



"Together We Fly"

Universal Academy

Highly Qualified Prekindergarten (HQPK)

Family Engagement Plan

Universal Academy in accordance with the House Bill 3 High-Quality Prekindergarten guidelines, created a High-Quality Prekindergarten Family Engagement Plan to promote partnership between our school, families, and community to ensure the successful outcomes for our youngest learners in prekindergarten programs. Collaboratively, we all share the responsibility to encourage and support initiatives, activities, and practices that enhance the success of student learning and achievement.

Family engagement is defined as:

"The mutual responsibility of families, schools, and communities to build relationships to support student learning and achievement, support family well-being, and the continuous learning and development of children, families, and educators. Family engagement is fully integrated in the child's educational experience and is both culturally and linguistically appropriate." Texas Administrative Code §102.1003.

It has long been recognized by both researchers and practitioners that family engagement plays a non-negotiable role in education. It is no longer a suggestion, rather a mandate, in Texas with the passage of house Bill 4 in 2015. Texas Education Code §29.168, created by House Bill 4, 84th Texas Legislature, 2015, requires a school district or charter school to develop and implement a Family Engagement Plan to assist the district in achieving and maintaining high levels of family involvement and positive family attitudes toward education. The local Family Engagement Plan shall be based on the family engagement strategies established by the Texas Education Agency in collaboration with other state agencies.

Universal Academy embraces the individuality and uniqueness of families and promotes a culture of learning that is child centered and age appropriate. Building partnerships between educators and families, by way of the Family Engagement Plan, ensures that every learner is encouraged, supported, and challenged to achieve the highest levels of knowledge, skills, and character.

The six Universal Academy Family Engagement Plan domain strategies are based on empirical research and are proven to demonstrate positive short-term and long-term outcomes for early childhood education. This plan expresses what is contained in the Commissioner's Rule

(102.1003(f)) in addition to specific examples of how each of the family engagement strategies will be accomplished in our high-quality program. The following articulates strategies within each of the six domains.

Domain I: Facilitating Family-to-Family Support

Universal Academy creates a safe and respectful environment where families can learn from each other as individuals and in groups; invites former program participants, including families and community volunteers, to share their educational and career experiences with current families; and ensures opportunities for continuous participation in events designed for families. Examples of events include:

- “Open House” time during the initial days of each school year that creates a welcoming space for parents to gather and talk informally with one another before and/or after the event. This space is intentionally designed to be family-friendly with culturally diverse pictures and materials that welcome all families.
- Room moms and volunteers to support parents and classroom activities
- “Book Fair” where families can get to know one another and share community and school experiences
- “Meet the Teacher” night facilitating family to family interactions, networking, and community/school support
- “Remind App Implementation” meeting held during open house to provide parent training along with family-to-family support, dialogue, experiences that encourage parents to establish mutual support mechanisms
- Parent-Teacher meetings and sponsored events encouraging parent volunteer opportunities allowing parents to work collaboratively and designed to match families who have similar interests, goals, or challenges and providing opportunities for families to have ongoing connections
- Class field trips and other activities that include family participation.
- School Health and Advisory Council and Site Base Decision Making Teams provide opportunities for parents to interact and network with other parents interested in supporting public education in the Universal Academy community
- Invite parents to share about their experiences and the transition to kindergarten.
- Universal Academy Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Round-up. Early indicators of the following year enrollment

Domain II: Establishing a Network of Community Resources

The Universal Academy Family Engagement Plan builds strategic partnerships by leveraging community resources; establishing and maintaining partnerships with businesses, and community agencies; monitoring and evaluating policies and practices to stimulate innovation and create learning pathways; identifying support from various agencies, including mental and physical health providers; partnering with local community-based organizations to create a family-friendly transition plan for students arriving from early childhood settings; and identifying partners to provide translators and culturally relevant resources reflective of home language. Examples of Strategies in Action (B) include:

