



PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT/FOSTER CARE

The Governing Authority of Legacy Academy of Excellence recognizes and values parents and families as children's first teachers and play the key role in the decision making process as it impacts their student(s) education. The Board believes that student learning is more likely to occur when there is a collaborative partnership between the school and the student's parents, foster caregivers and/or guardians. Such a partnership between the home and school results in higher academic achievement, improved student behavior, and reduces absenteeism.

Our first priority is to create a welcoming, open door policy that is family-friendly, supportive, informative, instructional, and nonjudgmental. The school will represent a safe space for families to gather, socialize and engage with each other families through the hosting of family nights, back-to-school events and holiday celebrations.

In accordance with statute and the State Board of Education Parent and Family Involvement Policy, use of the term "families" is used in order to include children's primary caregivers, who are not their biological parents, such as foster caregivers, grandparents, and other family members.

In cultivating partnerships with families and communities, the Board is committed to the following:

A. Relationships with Families

1. establishing school environments that are welcoming, supportive, and student-centered
2. providing professional development for school staff that supports partnerships between families and schools
3. providing family activities that relate to various cultures, languages, practices, and customs, and bridge economic and cultural barriers
4. providing coordination, technical support and any assistance needed to plan and/or implement family involved activities

B. Effective Communication

1. providing information to families to support the proper health, safety, and well-being of their children
2. providing information to families about school policies, procedures, programs, and activities
3. promoting regular and open communication between school personnel and students' family members
4. communicating with families in a format and language that is understandable
5. providing information and involving families in monitoring student progress



6. providing families with timely and meaningful information regarding Ohio's academic standards, state and local assessments, and pertinent legal provisions
7. preparing families to be involved in meaningful discussions and meetings with school staff

C. Volunteer Opportunities:

This policy serves to notify every School volunteer who has regular unsupervised access to students that the School must be conduct a background check or request a set of fingerprints. The school will cover the cost associated with the background check.

If the criminal background reveals that the volunteer has been convicted of or plead guilty to any offense described in section 109.572 of the Ohio Revised Code, the School will not permit the volunteer to have unsupervised access to students unless the following are satisfied:

- A written notice is sent out to the parent or guardian of each student enrolled in the School, stating the name of the volunteer and indicating that the volunteer has been convicted of or plead guilty to one or more of the prohibited offenses; and
- The notice is sent out to each parent either when the School starts providing services to the student or when the School decides to accept the volunteer despite the volunteer's previous offense, whichever comes later.
- All volunteers must be approved by the School Director, volunteers are assigned to area of need

How to Sign up?

- Complete Volunteer Request Form and submit to School Director
- Complete Background Check
- School Director will notify volunteer of background results, assigned area and staff contact

The School Director has the authority and sole discretion to prohibit any individual from entering School property if the Head Administrator has reason to believe that such individual's presence would be detrimental to the effective operation of the School.

Any individual who disrupts the educational environment, acts in a disorderly manner, damages School property, or violates the law or these Policies may be requested to leave School property, and the local law enforcement agency may be contacted if necessary.



Approved Volunteers:

- All volunteers must immediately sign-in on the visitor log
- Work in assigned area
- Contact staff contact when unable to report for volunteer hours
- Report all concerns to staff contact

Terms:

- Staff contact: School employee assigned to lead volunteers, outline scope of volunteer services, stay in contact with volunteer
- Volunteer: Not employed by the staff, may or may not be a parent of the school

D. Learning at Home

1. offering training and resources to help families learn strategies and skills to support at-home learning and success in school
2. working with families to establish learning goals and help their children accomplish these goals
3. helping families to provide a school and home environment that encourages learning and extends learning at home

E. Involving Families in Decision Making and Advocacy

1. involving families as partners in the process of school review and continuous improvement planning
2. involving families in the development of its District-wide parent involvement policy and plan, and distributing the policy and plan to families

