

Health and Safety in Schools

Strategy for Involving Parents in School Health

Parents Responsibilities Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (2024/2025)

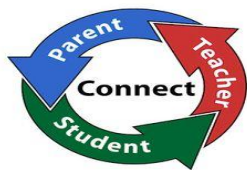
In our school Al Kamal American private school the parents have a powerful role in supporting their children's health and learning.

- ✓ Engaged parents help guide their children successfully through school, advocate for their children, and can help shape a healthy school environment.
- ✓ Parent engagement in schools is parents and school staff working together to support and improve the learning, development, and health of children and adolescents.
- ✓ Parents should not send children to school if they are showing signs of illness. Any student with a fever, vomiting or signs of an infectious disease, parents will be notified and the student must be sent home.
- ✓ The school is responsible for the student's wellbeing during school hours. The school, through the nurse and the Health Office, will handle any illness, injuries or emergencies that arise throughout the day.
- ✓ The parents will be responsible for any follow up medication or treatment and should
- ✓ keep the school's nurse informed of all developments.

How can school staff increase parent engagement in school health?

In our school there are four aspects of the parent engagement framework:

1. Connecting with parents.
2. Engaging parents in school health activities.
3. Communicate through different channels.
4. Sustaining parent engagement in school health.



1- Connect



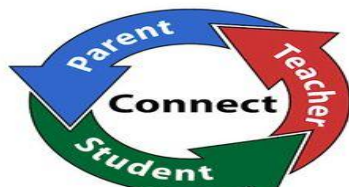
2- Engagement



3- communication



4- Sustain



Connection

School districts and school staff need to connect and build positive relationships with parents before they can effectively engage parents in improving school health programs and activities. First, it is essential for school staff, parents, and community partners to recognize the advantages of working together to guide children's health and learning. This can be accomplished by having a shared school vision for engaging parents in their children's education and communicating that vision to everyone in the school community. The school's vision for parent engagement can set the tone for a positive relationship with parents and the expectations parents have for being involved in school health and academic activities.

Examples of ways school staff can connect with parents

- ✓ **The school mission** reflects the importance of parent engagement and establish a foundation for parent engagement in school health activities.
- ✓ **The school E – safe mission** reflects the importance of parent engagement and establish a foundation for parent engagement in school health activities.
- ✓ The school has a well-planned program for parent engagement.
- ✓ The policies and procedures in place to maximize parent engagement in the school's health activities, services, and programs.
- ✓ The school has a friendly, welcoming environment for parents.
- ✓ The school welcomes parents to participate in and contribute to the school's health activities, services, and programs.
- ✓ There is a district-level parent involvement and engagement plan that can guide the development of a school plan for involving parents in school health activities.



The school ensure that the staff members have the ability to connect with parents and support parent engagement in school health activities.

- ✓ The school has a dedicated committee of teachers, administrators, and parents (such as an Action Team for Partnerships24) that helps the school plan, implement, evaluate, and continually improve its outreach to parents and the quality of parent engagement activities.
- ✓ There are school health activities that address the interests of parents, such as healthy eating seminars.
- ✓ The school staff members provide with opportunities to learn how to increase parent engagement in school, including in health activities.

Ask parents about their needs and interests regarding the health of their children and how they would like to be involved in the school's health activities, services, and programs. For example, the following questions might be integrated into an existing school assessment:

- ✓ What health topics are important to your family and your child?
- ✓ What information would you like to receive related to school health?
- ✓ What school health-related activities, services, and programs would you like to know more about?
- ✓ What simple changes or modifications would make the school's physical environment more pleasant, accessible, and safe for parents and community members?
- ✓ For parents with a child with an identified health risk, such as asthma, diabetes, or food allergies: how would you like to work with the school to most effectively manage your child's health condition?
- ✓ What skills and talents do you have that might match with the health-related needs of the school?



Engage

In addition to establishing a relationship with parents and making them feel welcomed, the school offers a variety of opportunities to engage parents in school health activities.

There are six types of involvement that schools can use to engage parents:

- ✓ Providing parenting support.
- ✓ Communicating with parents.
- ✓ Providing a variety of volunteer opportunities.
- ✓ Supporting learning at home.
- ✓ Encouraging parents to be part of decision making in schools.
- ✓ Collaborating with the community.

Examples of ways school staff can encourage healthy parenting support:

The school Offer or collaborate with community organizations to provide parent education classes on the following topics.

- ✓ Understanding child and adolescent development.
- ✓ Praising and rewarding desirable health behaviors.
- ✓ Setting expectations for appropriate healthy behavior and academic performance.
- ✓ Talking with children about health-related risks and behaviors.
- ✓ Monitoring children's daily activities (e.g., knowing their children's whereabouts and friends).
- ✓ Modeling healthy behaviors (e.g., taking medicine as directed, getting regular physical activity, and eating foods that align with dietary guidelines).
- ✓ Strengthening leadership and advocacy skills.
- ✓ Provide parents with seminars, workshops, and information on health topics that relate directly to lessons taught in health education and physical education classes.



Communication

our School established clear communication channels between parents and school staff. This included opportunities for school staff to communicate with parents about school health-related activities (such as health education classes, screening programs, and other health-related events) and provided them opportunities to participate in school health activities and other community-based programs that focus on health.

There are two-way communications (**school-to-home and home-to-school**), parents can receive educational materials about different health topics, learn how they can be involved in school health activities, offer feedback and recommendations about health activities, and stay in constant communication with teachers, administrators, counselors, and other staff about their children's health.

Examples of ways school staff can enhance communication with parents about health and education:

- ✓ Use a variety of communication methods, such as flyers, memos, banners, signs, door hangers, newsletters, report cards, progress reports, post cards, letters, monthly calendars of events, Web sites and Web boards, text messaging, and e-mail messages to communicate with parents about health-related topics and issues.
- ✓ Use a variety of verbal and face-to-face communication methods, such as phone calls to home, automated phone system messages, parent teacher conferences, meetings, school events.
- ✓ Provide open lines of communication for receiving comments and suggestions from parents on health-related topics, and build the school's capacity to route this information to the intended persons.
- ✓ Appoint or hire a school staff member (e.g., a parent liaison) to be the point of contact for parents in the schools.
- ✓ Establish regular meetings with parents to discuss school health issues and children's behavior, grades, and accomplishments.
- ✓ Create opportunities at school for parents to share important aspects of their culture, needs, and expectations related to the health of their children.
- ✓ Create opportunities for parents of children with special health care needs (e.g., asthma, diabetes, or food allergies) to meet and discuss concerns and solutions.
- ✓ Provide information to parents when students are given health screenings in school (e.g., eye exams, hearing tests, or body mass index assessments) and suggestions for follow-up services.

Vision: "To build lifelong learners who can demonstrate 21st century skills for a productive global citizenship".



- ✓ Ensure the school nurse works with parents to create individualized health care plans (IHPs) for children with special health and medication needs.

Encourage parents to be part of decision making at school.

- ✓ Involve students, parents, and community members in helping the school make decisions that improve the health and well-being of students through parent organizations.
- ✓ Involve parents in decisions when developing school health policies, emergency and safety plans, and health and safety messages; selecting health-related curricula or foods and beverages for school breakfasts and lunches; establishing health services and referral procedures; and other plans and programs.
- ✓ Provide parents with information about processes followed for health and safety policies: how they are developed, adopted, implemented, monitored, and revised, as well as the point of contact.
- ✓ Give parents opportunities to be involved in developing or reviewing school health and safety policies.
- ✓ Give parents opportunities to provide feedback on the meal program, and let them know the outcome.

Provide a variety of volunteer opportunities.

Involving parent members as school volunteers can enrich health and physical education classes, improve the delivery of health services, and help create safe and healthy environments for students. To maximize parent engagement, schools should offer a variety of ways for parents to become involved

Examples of ways school staff can create opportunities for parents to volunteer:

- ✓ Encourage parents to serve as mentors, coaching assistants, monitors.
- ✓ Enlist parent volunteers to staff school facilities after school hours, allowing for community access to safe facilities for physical activity.
- ✓ Involve parents in helping write health-related grants for the school.
- ✓ Enlist parents of students with special health care needs (e.g., asthma, diabetes, or food allergies) to share expertise and experiences in staff meetings or professional development events.



Support Learning at Home.

Our school engages parents and students in health education activities at home. Engaging parents in homework assignments or other health activities at home can increase the likelihood that students receive consistent messages at home and in school.

Examples of ways school staff can enhance learning at home:

- ✓ Train teachers to develop family-based education strategies that involve parents in discussions about health topics with their children (e.g., homework assignments that involve parent participation) and health promotion projects in the community.
- ✓ Identify health promotion projects in the community that could involve parents. For example, invite family members to participate in physical activities at school or in the community, such as runs or walkathons.
- ✓ Encourage students to teach their parents about health and safety behaviors they learn in school (e.g., the importance of hand washing and of using seat belts and helmets).
- ✓ Ask parents to engage their children in health-related learning experiences, such as cooking dinner and packing lunch together, shopping for healthy foods, and reading labels on over-the-counter medicines.
- ✓ Host discussions about how parents can support healthy behaviors at home. Such discussions might be held at open houses and back-to-school nights, at parent meetings, and during parent-teacher conferences.

Collaborate with the community.

Examples of ways school staff can collaborate with the community to promote parent engagement:

- ✓ Invite community partners who provide health services for students or parents to school or parent meetings to talk about their mission, services, and partners, as well as how they can collaborate with the school and students' families.
- ✓ Create an agreement with community partners to develop and support school health programs and activities. This agreement should include how decisions will be made, how activities will be carried out, and how community and school partners will be held accountable.
- ✓ Create a system that links families to community health and social service resources, activities, and events.
- ✓ Collaborate with community partners to provide health services at school that meet the needs of students and their families (e.g., dental services, immunizations, health screenings, substance abuse treatment).
- ✓ Make school facilities available for use by community organizations that will host activities for students and their parents outside of school hours.
- ✓ Encourage community businesses and organizations to sponsor service learning opportunities and other projects that enable students, staff, and parents to contribute to the health of the school and community.

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Sustain

Sustain is one important strategy for our school administrators and staff to identify challenges that keep parents from being connected and engaged in school health activities and then work with parents to tailor school events and activities to address those challenges. It is also important for schools to have a dedicated team or committee that oversees parent engagement.

Solutions for six common challenges to sustaining parent engagement

1. Parents are unable to attend school health meetings or activities because of schedule conflicts (e.g., work, family, religious, and community activities).

Schedule meetings and activities to match varying parent schedules.

- ✓ Survey parents to see which times/days are best for them.
- ✓ Schedule more than one meeting and activity opportunity.
- ✓ Schedule meetings and activities on a Saturday (offering teachers incentives for attendance).
- ✓ Host meetings and activities during the day for parents who work or are unable to attend at night.
- ✓ Host meetings and activities after rush hours.
- ✓ Host school meetings off school campus, such as in community centers or places of worship.
- ✓ Avoid scheduling meetings and activities that conflict with other school activities, major community events, and religious holidays.
- ✓ Offer a variety of opportunities and flexible times for parents to volunteer.



Provide alternative ways for parents to access information and communicate with school staff, aside from attending meetings and activities on school grounds.

- ✓ Create a phone number with 24-hour voicemail service for parents to voice concerns outside of regular school hours.
- ✓ Host a conference call meeting.
- ✓ Use forms of social media such as creating a secured Facebook page for the school, sharing updates via Twitter, and/or getting already involved parents to blog about school events.

2. Parents cannot attend school health meetings and activities due to lack of transportation.

Provide transportation.

- ✓ Use school buses.
- ✓ For meetings that involve students and their families, extend school bus hours to pick up parents, too.
- ✓ Provide bus tokens or other public transportation fares.

Hold events off site or online.

- ✓ Go places where families will already be such as community centers, community organizations, neighborhood centers or housing projects, libraries.
- ✓ Host online meetings with live feed (e.g., webinars).
- ✓ Create a podcast of a meeting and archive it online



3- Parents do not fully comprehend health information and communications provided at school health activities and meetings. This might be due to language barriers (non-English-speaking family members) or unfamiliarity with terms used among those working in schools.

Provide translation services for non-English speaking parents.

- ✓ Provide translators at school meetings and activities.
- ✓ Ask parents or students (if appropriate) to volunteer as translators at school meetings and activities.
- ✓ Offer educational programs in families' home language.
- ✓ Provide school publications and Web site resources in multiple languages.
- ✓ Provide language-specific school telephone call lines for families.

Reduce barriers to understanding information.

- ✓ Avoid using professional jargon with parents.
- ✓ Prepare materials and provide information at the 8th-grade reading level or lower.
- ✓ Provide professional development opportunities for school staff that focus on strengthening parent engagement.
- ✓ Offer a variety of topics (not all staff need the same professional development).
- ✓ Develop strategies for working through staff resistance to change, and power struggles that might hinder teacher-parent interactions.
- ✓ Provide teachers with sample/model assignments that include parents.
- ✓ Talk with school staff about their concerns related to parent engagement.
- ✓ Provide coaching to school staff on how to interact positively with parents.
- ✓ Empower parents to speak up to school administrators about the positive impact of engaging parents in the health of students and the school.

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