

# **Pinnacle Charter School Parent Involvement Policy**

*Mission: to optimize the potential of each child to meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards and to advance to personal independence with short and long term contribution to the community.*

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 Family Council; Parents and Teachers Together, annual surveys, parent focus groups, and teacher conferences.

Pinnacle 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 funding a full time Family Services Coordinator, providing meeting space for the Family Council and Parents and Teachers Together, distributing meeting notices, publishing Family Council articles and updates, use of an automated Parent Notification called School Reach, 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. Pinnacle Charter School has also implemented a home visiting program entitled Parents as Teachers. This program will instruct parents in early childhood education and healthy child development. Parents as Teachers uses evidence-based practices that support the importance of enhancing school readiness by reaching children during the critical, formative years of life. Grounded in the latest research, Parents as Teachers develops curricula that support a parent's role in promoting school readiness and healthy development of children. The approach is intimate and relationship-based. It embraces learning experiences that are relevant and customized for the individual needs of each family and child.

Pinnacle Charter School will build the school's and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, funding a full time Family Services Coordinator position, making enhancing parent involvement a regular topic at staff and board meetings (as well as during employee evaluations), recommending/making presentations to the Family Council and Parents and Teachers Together, 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.

Pinnacle 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 Pinnacle.

Pinnacle 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**

The mission of the Pinnacle Charter School is to optimize the potential of each child to meet or exceed the New York State Learning Standards and to advance to personal independence with short and long term contribution to the community.

The following strengths comprise the uniqueness of the Pinnacle Charter School and will enable Pinnacle to "close the gap" in student performance:

- Using the Coalition of Essential Schools model with a communication focus and integrated thematic instruction allowing for deeper understanding of core disciplines
- Utilizing communication as its theme, which allows Pinnacle Charter School to use a seamless model integrating all seven New York State Learning Standards using effective instructional strategies, current technological advances and future innovations; and
- Allowing for greater parental involvement in the school through Family Council, the School Compact and other approaches.
- Recruit strong teachers and leaders and provide them with extensive professional development and support to implement the school's design and principles (smaller class size, looping), while also holding them accountable for student achievement.
- Using multiple measures to ensure that students are meeting and then exceeding all 28 state-established academic standards as well as school-based demonstrations of mastery. Data-informed instruction will join comprehensive planning and on-going self-assessment as tools for continuous improvement.
- Providing every child the assistance and time needed to succeed by extending the school day and year so that students are engaged for longer periods of time and have the varied opportunities to engage in Academic Interventional Services and Intramural activities

These strengths, when taken together, will improve student learning and achievement, increase learning opportunities for all students including those who are at risk of academic failure; encourage the use of innovative teaching methods school-wide, not in isolated classrooms only; create new professional opportunities for teachers and staff, provide opportunities for parents and the community; and lastly provide a method to change from rule-based to performance based accountability systems.

The educational program at the Pinnacle Charter School will provide a number of professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel as outlined below:

- The looping program will allow teachers to grow with their students over a two-year period, which will help to foster stronger student/teacher relationships.
- The educational program also provides a unique opportunity for continuity through the Charter Schools year round schedule. This will help to decrease time devoted to review and increase time for uncovering new knowledge with students.
- The Charter School's commitment to the Coalition of Essential School's philosophy will guarantee class sizes limited to a 20:1 student teacher ratio. This will enable teachers to better serve each student individually and provide opportunities to identify difficulties that students may be experiencing which might go unnoticed in classes with a larger number of students. Furthermore, this smaller class size will enable teachers to utilize instructional strategies that might be unrealistic with larger numbers of students
- Because the extended academic periods will utilize cross grade level grouping, teachers will have the opportunity to interact with students of a variety of grade

levels. This will also allow teachers the opportunity to see how their own students interact with other teachers and students of varying ages.

- There will be increased opportunities for participation in extended team planning due to the longer length of the school day, from 8:30 - 4:00.

### **Parent Involvement Benefits**

The Pinnacle 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 children's progress. The educational responsibility for our students is shared by parents, school, and community.

### **Parent Involvement Framework**

Pinnacle Charter School was opened in 2003 and formed a Family Council and Parents and Teachers Together that serves as the volunteer parent/community organization that plans activities, organizes family programming, and raises funds for special programs. The Family Council assists Pinnacle Charter School in developing comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnership as part of its efforts to increase parent involvement. Pinnacle Charter School believes in the following:

- I. Communicating: Communication between home and school is regular, two-way and meaningful.
- II. Parenting: Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- III. Student Learning: Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- IV. Volunteering: Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are actively sought.
- V. School decision making and advocacy: Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- VI. 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. Continuing to foster a network of sharing among parents and other members of the school community through the duties of the full time Family Services Coordinator, the Family Council, Parents and Teachers Together and other parent involvement opportunities.

2. Disseminating information relevant to student achievement and parents' 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:
  - Provide assistance to parents of children served by the school, 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;
  - Provide 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;
  - Educate teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contribution of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent program, and build ties between parents and the school;
  - Coordinate and integrate to the extent feasible and appropriate, parent involvement programs and activities with Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, the Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters, the Parent as Teachers Program, and public preschool and other programs, and conduct other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children;
  - Ensure 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.

*Building Capacity for Involvement:*

The school has a full time Family Services Coordinator responsible for working with parents to enhance their involvement (and capacity for involvement) with the school to increase student academic achievement.

The Family Services Coordinator is charged with working with the Family Council and Parents and Teachers Together to develop programming on topics as the State's academic content standards and 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 achievement of their children;

The Family Services Coordinator is charged with working with the Family Council and Parents and Teachers Together to provide 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;

The Family Services Coordinator is charged with educating teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contribution 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;

The Family Services Coordinator is charged with coordinating and integrating- to the extent feasible and appropriate- parent involvement programs and activities with Head Start, the Parent as Teachers Program home visiting program, and public preschool and other programs, and conducting other activities, such as Parent Support Center, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children;

The Family Services Coordinator is charged with 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.

### **The Administration's Responsibilities and Expectations**

The Chief Academic Officer, in collaboration with the Family Services Coordinator, parents and with the support of the Pinnacle Charter School Family Council will:

1. Designate the Family Services Coordinator to participate in the Family Council, representing Pinnacle Charter School in order to:
  - Ensure that the Family Council meets on a regular (monthly) basis and that the organization continues to encourage the inclusion of new parents into the organization.
  - Ensure that the Family Council elects officers and holds regular meetings that are scheduled in consultation with parents and announced publicly, with all invited to attend.
  - Ensure that the Family Council 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 Family Council, ensure that the school community elects one (1) parent member 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 Pinnacle 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 Code of Conduct.
6. Attend Family Council meetings, parent/teacher conferences and workshops designed to increase student achievement.
7. Communicate with the Family Services Coordinator, teachers and the principal as a partner in their children's academic success.

The Pinnacle Charter School Board of Trustees and the Chief Academic Officer endorse and support this plan to help ensure the success of all students.