F. Collaborating with the Community

1. building constructive partnerships and connecting families with community-based programs and other community resources
2. coordinating and integrating family involvement programs and activities with District initiatives and community-based programs that encourage and support families' participation in their children's education, growth, and development

The following communication method shall be in place and will provide the opportunity for parents and foster caregivers to be actively involved in their children's or foster children's education: Not Limited to

- General school meetings
- Newsletter
- Student/Parent Teacher Conference
- School Website
- Social Media
- School Events



- Onecall System
- Direct Mail

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Governing Authority recognizes the importance of educational stability for children and youth in foster care. Further, the Governing Authority recognizes these children and youth as a vulnerable subgroup of students in need of safeguards and supports in order to facilitate a successful transition through elementary and secondary education and into college and/or careers. To that end, the School will collaborate with the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), other schools and school s, and the appropriate custodial agencies (child welfare agencies and/or local Title IV-E courts) to provide educational stability for children and youth in foster care.

Definitions

Children, who meet the Federal definition of "in foster care", including those children who are awaiting foster care placement, will be provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the same manner as all other students of the Academy for Urban Scholars (School). To that end, students in foster care will not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status. The School shall establish safeguards that protect foster care students from discrimination on the basis of their foster care status or other of the recognized Protected Classes. The School shall regularly review and revise its policies, including school discipline policies that may impact students in foster care.

Consistent with the Fostering Connections Act, "foster care" means twenty-four (24) hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the custodial agency has placement and care responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to, placements in:

- A. foster family homes
- B. foster homes of relatives;
- C. group homes;
- D. emergency shelters;
- E. residential facilities;
- F. child care institutions; and
- G. preadoptive homes.

A child is in foster care in accordance with this definition regardless of whether the foster care facility is licensed and payments are made by the State, tribal or local agency for the care of the child, whether adoption subsidy payments are being made prior to the finalization of an adoption, or whether there is Federal matching of any payments that are made. (45 C.F.R. 1355.20 (a)).

School Stability



The School shall remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of children and youth in foster care in schools in the School. Foster care students shall be enrolled immediately, even if they do not have the necessary enrollment documentation such as immunization and health records, proof of residency or guardianship, birth certificate, school records, and other documentation, in order to prevent educational discontinuity. Within twenty-four (24) hours of a student's enrollment in school, the School shall contact the school last attended by the student and request that it send all appropriate records and documentation concerning the student.

The School shall meet the Title I requirements for educational stability for children and youth in foster care, including those awaiting foster care placement. The School shall identify which students are in foster care and shall collaborate with State and tribal custodial agencies to provide educational stability for these children and youth. School staff will work closely with custodial agency personnel to develop and implement processes and procedures that include these enrollment safeguards:

- A. a child/youth in foster care shall remain in his/her school of origin, unless it is determined that remaining in the school of origin is not in that child's best interest;
- B. if it is not in the child's best interest to stay in his/her school of origin, the child shall be immediately enrolled in the determined new school even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment; and
- C. the new (enrolling) school shall immediately contact the school of origin to obtain relevant academic and other records, including the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) if applicable. (ESEA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)(i)-(iii)).

School of Origin

The school of origin is the school in which a student is enrolled at the time of placement in foster care. If a student's foster care placement changes, the school of origin would then be considered the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of the placement change. A student in foster care shall remain in his/her school of origin, if it is determined to be in the student's best interest, for the duration of the student's placement in foster care.

When a student exits foster care, the School will continue to prioritize the student's educational stability in determining placement, supports, and services deemed to be in the child's best interests.

Best Interest Determination

In making the best interest determination, the School will follow the guidelines established by ODE and the State or tribal custodial agencies. The School shall utilize the prescribed process in conjunction with local custodial agencies in making best interest determinations, and shall make such determination within five (5) school days of the child's placement in foster care or change in child's living arrangement. Once a determination is made the School shall provide the decision in writing to all relevant parties, in collaboration with the appropriate custodial agency.



