

The Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Plan



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The Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) recognizes the far-reaching benefits of parent, family, and community involvement in the success of students. The following programs and practices have been created and established as our Parent and Family Engagement Plan:

1. Jointly Developed Expectations and Objectives

As ASBVI continuously seeks to improve in meaningful parent and family engagement, the district will:

- Assemble a Parent and Family Engagement Committee that is representative of the school's population (including representation of diversity such as race, socioeconomic status, single parent homes, grandparents as parents, and foster parents).
- Involve parents in the development and revisions of the Family and Parent Engagement, School-Parent Compact, School Improvement, and Title I Plans.
- Schedule and hold a Title I Meeting at the beginning of the school year allowing parents to fully understand the school wide plan and offer any feedback.
- Schedule and hold a Report to the Public meeting in order to provide an overview of the school's programs and services.
- Provide surveys in a variety of formats to find out the needs and opinions of parents, families, and community members.
- Utilize survey data to assist in evaluation and update of the Parent and Family Engagement, School-Parent Compact, School Improvement, and Title I Plans.
- Provide a parent-friendly summary/explanation as well as access to the Parent and Family Engagement Plan.
- Provide parents with multiple formats of participation, including in-person or by virtual means, in order to maximize parental involvement and participation among our widely scattered parent group.
- Provide parents with the information, training, and tools to support their child's academic and functional development.
- Schedule at least two Parent-Teacher Conferences during the school year.

- Conduct monthly Friends of ASB meetings involving parents, families, school staff, and community members.

ASBVI's Parent and Family Engagement Committee will meet annually during the spring semester. This meeting will focus on monitoring the implementation of, making revisions, and updating our Parent and Family Engagement Plan. This committee will be made up of school personnel, parents, family members, and community members.

Our plan will be submitted to the Department of Education by August 1st of each year. This plan, as well as a parent-friendly summary/explanation will be posted on our website by August 1st of each year so that parents are able to read the plan at any time. We will also provide a parent-friendly summary of the plan as a supplement in our Student Handbook. In order for us to make sure all parents are provided an opportunity to read the plan and know how to provide feedback, we will obtain signatures from each parent acknowledging that they have a copy of the plan summary.

If a parent reports that the plan is not satisfactory, the coordinator will submit the parent comment as part of the plan submission to the state.

Parents will be invited to provide feedback through surveys provided to them during Open House, during Parent-Teacher Conferences, and through our website (<https://asbvi.ade.arkansas.gov/>). From these surveys, we will gather information about parent education needs, volunteer interest areas, and on academics, school climate/culture, and their effectiveness. These surveys will be reviewed by the Parent and Family Engagement Committee and used for planning and implementation of initiatives and goals that reflect the concerns and needs of our parents and families.

As the Parent Engagement, School-Parent Compact, School Improvement, and Title I Plans all interconnect, the goal is for student attendance and academics to improve as parent engagement increases. These interconnected plans will help to build relationships between parents, families, community members, and school staff leading to improved achievement for ASBVI and our students.

2. Building Staff Capacity

ASBVI teachers and administrators will be required to earn 60 hours of professional development each year. Included in these hours, these employees must complete a minimum of 2 hours related to parental involvement every four years as required by the state of Arkansas. In addition to this requirement, trainings will be offered by the school to educate staff on the value of parent contributions, communicating and working with parents as equal partners, and implementing parent programs. These trainings will be provided in response to identified staff needs and in collaboration with parent facilitators. Paraprofessionals are also required to participate in online trainings through Arkansas Ideas as well as professional development activities provided through the school to develop knowledge and skills related to their jobs. All professional development documentation must be submitted to our school secretary who inputs the information and monitors completion of these required hours throughout the school year. All of our teachers, under the professional development offered by our district, must be on a prescribed pathway to obtaining a proficiency credential or an awareness credential in knowledge and practices in scientific reading instruction. All of our teachers must also be TVI (Teacher of the Visually Impaired) certified or working towards their TVI certification, or have credentials in special education. The ASBVI Foundation and school provides financial assistance for teachers who are in need while going through the TVI program. This program allows our teachers to support our parents in many different ways, including teaching them braille and the expanded core curriculum skills so that it is easier for them to help their students at home with their homework and with learning life skills. Parents are encouraged to communicate any training needs they have through our Parent Survey. This input from parents allows us to coordinate the parent programs that they need most. ASBVI provides a Parent Resource Center to address some of these needs. Annually we also provide a full day of parent programs in conjunction with our Braille Challenge and Cane Quest.

