

Discovery Charter School Parent Involvement Policy

This parent involvement policy addresses the No Child Left Behind commitment to shared accountability between schools and parents for high student achievement, including expanded public school choice and supplemental educational services for eligible children in low-performing schools, local development of parental involvement plans with sufficient flexibility to address local needs, and building parents' capacity for using effective practices to improve their own children's academic achievement.

New reporting provisions, added by the NCLB Act, offer parents important insight into their children's education, the professional qualifications of their teachers, and the quality of the schools they attend. The new legislation ensures that parents have the information they need to make well-informed choices for their children, more effectively share responsibility with their children's schools, and help those schools develop effective and successful academic programs. Parents now will know their children's academic strengths and weaknesses and how well schools are performing, and they will have other options and resources for helping their children if their schools are identified in need of improvement.

The new Title I, Part A is designed not only to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers, but also to change the culture of America's schools so that success is defined in terms of student achievement and schools invest in every child.

The following plan lays out the respective responsibilities and commitments of the school, the administration and parents in working together for the academic success of students.

In particular:

Parents will be involved in the joint development of the Title I Plan through a variety of avenues including, but not limited to: parent representation on the board of trustees, participation in the school's parent organization; annual surveys; teacher conferences; and school planning, evaluation, and review committees.

Discovery Charter School will aid in the planning and implementation of effective parent involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance in numerous ways including, but not limited to providing meeting space for a parent organization, distributing meeting notices, publishing parent organization articles and updates, recommending/making presentations to parents on issues (e.g., understanding learning standards, school and student performance, opportunities for greater involvement with the school, accessing services), and other coordination, technical assistance, and support necessary.

Discovery Charter School will build the school's and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, making enhancing parent involvement a regular topic at staff and board meetings (as well as during employee evaluations), recommending/making presentations to the parent organization to develop

parents' skills, confidence, and awareness of their role in interacting with the school for their child's success; discussing parent involvement activities in every newsletter and at every parent/teacher conference.

Discovery Charter School will coordinate and integrate Title I parental involvement strategies with those of other programs (including federal, state and local programs) by making the parent involvement strategies universal. Parents are integral to the mission of the school and have a central role in any program implemented at Discovery Charter School.

Discovery Charter School will conduct, with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parent involvement policy in improving the academic quality of the school. The evaluation will include identifying barriers (such as limited English proficiency, disability status, limited literacy, economic disadvantage, etc.) to greater participation by parents in activities authorized by Title I (such as limited English proficiency, disabilities), and use the findings of the evaluation to design strategies for more effective parental involvement and to revise, if necessary, the parental involvement policies at the school.

Mission

Discovery Charter school will prepare students to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world, providing children living in poverty "real skills for the real world." Students will be able to connect what they learn in the classroom to real world situations and achieve academically at levels that are significantly higher than the State Education Department assessment results in their home district. Through Expeditionary Learning, a positive learning environment will exist where inquiry and enthusiasm are welcome, acquired skills applied to and enhanced with the study of the real world, and a culture of teacher and staff development, thorough assessment, and striving for exceptional results nurtured. Technology will be used extensively. Parent and community involvement will be actively sought and harnessed. Children will leave the school exceptionally well prepared to engage the world wherever their interests take them.

Parent involvement is a significant component in the success of the school and its students.

Parent Involvement Benefits

The Discovery Charter School believes that education is a partnership among the student, parent, school, and community. The academic achievement and success of our students depend on the actions, relationships, and strengths of these partnerships.

Parents and families provide their children with the foundation of their values, including education values, responsibilities, expectations, rules for home/school environment, and aspirations. Parents are the primary providers in preparing their children for school readiness and academic success. Parents' knowledge of their children's unique histories, traditions, life experiences, and learning experiences are important to their success. Parents also share knowledge about community resources and challenges, both of which are valuable and critical to their child's progress. The educational responsibility for our students is shared by parents, school, and community.