When making decisions regarding educational placement of students with disabilities under IDEA and Section 504, the School shall provide all required special educational and related services and supports provided in the least restrictive placement where the child's unique needs, as described in the student's IEP or Section 504 plan, can be met.

Dispute Resolution

If there is a dispute regarding whether the educational placement of a child in foster care is in the best interest of that child, the dispute resolution process established by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) shall be used.

The School's representatives shall collaborate fully in this process, considering relevant information regarding academic programming and related service needs of the child, and advocating for what the School believes is in the best interest of the child.

To the extent feasible and appropriate, the child will remain in his/her school of origin while disputes are being resolved in order to minimize disruption and reduce the possible number of moves between schools. (ESEA Section 1111(g)(1)(E)(i)).

Since the custodial agency holds ultimate legal responsibility for making the best interest determination for the foster child in their care, if the dispute cannot be resolved the dispute, the custodial agency will make the final determination. Such final determination will be made within five (5) school days of the child's placement in foster care or change in the child's living arrangement.

All notifications and reports regarding foster care placement, changes in school enrollment, transportation services, and changes in the child's living arrangements shall be provided to the affected parties, in writing, in accordance with the forms, procedures, and requirements of the ODE and the State or tribal custodial agencies.

Local Point of Contact

The Superintendent shall designate and make public a local point of contact that will perform the duties as assigned by the Superintendent. The point of contact shall serve as a liaison to coordinate with child protection agencies, lead the development of a process for making the best determination for a student, facilitate the transfer of records, and oversee the enrollment and regular school attendance of students in foster care.

Records

The School shall provide privacy protections for children and families and shall facilitate appropriate data-sharing pertaining to children in foster care between custodial and educational agencies, in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Policy 8330 – Student Records.

Services to Children and Youth in Foster Care



Foster care children and their families shall be provided equal access to the educational services for which they are eligible comparable to other students in the School including:

- A. educational services for which the student in foster care meets eligibility criteria including services provided under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or similar State and local programs, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency;
- B. programs in career and technical education;
- C. programs for gifted and talented students;
- D. school nutrition programs; and
- E. before - and after-school programs.

Transportation Services

The School shall provide that transportation services for children in foster care consistent with the procedures developed by the School in collaboration with the State or local custodial agency. These requirements apply whether or not the LEA already provides transportation for children who are not in foster care.

In order for a student in foster care to remain in his/her school of origin, when in his/her best interest, transportation services shall be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the child's placement in foster care. The School's transportation services will provide that:

- A. Children in foster care needing transportation to their schools of origin will promptly receive that transportation in a cost effective manner and in accordance with Section 475(4)(A) of the Social Security Act; and
- B. If there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to the school of origin, the School shall provide such transportation if 1) the local custodial agency agrees to reimburse the School for the cost of such transportation; 2) the School agrees to pay for the cost; or 3) the School and the local custodial agency agree to share the cost. (ESEA 1112(c)(5) (B)).

The School will collaborate with the SEA, other LEAs, and custodial agencies to pursue possible funding sources and arrangements to deal with transportation costs.

Coordination of Service

1. Prior to enrollment students indicate if they need transportation



2. Transportation is assigned on the first day of school
3. When Foster Care occurs after enrollment engagement coach will work LEA on all new transportation request
4. Engagement coaches are responsible to work with the student, family engagement coordinator and LEA to ensure transportation is never a barrier that prevents the student from attending school
5. Since foster care placements may occur across school, county, or State boundary lines, coordination among multiple agencies may be necessary. The School will work with appropriate State and local agencies to address such placement and transportation issues that arise. The School shall provide or arrange for adequate and appropriate transportation to and from the school of origin while any disputes are being resolved.

No Governing Authority policy, administrative procedure, or practice will be interpreted or applied in such a way as to inhibit the enrollment, attendance, or school success of children and youth in foster care.

Foster Care Liaison Contact

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