . . encourage the involvement of parents and other members of the community with school activities." Through various activities and strategies, the Roane County Family Engagement Plan will:

- Assist families to establish home environments that support children as students by providing information and ideas about how to help students at home with homework, curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning;
- Establish effective forms of school/home and home/school communications about school programs and children's progress;
- Actively recruit, organize, and support parental assistance including encouraging and supporting parent-teacher organizations and community volunteers;
- Promote including parents in school decisions and developing parental teams to foster decision-making;
- Identify and promote the use of community resources necessary to strengthen school programs, family engagement, and student learning; and
- Support schools in welcoming parents and other stake-holders to a friendly and service-oriented environment.

## Activities and Strategies

Assist families to establish home environments that support children as students by providing information and ideas about how to help students at home with homework, curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning

1. Schools will provide to parents suggestions on how they can properly work with their child to increase academic achievement.
2. Schools will provide parents with strategies to promote effective parenting practices at home with specific references to those behaviors shown to increase student achievement.
3. Schools will offer “parenting workshops” in conjunction with the Family Resource Center to increase proper parenting behaviors.
4. The Family Resource Center will provide a variety of parenting materials for review and check out.
5. Adult literacy and adult education courses will be made available in conjunction with Adult Education of Roane County and Workforce Development.
6. Before and after-school remediation/tutoring programs will be established at schools using Extended Contract personnel to improve student homework and achievement.
7. Parents will be contacted concerning excessive absences; a letter will be sent home once a student has accrued five unexcused absences; students with chronic absenteeism will be referred to the truancy board for review and assistance.
8. Educational materials for parents to use at home will be presented to new Kindergarten students during spring and summer pre-registration.

Establish effective forms of school/home and home/school communications about school programs and children’s progress.

1. Notices and calendars of events will be posted on the District’s web site ([www.roaneschools.com](http://www.roaneschools.com)) and updated in a timely manner.
2. A link to the Tennessee Department of Education where the state curriculum for each grade level and subject area will be prominently posted on the District’s web site as well as the state’s report card.
3. Each school building will have for parent and community review a copy of all state curriculum and guidelines.
4. Newsletters will be developed by all schools and distributed to parents through various methods (child takes home, copies available at school, portable document format [.pdf] documents available on school website, etc.).

5. Parents are encouraged to contact their child's school with concerns through various means (telephone, written communications, e-mails, etc.).
6. The use of e-mail communications is encouraged between teachers and parents; e-mail listserves will be developed at each school to assist in facilitating communication via electronic methods.
7. Notices of report card/midterm reports due dates will be posted on school signs, in the *Roane County News*, and on the District website.
8. When needed, translators shall be employed to facilitate communications between non-English speaking families and the school/District; printed documents shall be printed in a language that all can understand.

Actively recruit, organize, and support parental assistance including encouraging and supporting parent-teacher organizations and community volunteers.

1. Volunteers from the community will assist the schools in many ways, i.e. serving as tutors, classroom assistants, guest speakers, coaches, or chaperones.
2. Schools will use various means of communication to find and offer parent and community volunteers opportunities to participate in the school experience.
3. Schools will welcome volunteers and attempt to best utilize their talents in the school setting.
4. Schools shall encourage strong PTA/PTO organizations and place representatives on each school's site-based Family Engagement Team.
5. Schools shall meet regularly with PTA/PTO officers to discuss and coordinate plans for family involvement in the school.

Promote including parents in school decisions and developing parental teams to foster decision-making.

1. School and District staff members are friendly towards, respectful of, and helpful to all families.
2. All schools are required to have family representation on the site-based Family Engagement Team.
3. The District has several ways of listening to parents and engaging them in two-way communication (e.g. giving time at Board/Administrative meetings, holding community meetings in local areas, and providing ways for input to the District web site).

4. Parent representatives shall serve on the District Family Engagement Team, the District Consolidate Planning Team, and the schools' Family Engagement Teams.

Identify and promote the use of community resources necessary to strengthen school programs, family engagement, and student learning.

1. The District shall, in its efforts to involve all members of the community, partner with various community organizations to further the goal of Family and Community Involvement.
2. The District shall use all means of communication available in the community to reach parents and community members with school information (newspaper, radio, television, web sites, e-mail, etc.).
3. The schools shall form partnerships with community organizations to increase the level of participation in school activities (adopt-a-school, business partnerships, etc.).
4. Schools, with the help of parents, will evaluate their station in the community (location) and seek out resources that may be available for assistance.

Support schools in welcoming parents and other stake-holders to a friendly and service-oriented environment.

1. Schools will hold Open House activities to provide opportunities for parents and the community to visit the school and get acquainted with the school personnel and the educational programs that are offered.
2. Parents and educators will have the opportunity to provide input through surveys and through postings on the District's/Schools' web sites.
3. Schools will provide a means by which parents and community members can make suggestions/comments about the school and its environment.
4. Schools shall evaluate their campus and office environment and make attempts to make it as welcoming as possible, remembering that the parents are the consumers of our product.

## **Evaluation**

The Family Engagement Plan is required at all school sites. Schools will develop a Family Engagement Plan much as they develop a School Improvement Plan. Schools will select a faculty Family Engagement Team with a representative to the District Family Engagement Team. The faculty team shall be responsible for developing the school plan and submitting it to the District Office for review and evaluation. The school team will also be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the school's Family Engagement Plan. The school team shall establish a procedure as part of the plan whereby parents can assist in the development of the school plan, view the plan, and make comments. Schools will also survey their

parents/community members so as to promote continuous improvement of the engagements of all families.

The District shall use the larger District Family Engagement Team to monitor and evaluate the District's Family Engagement Plan. Parents and community members shall have the opportunity to view the plan and have various methods to make comments regarding the plan and its facilitation. Comment thus submitted will be reviewed by the team and possible adjustments made. The District Family Engagement Team shall meet monthly to discuss matters relating to Parental Involvement and Family Engagement, or more frequently as required.

## **Conclusion**

Any plan so devised is only a representation of the philosophy and beliefs of the organization. With that in mind, one must be aware that this plan is a living document, constantly under revision. As situations change, so will the plan. As suggestions and comments are received, the plan will be modified as necessary to adapt to the changing environment. What may have worked in one situation may not work in another. An activity or strategy that works in one school or at one grade span may not work in another. As with everything else, the world and the school environment is constantly changing. We must and will change with it.