Additionally, we have signed an MOU (memorandum of understanding) agreement with Reach University to allow our paraprofessionals an affordable route to obtain teaching credentials within a 2-or-3-year period (depending on the amount of college coursework they have already earned).

Also, we have developed specific required courses ("ASBVI University") that focus on blindness, maximizing the use of residual vision, daily living skills, Orientation & Mobility and Braille. These trainings are offered to new teachers and instructional support staff members as well as residential dorm parents and non-teaching staff or as refresher courses to our more experienced teachers. Recordings of these trainings are available to staff to access throughout the school year.

Communication is a key to a successful partnership between home and school. A list of opportunities for parents to be involved will be mailed to every parent from ASBVI administration at the beginning of each semester. Parents will be regularly informed of their child's progress through a minimum of two scheduled Parent-Teacher Conferences, mid-quarterly reports mailed to parents of students at risk of falling behind, quarterly reports, and access to staff email addresses (formatted firstname.lastname@asb.k12.ar.us).

Teaching staff will work to initiate communication with parents on a regular basis so that parents feel like they have built a relationship with their student's teachers and are comfortable in their communication. School administrators will work with teachers to remind parents of upcoming events that they can be involved in with their student, as well as opportunities for them to volunteer and be a part of specific classroom activities. Teachers will keep a contact record to document these parent-teacher contacts.

The school will make sure that all information is made available to our parents in a way that is parent-friendly and accessible to them; whether it be in a different language or accessible for the visually impaired, just to name a few. When needed, translators will also be utilized to ensure effective communication.

ASBVI will hold a Title 1 meeting at the beginning of each school year. This meeting will address the school's participation in Title I, requirements of the program, and rights of parents under Title 1. This will allow school staff as well as parents to fully understand the school wide plan and offer any feedback. These yearly meetings will also be provided as virtual sessions so

that those parents that want to come, but are unable to travel to the school will be able to be a part. Our district will also provide a free meal for any parents that want to be a part of our meetings and are on campus during a meal time.

ASBVI also includes teachers, parents, and community members in jointly developing our Parent and Family Engagement Plan as well as a parent-friendly summary of this plan. In order for us to make sure all parents are provided an opportunity to read the plan, the parent-friendly plan will be provided to parents during Open House/Parent-Teacher Conferences as well as placed as a supplement to the student handbook. We will obtain signatures from each parent acknowledging that they have a copy of the plan summary. The Parent and Family Engagement Plan as well as the parent-friendly version is also placed on our school website so that all school staff, parents, and community members have access to view the plan and have input into it. The Parent and Family Engagement Committee utilizes parent survey data and input from school staff, parents, and community members in evaluation and update of the Parent and Family Engagement Plan.

In order to ensure that parents, students, and staff all understand their role in sharing the responsibility for improved student academic achievement, a Parent-School Compact will be jointly developed and agreed upon by all parents, teachers, and students. These Parent-School Compacts will be implemented and reviewed at Open House and Parent-Teacher Conferences.

ASBVI will provide Volunteer Interest Surveys during Open House and Parent-Teacher Conferences in order to gather volunteer interest data from parents so that we may offer parents multiple opportunities to share their wisdom and experience with our students. By showing parents that we highly value and respect their expertise we will be able to build a relationship with them that will allow us to work together with them in educating students. These partnerships will also give support and assistance to teachers in planning classroom parties/activities, tutoring students, and completing non-academic duties such as making copies, cutting, and stapling. We will offer one on one

volunteer training for our parents, upon request, instead of just group training sessions twice yearly, to accommodate our families.

3. Building Parent Capacity

Parents and families are given multiple opportunities to become engaged in their student's education and life at school. Some of these opportunities include attending and participating in Parent-Teacher Conferences and Special Education meetings, emailing teachers, attending parent trainings, taking advantage of our Parent Resource Center, attending scheduled school activities, participating in Friends of ASB, giving feedback on Parent Surveys, and volunteering. We have found that we get more participation when meetings are held synchronously in person and virtually. As a result, we continuously invite parents and community members to participate in trainings and meetings both in person and online.

A minimum of two Parent-Teacher Conferences as well as annual Special Education meetings are provided throughout the school year to help teach and support our parents. At Parent-Teacher Conferences and Special Education meetings, assistance is provided to parents in understanding how to monitor their child's progress, comprehend state and local academic assessments, and work with educators to improve the achievement of their child. In order to keep parents informed, mid-quarterly grade reports will be mailed to parents of students at risk of falling behind. Quarterly grade reports and special education progress monitoring will also be mailed to all parents to assist them in monitoring their child's achievement. Parents will be given access to staff email addresses (formatted firstname.lastname@asb.k12.ar.us) to contact school staff with any concerns or questions.

Parents can receive support through on-campus and virtual trainings and Parent Nights offered by ASBVI that are related to topics such as literacy, math, technology (including the harms of copyright piracy), expanded core curriculum, and braille and adaptive technology. Some of these trainings are offered in conjunction with our Braille Challenge and Cane Quest. These meetings and trainings will incorporate the goals of the Parent and Family Engagement Plan, as

well as, the school wide plan concerning elementary and secondary curriculum and academics.

Another way that we support parent engagement is through our Parent Resource Center. Through our Parent Resource Center and on our website, parents are able to access all the information that is shared with them at our annual Title 1 meeting. Also located in our Parent Resource Center, as well as provided and discussed during our beginning of the school year Open House and Parent-Teacher Conferences, a parent-friendly version of the state academic standards for each grade level will be available so that parents understand what their students are learning at each grade. Materials are also available that our parents are free to take so that they have the resources they need to help their student have academic and community success.

Elementary teachers will provide student packs that have teaching strategies parents can use as well as ideas for hands on learning that will give the students extra practice in the skills that are being taught in the classroom. There are also packs parents can utilize that will allow their students the opportunity to delve a little deeper in the areas that are being taught and will help foster student led learning and allow parent and students to work and learn together, which will work to build partnerships between the student, parent, and teaching staff. The secondary classroom teachers have provided online teaching support for parents as well as their email addresses so that parents can contact them with specific questions regarding their students work. We also have information available for parents regarding state and local assessments such as the dates they will be given and "helps" that parents can provide for their students.

A list of opportunities for parents to be involved will be mailed to every parent from ASBVI administration at the beginning of each semester. These events will also be posted on our school website and social media sites. The majority of these activities are available through on-campus and virtual participation. This allows our parents that are scattered throughout the state to still have the chance to be involved and active in their child's school events.

All parents are encouraged to be part of Friends of ASB, our team of school staff members, parents, and community members that support our school. Friends of ASB will meet a minimum of once per month. These scheduled meetings will be posted on our school website and links will be provided in order to allow members to join virtually.

As parents and family members are engaged they will be able to give feedback to the school on what they see that is helpful and what they need to see more of in order to feel fully supported. Parents are able to provide feedback through discussions with staff as well as parent surveys provided at Open House, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and on the school website. The results of these surveys will be used by the Parent and Family Engagement Committee and will potentially lead to additional parental involvement activities and trainings that have been requested by parents.

Parents can also be involved by volunteering. There are many options for volunteering. Parents can complete Volunteer Interest Surveys provided at Open House and Parent-Teacher Conferences. Volunteer training will be provided annually.

4. Coordination

The ASBVI School Parent and Family Engagement Plan works to promote relationships between community stakeholders, parents, family members, and school staff members. These relationships are critical for solid and cohesive bonds of trust that will lead to academic success for our students.

Through our Child Find Program, we work cooperatively with educational co-ops, medical and vision facilities, school districts, preschools, and other local, state, and federal programs across Arkansas to identify children in need of services. Our nursing and low vision clinic departments also work with local medical facilities such as Arkansas Children's Hospital, Baptist Health, and the Arkansas Department of Health to assist the school in providing dental,

vision, and hearing screenings/services. This also gives the school the capacity to connect students and families to available supports. We also work in collaboration with Behavioral Health Services of Arkansas in making sure that our students and families receive support related to mental health needs. This organization also works with school staff in providing information, training, and resources to support these students and their families.

Our alumni association is connected very closely with our student body and often offer supports through activities and funds for scholarships and other educationally related activities.

Our birth to three program works with parents and preschool facilities across the state giving the support needed for parents and community members to more fully provide an appropriate education and skills training for the child. This program also affords parents to stay in our "Parent Cottage" free of charge for required overnight stays to access services such as appointments at Arkansas Children's Hospital or to participate in parent trainings provided by ASBVI.