- Partnership with local businesses to provide resources as needed
- Community Health & Wellness Resources
- Child Nutrition Information
- Immunization Information
- Health & Attendance Guidelines
- Educator/Campus newsletters that highlight community resources, events, and services to support diverse needs of multi-cultural families
- Enrollment Flyers will be distributed to all elementary campuses to help share information about PK and other community resources.
- Universal Academy will contact the Local Area Fire/Police Department/Military Personnel and invite them for visits to share resources with students, families, and the school promoting safety and overall well-being
- Local partnership to provide food, school supplies, and back to school backpacks for learners in need
- Universal Academy Bilingual employees provide (as needed) translation services for families at events, meetings, newsletters, etc
- Offer training for parents

Domain III: Increasing Family Participation in Decision-Making

Universal Academy increases/promotes family participation in decision-making by developing and supporting opportunities related to district and campus goal-setting efforts targeting family engagement; developing and supporting leadership skills for family members and providing opportunities for families to advocate for their children/families; collaborating with families to develop strategies to solve problems and serve as a problem solvers; engaging families in shaping program activities and cultivating the expectation that information must flow in both directions to reflect two-way communication; developing, in collaboration with families, clearly defined goals, outcomes, timelines, and strategies for assessing progress; providing each family with an opportunity to review and provide input on program practices, policies, communications, and events in order to ensure the program is responsive to the needs of families.

Utilize appropriate tools such as surveys or focus groups to gather feedback on the **Family Engagement Plan**. Examples of family participation in district and campus decision-making opportunities include:

- Campus Site-Based Decision-Making Committee composed of campus staff, community partners, parents, and business representatives focusing on planning, curriculum, budgeting, staff development, overall school organization, all with the intent of improving the achievement of all learners at the campus
- Campus visitation and volunteering opportunities
- Share strategies with parents on how to advocate for themselves and their children appropriately

- Educate families regarding their rights under State and Federal law regarding the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the American Disabilities Act
- Create and maintain an environment that values and affirms parent leadership.
- Using parents as equal partners with staff in reviewing family engagement results and making decisions regarding plans for continuous improvement
- LPAC parent representation
- Regularly held parent/teacher conferences
- Progress monitoring information is shared with parents encouraging their feedback, questions, and ideas regarding future learning experiences.

Domain IV: Equipping Families with Tools to Enhance and Extend Learning

Educators in Universal Academy recognize the families of our learners as the first and best teachers in the child’s life. In order to equip families with tools to enhance and extend their child’s learning, our educators work with families to design or implement existing home educational resources to support learning at home while strengthening the family/school partnership; provide families with information and/or training on creating a home learning environment connected to formal learning opportunities; equip families with resources and skills to support their children through the transition to school and offering opportunities for families and children to visit the school in advance of the pre-kindergarten school year; provide complementary home learning activities for families to engage in a home with children through information presented in newsletters, online tech tools, social media, parent/family-teacher conferences, or other school-related events; provide information focusing on age-appropriate developmental expectations; collaborate with families to appropriately respond to children’s behavior in a non-punitive, positive, and supportive way; and assist families to implement best practices that will help achieve the goals and objectives identified to meet the needs of the child and family. Examples of how Universal Academy equips families with tools to enhance and extend learning include:

- Universal Academy offers a high-quality full day PK program to eligible learners, enhancing and extending socialization and facilitating parent involvement for Pre-K families
- Teacher/parent conferences held throughout the school year and collaborating with them in setting goals for their children while in the PK program
- Encouraging family members to volunteer in the classroom, using the time to foster enhanced communication regarding their child’s development
- Suggested extension home activities that correspond to activities done in the classroom
- Sharing technology tips/resources that are family-friendly to enhance parents’ knowledge on child development (Accessible Downloadable Apps)
- Registrations and throughout the summer and school year that include campus tours and school/program information
- District webpage that shared information supportive of enhancing and extending learning for children participating in the PK program
- District webpage includes recommended learning links

- Parents are encouraged to access class/campus/district information from the Parent Portal on the Universal Academy website
- Parents are provided with learner progress by way of regular report cards, weekly teacher communication, etc.
- BOY, MOY, and EOY benchmarking
- Universal Academy Code of Conduct

Domain V: Developing Staff Skills in Evidence-Based Practices that Support Families

Universal Academy believes in a continuous improvement philosophy. We provide essential professional development for educators in understanding communication and engagement with families, including training on communicating with families in crisis; promoting and developing family engagement as a core strategy to improve teaching and learning among all educators and staff; and developing staff skills to support and use culturally diverse, culturally relevant, and culturally responsive family engagement strategies. Strategies in Action include:

- Develop educator skills to support and use culturally diverse, culturally relevant, and culturally responsive family engagement strategies
- Promoting and developing family engagement as a core strategy to improve teaching and learning among all educators and staff
- Continuous professional development achieved through training opportunities from Region 10
- Educators will brainstorm and actively seek out ways parents can play a major role in decision-making within the classroom
- Utilize developmentally appropriate activities to help children understand differences in families, cultures and traditions
- Educators will continue training targeting how to support families in crisis
- Train educator about the resources that are available in the community that support families' interests and needs
- Educators will participate in professional learning that focuses on strength-based approach to family engagement
- Continuation of educator awareness of how culture may influence perspective in child-rearing, communication styles, caregiving, discipline, etc.
- Implementation of the Universal Academy Discipline Policy
- Utilization of resources available in Circle Progress Monitoring platforms
- Continuing membership in the ESC 10 as a means of professional learning, program effectiveness, and practices associated with HQPK implementation

Domain VI: Evaluating Family Engagement Efforts and Using Evaluation for Continuous Improvement

Self-assessment will be a cornerstone to the overall process of evaluating program effectiveness and to support future improvements. Our PK program develops a data collection systems that monitor family engagement; uses data to ensure alignment between family engagement activities and district/school teaching and learning goals and to promote continuous family engagement; employs an evaluation plan to guide action; uses a cyclical

process to ensure evaluation results are used for continuous improvement and adjustment; and ensures educators and parents play a role in the family engagement evaluation process. Efforts contributing to the evaluation process include:

- Parent surveys will gain information on preferences of program components and parents' perception of program effectiveness. Survey results serve to improve program design and to increase parent outreach and involvement.
- Universal Academy will conduct an annual EOY program evaluation and review of the results will support improvement efforts for the new school year considering all areas of the **Family Engagement Plan**.
- Child-centered goals setting collaborations with parents will continue at the BOY. Progress monitoring and reporting will occur at the BOY, MOY, and EOY
- Survey parents at least annually on the effectiveness of the prekindergarten experience for their child and their family
- Incorporating goals related to family engagement into the program/campus strategic planning initiatives
- Utilize the "High Quality Checklist" for Family Engagement Plan provided by Region 17 ESC.
- Utilize the "High Quality Pre-Kindergarten Self-Assessment" instrument created by the TEA to include results indicating strengths, opportunities to grow, and next steps for continuous improvement.
- Participation in family involvement activities will be quantitatively documented and monitored at the campus/district levels. Qualitative data will be collected to ensure the specific needs of families are being addressed through surveys. Evaluation results will future planning efforts in an effort to optimize family involvement within the school and Universal Academy community.

Transition Activities:

- Universal Academy may engage with local child-care providers to share and align best practices for family engagement, setting and communicating learning goals, and student progress monitoring
- Provide school tours/visits with local child-care providers and community to encourage smooth transitions to kindergarten
- Create a transition plan to support children and families moving from one grade to the next

Linguistic & Culturally Inclusive Practices:

- Ensure Human Resources Department routinely implements linguistically and culturally inclusive hiring practices
- Provide ongoing professional development to educators on culturally responsive topics with an early childhood focus
- Use culturally relevant materials in classrooms and for homework sent to families
- If needed, Use home languages for all communications sent to families
- If needed, provide translators and interpreters during all events/activities for caregivers

Conclusion:

The Universal Academy Family Engagement Plan is one of the strategies our district uses to guide collaborative:

- Ensure Human Resources Dept. routinely implements linguistically and culturally inclusive hiring practices
 - Provide ongoing professional development to educators on culturally responsive topics with an early childhood focus
 - If needed, Use culturally relevant materials in classrooms and for homework sent to families
 - If needed, Use home languages for all communications sent to families
 - If needed, Provide translators and interpreters during all events/activities for caregivers
- Conclusion: success.
- The positive relationships between staff and families that Universal Academy promotes through the HQPK Family Engagement plan, help build a shared understanding of how we can work together to ensure every child will reach their full potential, from birth to kindergarten and beyond.

Universal Academy HQPK Family Engagement Plan URL for ECDS Submission: