

POLICY
RI School for the Deaf
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Policy Title: PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT and EDUCATION

A. Purpose

One of the guiding principles of the RI School for the Deaf is to involve families to the fullest extent possible in realizing the goals of the school and of the students. To achieve this principle, the RI School for the Deaf will offer a range of activities to:

- (a) Welcome parents/guardians and families to the school, as well as seek their support and assistance;
- (b) Communicate effectively with parents/guardians and families, ensuring that that communication is two-way and meaningful;
- (c) Assist parents/guardians, families to play an integral role in student learning and ensure that caregivers (and students whenever possible) have the information they need to participate in assessing, planning, and implementing their children's education program;
- (d) Involve parents/guardians, families as partners in shared decision-making and advisory functions;
- (e) Utilize the school community to connect students and families with resources that provide educational enrichment, support, and promote connections between students, families, and the community-at-large;
- (f) Communicate in languages all caregivers understand;
- (g) Receive education and support in areas that will facilitate achievement of students;
- (h) Empower parents/guardians, families to lead and collaborate confidently on issues of deafness, ASL, spoken language development, and resources for social-emotional support to their children with unique needs resulting from hearing loss.

The RI School for the Deaf recognizes that the diversity of personal beliefs, political opinion, religious affiliation, and cultural identity is a community strength. Accordingly, the RI School for the Deaf is mindful of how employee's personal attitudes and opinions influence decisions and conduct. The School respects that each parent/guardian is unique in their educational, cultural, and religious backgrounds and expectations, and rightfully deserves to obtain individualized services and programs compatible with their abilities, goals and cultural framework. Every effort is made to provide information and materials in the families' native languages.

Although parents/guardians are diverse in culture, language, and needs, they share the school's commitment to the educational success of their children. Collaboration between school and parents/guardians is essential to support student learning. Programs reflect specific needs of the students and the families in the communities we serve.

This Parent/Guardian Involvement Policy supports the development, implementation and regular review of a parents/guardians involvement program. It obligates the involvement of parents/guardians at all grade levels in a variety of roles. Parents/guardians involvement

programs are comprehensive and consistent with the standards set forth in the No Child Left Behind Act.

The No Child Left Behind of 2001 (NCLB Act) reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and is based on four principles that provide a framework through which families, educators, and communities can work together to improve teaching and learning. These principles are 1) accountability for results, 2) local control and flexibility, 3) expanded parents/guardians choice, and 4) effective and successful programs that reflect scientifically based research.

Three decades of research provide convincing evidence that parents/guardians are an important influence in helping their children achieve high academic standards. When schools collaborate with parents/guardians to help their children learn and when parents/guardians participate in school activities and decision-making about their children's education, children do better in school and schools improve.¹

B. Parents/Guardians & Student Education

Numerous studies have documented the importance of educating parents, guardians and caregivers of children all aspects of their education. The progress of children and the quality of their families' lives are greatly enhanced when there is ongoing, open communication between the parents/guardians and school program, and when methodologies are consistent across environments. During the screening and subsequent education planning processes, any barriers that may interfere with the student's access to education will be assessed. Strategies for minimizing these barriers will be identified and may result in parents/guardians and student education activities.

The School will provide education and information to families (and students when appropriate) through a variety of methods so that families can get access to it through the channel that best meets their needs.

- During the referral and screening process, families will receive written information about the school, its scope of services, philosophy, and expectations for participation.
- Upon a student's acceptance into the school, a parents/guardians orientation meeting will be held with the parents/guardians. The parents/guardians rights will be reviewed, along with School procedures relevant to the education of their child. Parents/guardians will be encouraged to discuss their expectations, interests, and ability for involvement in their child's school, and any barriers that may restrict or prevent their full participation. Such a discussion will enable the school to meet the parents/guardians' needs and collaborate with the parents/guardians in planning for the child's future.
- Parents/guardians will be provided with a handbook/information packet to use as a reference for understanding their rights, participating in their child's education

¹ Lewis, Anne C.; Anne T., Urgent Message: Families Crucial to School Reform, 1998

planning, managing their child's health and safety, school expectations, community resources, and helpful information to caring for their child.

Parents/Guardian Involvement:

RI School for the Deaf views parent/guardian involvement as one of the foundational principles of the school and encourages families to partner with us in providing children with the highest quality opportunities for healthy development.

