

BOARD BRIEF

Date: March 1, 2019

For ACTION _____

For INFORMATION X

Board Agenda: _____

No X

FROM: Jennifer Mursaloglu, Ph.D., Evaluation & Assessment Analyst
Clinton Page, Ed.S., Chief Accountability Officer
Kurt Huffman, Director of School, Business and Community Partnerships

THROUGH: Gregory Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Cindy M. Anderson, Chair, and Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Family Engagement Evaluation

BACKGROUND:

Through the ACPS 2020 strategic plan, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) has made a commitment to collaborate with families in providing high-quality services in the education of Alexandria's youth. To this end, ACPS is conducting a comprehensive division-wide evaluation of family engagement. ACPS approaches evaluations through a utilization-focused lens, as evaluations are positioned to be learning opportunities to continue to improve programs, policy and practice. The rationale for this evaluation is to provide ACPS with a better understanding of the needs, barriers, resources, and services to engage all families across contexts. Key stakeholder groups have been represented throughout the evaluation planning process ranging from the development of the overall evaluation plan, including the guiding research questions, to the Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

A concept map was developed by the evaluation team in an effort to identify targeted research-based topics of interest for this evaluation. The concept map is theoretically grounded in the Epstein's (1995) model of six types of parental involvement; Mapp's (2013) dual capacity building framework for family-school partnerships; and Hoover-Dempsey Sandler's (1997) theoretical model of parental involvement. Components of all three parental engagement models were used to develop a comprehensive concept map catered to the unique needs and interests of ACPS.

EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY:

This formative evaluation is comprised of two evaluative phases guided by the following main research questions (see additional sub-questions in attachment):

Relationships

1. To what extent is ACPS developing mutual relationships with families?

Opportunities

2. To what extent do current ACPS family engagement initiatives and activities meet the needs of families? What activities are most valued by stakeholders in increasing family engagement?

Decision-making

3. To what extent does ACPS include families in the decision-making of the education of their children?

Environment & Climate

4. To what extent do ACPS schools and central office departments foster a welcoming and supportive environment for families?

Communication

5. To what extent do ACPS's communication practices meet the needs of families?

Phase I will be led by the internal ACPS evaluation team and will focus on understanding the perspectives of parents and staff members through surveys. The surveys will focus on the following areas of interest as identified on the attached evaluative concept map: family-school relationships; two-way communication; welcoming environment; opportunities and barriers to engagement; and decision-making. Surveys will be administered during the month of March to ACPS parents and staff.

Phase II will be led by a competitively selected external evaluator, ICF International, and will focus on garnering information related to the above areas of interest through conducting: 1) observations including secret shopper emails and phone calls and document analysis, 2) staff focus groups and interviews, 3) focus groups with English-speaking parents/guardians, and 4) group interviews with non-English speaking parents/guardians.

The on-site data collection effort will continue through the spring of 2019. Data analyses will be conducted in the summer of 2019 with a final report in fall of 2019. As part of the contract, ICF, in partnership with ACPS, will return on-site to present findings and actionable recommendations to stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends review of the information within this memo and the attachments pertaining to the evaluation of family engagement.

IMPACT:

Data collected from this evaluation will be triangulated across all data sources and reported out in fall of 2019. The information within the report will provide the division with findings and recommendations to chart a purposive action plan for improving programs, practices and policies related to family engagement.

ATTACHMENTS: (1) *Family Engagement Concept Map, Timeline, and Methods*

CONTACT PERSON: Clinton Page, Chief Accountability Officer

REFERENCES:

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76, 701-712.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education? *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), 3-42.

Mapp, K., & Kuttner, P. J. (2013). Partners in education a dual capacity –building framework for family-school partnerships. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf>