

A Tool for Success: High Expectations and Your Child's Education

Dear Family Member,

When it comes to education, it is difficult to know exactly what is right for your child. As a parent, you will have many concerns about your child's school community. It is important to help children make the transition from home to school with high expectations for their academic and developmental success.

You can use the information provided in this handout to learn more about your child's school and be more engaged in their education. Included are questions that you can think over on your own or with other family members. You might even want to ask your child what they think. Afterward, plan to address all or some of these questions with school personnel such as your child's teacher, principal, social worker, or other staff. Try talking with other parents at your child's school. **This handout provides questions to ask about the following topics:**

- Safety and health
- The quality of education
- Key elements of fairness and equity—high expectations for ALL
- Preparation for student success
- Teacher quality and effectiveness

Safety and health

- Is my child safe and cared for at this school?
- What programs are in place to assure my child's safety?
- Are there health assessments, such as hearing or vision tests, that are offered to students at the school?
- Is this a positive, safe environment for all children? In what ways is this demonstrated?
- Are there policies against bullying?
- Does this school provide enough time for students to exercise and play?
- Are meals provided? Are they nutritious and healthy?

The quality of education

- Is my child receiving a quality education? What are the school's high expectations for their students? What are the parent's high expectations for their child?
- Is the school family-friendly and family-engaged?
- Does the classroom teacher keep me informed about my child in a timely manner? What methods or strategies do teachers and administrators use to keep parents informed about their child or the school in general? Will I be informed in person, by paper, or electronically and in my preferred language?
- What does support and information look like for my child at this school? Is it daily, monthly, quarterly, or only for special events?

- If my child falls behind, what will the teacher do? Will the teacher and I work together to help my child?
- Is classwork culturally responsive and appropriate?

If you have an older child, here are a few questions to consider:

- Are the types of classes my child is taking preparing them for the adult world?
- Will these classes help my child be ready for college, postsecondary education, or alternatives to postsecondary education such as technical school and careers?

Key elements of fairness and equity—high expectations for ALL

- Will my child have opportunities to be successful?
- What does educational equity look like at my child's school?
- What does the school do to make sure my child is treated fairly? What are some school practices?
- How does the school make sure that all students are treated fairly? For instance, what are the suspension or expulsion rates by race, disability, or gender?
- Are classes offered to a wide range of students including English language learners and students in special education? Is there access to advanced placement, gifted and talented programs, science labs, music, the arts and, extracurricular activities?
- Does the school provide financial assistance if a family's financial status prevents their child from participating in school or extracurricular activities?

Preparation for student success

- Overall, how is my child's progress measured in key classes such as reading, math, science, and the arts at this school?
- What assessments or tests will my child be taking this year? When will these tests be held?
- If my child should miss an assessment or test, what is the makeup procedure?
- How much time is spent preparing for and taking state and district tests?
- Is there anything I can do as a parent to help prepare my child for the test?

Teacher quality and effectiveness

- Do teachers have time to talk and share ideas with one another?
- What are the values and beliefs of my child's teacher regarding student learning, school testing, and communication with families? What are the overall values and beliefs of the school?
- What kind of professional development is available for teachers at my child's school?
- Does the professional development align with what is being taught at the school?
- Are members from the community asked to inform teachers and administrators about their community?

Parent engagement is a key factor in the success of your child at home, at school, and in the community. Having information about the place where your child spends the bulk of the day can help you stay engaged in your child's education.

Resources.....

Parents with High Expectations: You and Your Elementary School Aged Child. PACER Center 2017.

