

Niagara Charter School Parent Involvement Policy

Mission: Niagara Charter School is dedicated to fostering the unique potential of each child by providing a rigorous academic program using the expeditionary learning approach designed to empower students as life long learners, resourceful and practical thinkers, active citizens, and future leaders.

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 School Association (FSA); annual surveys; teacher conferences; and school planning, evaluation, and review committees.

Niagara 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 Community Liaison, providing meeting space for the FSA, distributing meeting notices, publishing FSA 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;

Niagara 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 Community Liaison position, making enhancing parent involvement a regular topic at staff and board meetings (as well as during employee evaluations), recommending/making presentations to the FSA 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.

Niagara 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 Niagara.

Niagara 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

Niagara Charter School is dedicated to fostering the unique potential of each child by providing a rigorous academic program using the expeditionary learning approach designed to empower students as life long learners, resourceful and practical thinkers, active citizens, and future leaders.

Niagara Charter School is an Expeditionary Learning School where students learn best through purposeful, hands on experiences that provide opportunities to become active learners. Through learning expeditions, students are involved in original research, critical thinking, problem solving, and building character along with academic skills. Parent involvement is a significant component in the success of the school and its students.

Parent Involvement Benefits

The Niagara 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

Niagara Charter School was opened in 2006 and is in the process of chartering a chapter of the national FSA that will serve as the volunteer parent/community organization that plans activities, organizes family programming, and raises funds for special programs. The school's full time Community Liaison represents Niagara Charter School and is present at all FSA meetings. The FSA assists Niagara Charter School in developing comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnership as part of its efforts to increase parent involvement. Niagara 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 Community Liaison, the FSA, 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:

- 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 hired a full time Community Liaison responsible for working with parents to enhance their involvement (and capacity for involvement) with the school to increase student academic achievement.

The Community Liaison is charged with working with the FSA 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 Community Liaison is charged with working with the FSA 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 Community Liaison 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 Community Liaison is charged with coordinating and integrating—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 conducting other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children;

The Community Liaison 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 Principal, in collaboration with the Community Liaison, parents and with the support of the Niagara Charter School FSA will:

1. Designate the Community Liaison to participate in the FSA, representing Niagara Charter School in order to:
 - Ensure that the FSA meets on a regular (monthly) basis and that the organization continues to encourage the inclusion of new parents into the organization.
 - Ensure that the FSA elects officers and holds regular meetings that are scheduled in consultation with parents and announced publicly, with all invited to attend.
 - Ensure that the FSA 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 FSA, ensure that the school community elects two (2) parent members 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 Niagara 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 FSA meetings, parent/teacher conferences and workshops designed to increase student achievement.
7. Communicate with the Community Liaison, teachers and the principal as a partner in their children's academic success.

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