Parent Involvement Framework

Discovery Charter School plans to develop a parent organization that will serve as the volunteer parent/community organization. The school's Director (or a designee) will be present at all parent organization meetings. The parent organization will assist Discovery Charter School in developing comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnership as part of its efforts to increase parent involvement. Discovery Charter School believes in the following:

1. Communicating: Communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful.
2. Parenting: Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
3. Student Learning: Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
4. Volunteering: Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are actively sought.
5. School decision-making and advocacy: Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
6. Collaborating with community: Community resources are used to strengthen the school, our families and student learning.

School Responsibilities/Expectations

To successfully implement the School's beliefs in parent involvement, support will be comprised of, but not limited to the following:

1. Fostering a network of sharing among parents and other members of the school community through the parent organization and other parent involvement opportunities.
2. Disseminating information relevant to student achievement and parent's rights through community meetings, telephone contact, newsletters and the school website.
3. Providing for parent participation on all school decision-making teams.
4. Ensuring compliance with Section 1118 (parent involvement) of the No Child Left Behind legislation. Building parents' capacity for involvement through:
 - Providing assistance to parents in understanding such topics as the State's academic content standards and the State student academic achievement standards, state and local academic assessments, the requirements of this part, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the academic achievement of their children;
 - Providing materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement;
 - Educating teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of the contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school;
 - Coordinating and integrating—to the extent feasible and appropriate—parent involvement programs and activities that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children;

- Ensuring that information related to school and parent programs, meetings and other activities is sent to the parents of participating children in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand.
5. Providing an effective mechanism to ensure mutual respect and accountability in the school/parent partnership.

The Administration's Responsibilities and Expectations

The Director, in collaboration with parents and with the support of the Discovery Charter School parent organization, will:

1. Attend (or designate a representative) to participate in the parent organization, representing Discovery Charter School in order to:
 - Ensure that the parent organization meets on a regular (monthly) basis and that the organization continues to encourage the inclusion of new parents into the organization.
 - Ensure that the parent organization elects officers and holds regular meetings that are scheduled in consultation with parents and announced publicly, with all invited to attend.
 - Ensure that the parent organization is maintained as a viable entity to ensure that parents, who are full partners in their child's education, have an opportunity to be included in meetings and decision-making.
 - Ensure that regular elections are held to elect members to represent all parents from the school community to serve on the parent organization; ensure that the school community elects one (1) parent representative to serve on the School's Board of Trustees.
2. Establish and maintain an open-door policy of candid and frequent communication between the school administration and parents.

Parent Responsibilities and Expectations

Parents are partners in the Discovery Charter School and share responsibility for the successful education of the children. Parent involvement is the action parents take to participate in regular and meaningful communication with the school to provide an education that graduates productive citizens. All parent involvement is aimed at increasing student achievement through various levels of involvement

Parents can be defined as any parent, guardian, and/or person in parental relation to a child or children. Parents are expected to:

1. Ensure that children come to school prepared and ready to learn.
2. Provide high-quality nutrition, adequate sleep, and exercise for their children.
3. Provide a learning environment for children to do homework and actively monitor their children's homework and level of completion.
4. Review and support the School Attendance Policy.
5. Review and support the School Discipline Policy.
6. Attend parent organization meetings, parent/teacher conferences and workshops designed to increase student achievement.

7. Communicate school staff, teachers and the Director as a partner in their children's academic success.

The Discovery Charter School Board of Trustees and the School Director endorse and support this plan to help ensure the success of all students.

Discovery Charter School Transportation and Enrollment of Homeless Students

Charter schools are considered local educational agencies (LEAs) under the McKinney-Vento Act and are required to appoint a liaison to help students in temporary housing and their parents. Under the Act, the liaison is responsible for ensuring that:

- Children and youth in temporary housing are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other agencies;
- Children and youth in temporary housing enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, schools of that LEA;
- Families, children and youth in temporary housing receive educational service for which such families and youth are eligible;
- The parents/guardians of children and youth in temporary housing are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education;
- Public notice of the educational rights of children and youth in temporary housing is disseminated where such children and youth receive services, such as schools, family shelters, and soup kitchens;
- Enrollment disputes are promptly mediated; and
- The parent or guardian of a child or youth in temporary housing, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin. (*42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)*).

