



## Office of Parental Involvement and Family Engagement

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### Strategies and Practices

2021 – 2022 School Year

*Pursuant to NRS 385.635, the Office of Parental Involvement and Family Engagement is required to review and evaluate the programs implemented by the school district for carrying out and increasing parental involvement and family engagement in public schools. Completed reports should be submitted electronically to the Office of Parental Involvement and Family. Thank you in advance for your participation.*

School:

Equipo Academy

Completed By:

Ben Salkowe

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### Family Engagement Strategies and Practices

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List current family engagement strategies and practices utilized.

Equipo Academy believes in several primary strategies to engage and invest families in our mission and work:

- 1. Access to data.** Parents cannot provide the necessary support to help their children to and through college without access to the same data teachers are seeing in the classroom. This is why we provide that data real-time through secure, online web apps.
- 2. Parent-student advisory groups.** Daily advisory meetings of 18 students who work together throughout their secondary educational journey are key to the character development inherent in Equipo Academy's mission. What makes these advisories unique from traditional school advisory structures is when the advisory also hosts evening gatherings where parents of the students in the group join them for a small group discussion of their children's goals. When eighteen families are brought together to discuss academics with their students' advisor, the feeling in the room is transformational.
- 3. Exceptional "customer service".** Too often in education it is easy to take families and students for granted, especially in an educational landscape where options are limited. A message from a parent is lost on an administrator's desk, a student's disciplinary proceedings are deferred to a higher-up administrator in another facility at another date, or a Spanish-speaking parent struggles to understand how their child can improve an Algebra grade at a school without accessible translators. Equipo Academy staff have committed to never falling into the trap of taking families for granted. Simply put, they believe parents and families are too important to student success to ever let them fall through the cracks.

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### Strengths & Achievements

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Regarding family engagement, what have been the school's strengths during the 2020-2021 school year?

- Successfully growing our young school in partnership with families.
- Expanding several major community partnerships to support students and families during the pandemic.
- Conducting ongoing meetings and focus groups with students and families around challenges and next steps.
- Building strong advisories with student and parent involvement.
- Pulling off successful hybrid family events/meetings over the course of the year.

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### Areas for Improvements

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Regarding family engagement, what improvements will be made during the 2020-2021 school year?

- Reaching the same high percentages of parent attendance as the team had when it was smaller and before COVID.
- Finding more partnerships with community organizations around mental health counseling and interventions.
- Expanding new parenting workshops with some of the unique challenges of parenting older adolescents and especially in the context of the pandemic.

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### Goals for 2021-2022 School Year

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List family engagement goals for the 2020-2021 school year.

- Average 80% attendance from all families and students at fall semester events and 90% attendance from all families at spring semester events.
- Launch a partnership with a community organization to provide on-site and referral services for mental health issues.
- Hold at least five more parent workshops on topics related to parenting older adolescents to address health, substance abuse, decision-making, college access, and discipline.

## Collaborating with the Office and Council for Parental Involvement and Family Engagement

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Please indicate ways in which the Office and Council for Parental Involvement and Family Engagement can support school's goals.

As we know that mental health services are a challenge for both children and adults in our state, we would greatly appreciate any support the Office and Council can provide us and other school teams in locating services and connecting families to affordable providers. We have a significant number of students with diagnosed mental health disorders ranging from depression to bipolar to anxiety disorders. The lack of affordable providers in Southern Nevada and the links between these issues and academic and behavioral challenges creates challenges for our school team and our parents. By addressing these issues and the shortage of affordable providers, we could strengthen our relationships with students and families and improve educational and life outcomes.

### Supporting Schools with the Six Essential Standards

#### Nevada Policy of Parental Involvement and Family Engagement.

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Please indicate the ways in which the following areas are supported:

##### Standard 1: Welcoming Environment

Equipo Academy not only has parents and families represented in our staff, our contracted facilities team, and volunteering across our campus — we also have worked to create a team culture that actively welcomes all families to our campus. We have continued to require a training session for new staff modeled after the trainings required of new employees for the Four Seasons and Mandarin Oriental hotels. The simple objective of the training is to teach new teachers to approach families not as the people they turn to when a student is misbehaving, but to see parents as the most valuable members of their team — members worthy of world class service. If a parent asks a teacher something they do not know, the teacher is responsible for finding someone who could assist the parent and they are additionally responsible for following up later to ensure the issue was resolved. When a decision on a parent concern requires administrative input, the teacher becomes the advocate for that family and guides them through the process. To prepare for parents who show up and need a translator, school operations staff take the responsibility of calling in advance and arranging college interns to translate.

##### Standard 2: Communicating Effectively

Equipo Academy has identified several best practices for family communication:

- Leveraging smartphones: While many of our families do not have a home computer and may not receive regular mail consistently, nearly all of our families have regular access to a smartphone and social media such as Facebook. Using new services like SchoolMint and Remind, we have an SMS-based communication system that informs families of events and meetings.
- Access to data in real-time: Through Infinite Campus, LiveSchool, and SchoolMint, our families can always view current student grades, attendance, behavior, and enrollment information in real-time. We have required all staff to have this information updated at least weekly by 8 p.m. on Thursdays, but the majority of our staff update data daily as they grade assignments and enter behavior information.
- Intervention and Good-to-Great conferences: Equipo Academy staff conducted over 3,000 face-to-face and virtual conferences and check-ins over the course of the school year for our 832 students. Many of these were quick updates on progress, others were in-depth discussions of challenges, and still more were “Good-to-Great” conferences to celebrate progress and discuss where to go next. We believe the power of a well-organized student and family conference is unparalleled when it comes to effective communication and partnership.

### Standard 3: Collaboration to Support Student Learning

Collaboration with parents to support student learning now begins when a student first enrolls in the school. A team of teachers, staff, and sometimes experienced students/families, meets with the new student and his/her family to review the school expectations and our team commitment to excellence. The new student and his/her parents each read their responsibilities and discuss them with the Equipo team to understand how to be successful. Once the student begins the year, an advisor is assigned who formally reaches out to the family to establish an advising relationship and discuss their hopes and goals for their son/daughter. This collaboration can then expand to the parent and other family members joining our Parent Committee and participating in focus groups around decision-making, or even joining our SPP team or governing body.

### Standard 4: Empowerment and Advocacy

The founding staff of Equipo Academy supported founding families in advocating for the school’s approval starting as a small program in 2010 and through our approval to become a public charter school in January 2015. After the approval, staff continued to coach and support families in testifying before various state and local boards to get the doors of the school opened in August 2015. Once the school year began, staff and families worked side-by-side to continue improving the school design and to push for important changes in policy at the state and local level. Just as teachers meet regularly with students in advisory groups, advisors

have also engaged their advisees families in regular events and communication to identify priority issues and empower every member of our team to address them.

#### Standard 5: Equal Partnership in Decision Making

Equipo Academy was in the unique situation of having been founded largely by committed families who engaged in the decision-making processes around major school vision and design questions. Beyond this, families were also engaged in the physical construction and decision-making around the facility itself as we built it side-by-side with many of them through the summer leading up to the school's opening. Once doors opened, parents continue to be engaged in major issues at monthly family events and meetings, at PTA organization meetings, and through focus groups around key school challenges.

#### Standard 6: Community Collaborations

Equipo Academy engaged in numerous official and unofficial partnerships with community partners this year. To provide access to food including weekend food bags, fresh fruits and vegetables, and healthy daily breakfast and lunch meals, Equipo Academy partnered with Three Square and now runs our own nutrition programs. To provide access to basic personal products, clothing, and holiday meals, we partnered with Project 150. To provide access to services for students and families caught in immigration cases or other legal situations, our staff worked with Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada. As needed we also started partnerships with organizations providing students and families with substance abuse counseling, youth health services, and support in cases of domestic violence. Responding to a large number of students with mental health diagnoses, Equipo Academy plans to continue to expand mental health partnerships next year and bring more supports and services on site.

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### Optional

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Additional comments, questions, or concerns:

Thank you for ensuring that our schools do this work. We believe it is so critical to our success as a school team. We hope you are seeing great work happening at all of our schools across the state in partnership with students and families!