Research has concluded that "the evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing; families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more."²

Consistent with the standards set forth in the No Child Left Behind Act and the National PTA Standards for Parents/Guardians Involvement Programs, a successful parents/guardians involvement program here at the RI School for the Deaf will include, but not be limited to, the following components:

Parents Group

The RISD Parents Group is a collaboration of parents/guardians, teachers and administrators of RI School for the Deaf whose mission is to promote a sense of community in the school. They periodically help develop and support enrichment programs and provide services for our children and families.

School Empowerment & Improvement Team

Compiled by a group of people who represent the school community (including parents) and who are interested in making the school a better place for learning and teaching, this group decides what the school should do to improve student performance by gathering and analyzing data that can be used to make decisions that drive changes in the school.

Local Advisory Committee (LAC)

The overall purpose of the Local Advisory Committee is to advise the school on issues regarding students with special needs. This committee seeks technical assistance on specific education issues, disseminates information to the school community about special education concerns and participates in school planning meetings as an advocate for students with special needs.

² Henderson, Anne. T. and Mapp, Karen L., A new Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement, 2002, p.7

School Volunteer Program

We benefit from having our families partner with us. Some of the volunteer opportunities include classroom parents/guardians, assisting team coaches, cataloging in the school library, and planning special enrichment events, etc.

C. Parents/Guardians - School Communication

Throughout the course of enrollment at the school, ongoing contact will be maintained with each parent/guardian about their child's educational progress. Individual Parents/guardians communication needs will determine the frequency of contact. Several strategies may be implemented to provide a variety of opportunities for communication.

- A notebook may be set up for daily or weekly communication. This is particularly common with younger children who may not have yet developed a formal language structure that allows for telling families/caregivers what is happening at school. Staff and parents/guardians may write to each other about activities, concerns, general information, and progress. Phone calls and email can be used as an alternative or a supplemental means of communication.
- Written progress reports will be sent home quarterly.
- Review and general planning meetings will be held whenever requested by either the parents/guardians or school staff.
- Open House is scheduled each October to bring families and staff together to communicate about the school. Other evening events are planned to encourage parents/guardians school communication.
- Parents/guardians will be requested to complete an annual questionnaire rating their opinions of RI School for the Deaf services and climate. In addition to rating their satisfaction with frequency of School contact and helpfulness of particular services, parents/guardians will be asked to indicate the amount of improvement their children made in areas of concern identified in their education plan. The feedback received from the surveys will provide one method of program evaluation for ongoing improvements to the Parent/Guardian Involvement Policy and programs in the school.
- A series of educational workshops in parent/guardian communication, basic rights in special education, curriculum, and advocacy will be offered several per year. Meetings will be scheduled at convenient times so as to optimize attendance.
- The school makes ASL classes available to parents/guardians and family members on an ongoing basis at no charge to the family.
- Newsletters and other forms of informational materials may be distributed to parents/guardians. The newsletter provides information about activities that the

children are involved in, general news about the School, resources, and topics of interest.

- Parents/guardians will be provided with information about advocacy services that include parents/guardians support networks, educational advocacy, and legal assistance.
- Additional resources will be available through the RI School for the Deaf website at www.rideaf.net. and the RI Department of Education web site found at ride.ri.gov.

Parents/Guardians - Teacher Conferences

These opportunities to conference about students and their progress is made available twice a year for the younger children and as often as requested for any student. They represent an opportunity for families, teachers, and students to evaluate student progress towards meeting grade level expectations and IEP goals.

Parents/Guardians - School Compact

Each child's success depends on the commitment and effort of everyone. By signing this agreement, all of us are committing to provide the best opportunities for our students to be successful.

Parent/Guardian Nights

Several times each year, RI school for the Deaf hosts social and educational events for parents/guardians and families. Information about upcoming events will be distributed in advance, and childcare and interpreting services are typically provided.

Additional Resources:

- ❖ **RIDE.RI.gov** website. Rhode Island Department of Education's comprehensive website about all matters educational in our state.
- ❖ The "**What Works Clearinghouse**" (WWC), a project to help education decision-makers answer such questions as how do we create better schools and how can we make sure that all children can read? A part of the Department's Institute of Education Sciences, The WWC has been established to put solid evidence from high-quality scientific research into the hands of educators, policy-makers and the public so they may make better choices about programs and practices. To receive e-mail updates, subscribe to WWC Update on the Web at www.w-w-c.org. or call 1-866-WWC-9799. *-Adapted by the Title 1 Part A Parents/guardians Involvement Plan*
- ❖ **American Society for Deaf Children**. A helpful organization for parents/guardians, families and professionals who care about making good decisions for deaf and hard of hearing children, found at www.deafchildren.org