Pursuant to state law, all students identified as homeless, including those attending charter schools, must complete a designation form, indicating the designated school district of attendance. (*Education Law § 3209(2)(d)*).

The parent or the student with the help of the McKinney-Vento Liaison, in the case of an unaccompanied homeless youth, designates the district of attendance on the designation form, otherwise known as the STAC-202 form, linked here:

http://www.oms.nysed.gov/stac/schoolage/schoolage_placement_summary/homeless/stac_202_form.pdf

After a student has been identified as homeless, a designation form or STAC-202 form must be completed.

All local education agencies (charter schools, school districts, and BOCES) have an affirmative obligation to identify students experiencing homelessness. (*42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(i)*; *Education Law § 3209(2-a)*). To help LEA's meet this requirement, LEAs receiving Title I funds are required to administer a **Residency Questionnaire** inquiring about the housing status of all students seeking

enrollment in the district *as well as those who have a change of address* per SED's Consolidated Application.

A charter school, school district, or local department of social services (in cases where it has placed the family in temporary housing) may complete the STAC-202 form and send a copy to all parties listed on the STAC-202 form. In many instances, the charter school will be the first to become aware of a student's housing situation and should fill out the STAC-202 form. However, the charter school itself should *not* be entered anywhere on the STAC-202 form. It should be completed as follows:

- *Box 7A. NYS School District of Attendance Before Becoming Homeless:* the student's district of origin should be entered, even if the student has never attended a traditional public school in that district.
- *Box 8A. NYS School District of Current Location:* the school district in which the student is temporarily residing should be listed. Note that, because students may attend charter schools in any district, the student's school district of current location may or may *not be* the district in which the charter school they are attending is located.
- *Box 9A. NYS Designated District of Attendance:* the district designated by the student's parent (or the youth, if she is unaccompanied) should be listed

A parent may designate either the district of origin or the district of current location as the district of attendance.

- In most cases, if the student was attending the charter school prior to becoming homeless, the district of origin should be designated as the district of attendance, to ensure the provision of transportation. Under Education Law, the district of origin must transport a student in temporary housing up to 50 miles each way to school, whereas the student is only eligible for transportation from the district of current location insofar as permanently housed students in that district are eligible for transportation to that charter school. (*Education Law § 3209(4)*).
- If the student enrolls in a charter school after becoming homeless, the designation of the district of attendance will depend on factors such as where the student temporarily living, which district is better suited to provide the transportation, and which district is better suited to provide special education services if the student has an IEP (for example, which district may already have arrangements in place to provide speech therapy in the charter school in cases where the student in temporary housing is mandated to receive this related service according to his IEP).

Typically, the school district of residence is responsible for charter school basic tuition payments to charter schools. (*Education Law § 2856(1)(a)*). However, students experiencing homelessness do not have a district of residence because of their loss of permanent housing. The **designated district of attendance is responsible for paying the charter school basic tuition for a student in temporary housing who is attending a charter school.**

The **designated district of attendance is responsible for transporting students in temporary housing who attend a charter school.** If the district of origin is designated, it is required to provide transportation up to 50 miles each way. If the district of current location is designated, it is required

to provide transportation subject to the mileage limitations applicable to permanently housed students in the district. (*Education Law § 3209(4)*).

If the district of current location is designated as the district of attendance, it will be reimbursed the non-resident district tuition rate, pro-rated for the period of instruction while the student is in temporary housing. The reimbursement is processed through the STAC Unit and is initiated with the sending of the STAC 202 form to the State Education Department. If the district of origin is designated, there is no reimbursement available through the STAC process, and the STAC 202 form should not be sent to the State Education Department, although the form should be completed and retained by the charter school.

Districts are eligible for state transportation aid for allowable costs associated with transporting students in temporary housing. Districts will be reimbursed using the same transportation aid ratios as those used for permanently housed students. (*Education Law § 3209(4)*).

Attachments: STAC 202
Residency Questionnaire
Documenting Efforts to Identify Homeless Students