We also work in cooperation with the Division of Services for the Blind, World Services for the Blind, and Superior Success in providing our students vocational and life skills training opportunities. The Blue Umbrella, a gift shop under Department of Human Services, showcases and sells handmade, wooden pens made by some of our students.

We also provide a parent resource center with information related to education, vision, and community supports. Additionally, through parent support meetings that are included in our Annual Braille Challenge event and our Annual Cane Quest, we give parents the opportunity to connect with other parents of students with visual impairments for support and fellowship. At those specific meetings we provide parent education programs that promote best practices for raising a child who has a visual impairment.

Friends of ASBVI and local church organizations have partnered with our school to support our teachers through teacher appreciation meals and gifts

as well as our students and families through donations for our back to school backpacks, food pantry, and clothes closet.

5. Evaluation and Reservation

Evaluation and reservation of the Parent and Family Engagement Plan will be accomplished on a continual cycle. Each School Engagement Plan (Elementary and Secondary) will be created/reviewed annually by Elementary and Secondary Facilitators and teams representative of each school. These School Engagement Plans will be uploaded by the facilitators to Indistar prior to April 1. The District Reviewer (Superintendent) will provide responses within Indistar to indicate that compliance has been met for each school-level section or suggest required changes.

At the beginning of each school year the Superintendent will hold a Title 1 meeting to inform parents of their rights under the law. During this Title I meeting, information will also be given on the Title I budget and how much is set aside for engagement purposes. Parents will be given the opportunity during this meeting to provide input into how the funds are used. Also, throughout the school year, parents will be given opportunities to share their input of how funds are being spent and to offer their suggestions and concerns. These opportunities will include, to name a few, parent meetings, ability to share their opinion through email after reading the Title 1 information provided on the website that includes the Parent Facilitator's contact information, and through verbal surveys given during annual conferences. This data will be looked at by the Parent and Family Engagement Committee as an annual evaluation each Spring so that decisions can be made for the new school year. This annual evaluation meeting will also be the time that all parent survey data collected will be looked at so any updates to our Parent and Family Engagement Plan can be written that will address any identified barriers to parent participation, needs, and strategies to support successful school/parent/community interactions. These Parent Surveys will be provided to parents throughout the school year at Open House, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and through the ASBVI school website. In addition to review of

surveys and other data sources, the committee will utilize the Required Components for District Checklist provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to ensure that we are meeting legal compliance. Following revisions and updates, the plan will be provided to the team for final review. Once approved by all team members, the plan will be sent to the state for review in Indistar prior to July 1. If the plan is returned for any revisions, the plan will be resubmitted to Indistar for additional review within two weeks. Upon approval, the plan will then be updated on the school website by August 1.

During the school year, various members of the Parent and Family Engagement Committee will attend relevant trainings so that they will be abreast of newly found evidence-based strategies for more effective parental engagement.

Based on the 2021-2022 Parent Survey, parents indicated by their responses that the following are areas of improvement related to parent and family engagement:

Twenty-five percent indicated that they disagree with the statement of "Parent school activities are planned at different times of the day and week to provide all parents a chance to participate".

Twenty-five percent indicated that they disagree with the statement of "Parents are provided helpful materials/information about the thinking, social, emotional, and physical development stages of their child".

Twenty-five percent indicated that they disagree with the statement of "School staff recognize and work to remove barriers that may keep parent volunteers from participating in school activities."

Therefore, in response to these results, the school will provide school sponsored activities at various days within the week. For example, our Open House and first Parent-Teacher Conference will be held on Sunday, August 14. Our Christmas Concert will be held on Thursday, December 15. Our second Parent-Teacher Conference will be held on Monday, April 10. There

will also be virtual options for these events to encourage parent participation from our widely-scattered parent group.

Our school will provide informational sheets to parents related to the developmental stages of their children during Parent-Teacher Conferences as well as within our Parent Resource Center. Parent trainings will also be scheduled to cover this topic.

Volunteer Surveys will be provided during Open House and Parent-Teacher Conferences. Parents will be encouraged to volunteer in various ways whether it be on campus or by assisting in projects from their own home.

It will be through on-going evaluation and reservation of our Parent and Family Engagement Plan that ASBVI will stay committed to increasing parent, family, and community engagement, acknowledging that this is an integral part of our students' academic, functional, and social success.