

V. GENERAL POLICIES & PROCEDURES

SCHOOL FAMILY INVOLVEMENT POLICY

Freire Charter School Wilmington is fully committed to finding meaningful and mutually enriching ways for parents and families to participate in our school that involve improving the quality of teaching and learning for all of our students and at every level.

FAMILY/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

At Freire, we are always working to form stronger, better partnerships with families, and we have an open-door policy for families to communicate their needs, questions, or concerns to us at any time.

The ways that we communicate information to families include:

- Our website at www.freirewilmington.org, which is updated regularly with current news and event information
- A weekly email newsletter with updates for families on any and all activities, events, issues, etc.
- Frequent family mailings through the regular mail
- An automated family notification system so that families can be notified by phone when necessary
- The Home Access Center (<http://hacdoe.doe.k12.de.us/homeaccess/>) allows families to view their student's grades on a continual basis throughout the school year, with access codes provided in the first month of school and training available at back to school night and upon request
- Through family meetings, visits, back to school night, and conferences (more information below)

The ways that we solicit input from families include:

- Parent participation on the Board of Directors and various committees
- Our Freire Families association and other meetings throughout the year
- Including a family component in the interview process for hiring staff when possible, particularly when hiring senior administrative staff
- Parents receive an annual survey from the school

Freire makes every attempt to ensure that information related to school and family programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the families of participating children in a format and language families can understand. Parents/guardians are required to complete a Home Language Survey when a student first enrolls in the school, which enables us to plan for any translation needs. We contract with a telephone translation service (Language Line) to facilitate communication as necessary.

PARENT CONTACT INFORMATION

It is essential that parents keep their contact information on file with the school up to date at all times. The school may need to reach parents in emergencies, to notify them of incidents involving their child at school, or for other important reasons. Parents must therefore contact the school any time there is a change to their address, phone number, or email address.

CONTRACT FOR EXCELLENCE

From the students themselves to their parents/guardians, teachers, and support staff – each and every member of the school community has a critical role to play in supporting success for our learners. To make sure each individual knows their role in the process, all community members must agree to and sign the Freire Contract for Excellence which was developed jointly with parents. A copy of the contract is attached as an appendix and must be signed and returned to the school.

FAMILY CONCERNS

If a parent or family member has a concern, we want to know about it. In order to provide you with the most personalized service, we ask that you inform us of your concerns in a timely manner. You may wish to do this either by telephone or email. When families have a concern about something going on in a classroom or at the school, the best thing to do is first contact their child's classroom teacher to discuss the matter. After that, if the situation still has not been resolved, the family needs to contact either the Head of School (for any matters relating to the teaching and learning of the school) or the Head of Climate, Ruble Harris (for any matters in the school not directly related to the teaching and learning). Upon receiving your complaint, we will respond to you quickly and in a personalized manner. If the concern is not resolved at the school level, the parent/guardian may bring a complaint to the Board of Directors. All meetings have a period for public comment. Although not required, we recommend providing advance notice so that the Board can be prepared to effectively address any concerns.

FAMILY MEMBER CONDUCT

All families must represent Freire and Freire's values at all times. While this rarely, if ever, occurs at Freire, in the case that a member of a student's family, including a parent or guardian, comes to the school or to a school event and is not conducting him/herself appropriately or violates our school safety policies, that family member will be asked to leave the school property, and, if necessary, law enforcement may be called. Severe instances may lead to a family member being permanently prohibited from entering school property and/or school events.

SCHOOL SUPPORTS FOR FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Freire works hard to help families understand how we assess our students, as well as how Delaware and the nation as a whole assess them to determine whether or not they are college ready. As part of our regular academic calendar, families and school staff discuss achievement, standards, assessments, and student academic growth at the following events:

- Family Meetings – Regularly held family meetings where a Freire staff member is often present to highlight college counseling, the School Culture Team, after-school activities, the therapy program, etc.
- Family Visits – Family visits for all students identified as needing additional supports held either at the home of the new student with parent present or held at the school on an individual basis.
- Back to School Night – Back to School Night happens very early in the school year and is the first chance families have to meet their children's teachers in person.
- Parent-Student-Teacher Conferences – At Freire, conferences work best when both the student and parent attend the conference with the teacher. That way, we can work together to build on each student's individual strengths and make sure we all follow the plan as a team.

In addition, course syllabi for every class are available to families, which provide a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used, and the standards students are expected to meet.

PARENT GOVERNANCE AND COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION

Two parents of currently enrolled students serve on the school's Board of Directors, and families are invited to serve on various school committees. Freire Families, the school's family association, meets several times throughout the year. Contact the Co-Heads of School if you are interested in attending.

EDUCATION FOR OUR EDUCATORS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILIES IN STUDENT SUCCESS

In order for Freire to maximize every teaching and learning opportunity available during the secondary school experience, there needs to be a strong partnership between the student's families and teachers. As a result, Freire provides training for all staff in the summer training/orientation as well as at least one other educator

training yearly on the important role that families play and how we need to work together. Issues about differences in culture, expectation, communication styles, etc. are addressed.

TITLE I PROGRAM

Freire Charter School Wilmington receives federal funding through Title I, Part A – Improving Basic Programs of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. This federal program provides financial assistance to schools with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students to ensure that children meet challenging state academic standards. As part of participating, Freire shares information about the purpose and requirements of Title I programs, how Freire participates in the program and spends its Title I funding, what rights families have under the program, and how families can submit a complaint. This information is available on the Title I page of the school’s website and is also discussed at an annual Title I family meeting.

At this annual meeting, we solicit feedback from families on topics including how Freire is spending Title I funds, the quality of the school-family compact, barriers to family participation, and this Family Involvement Policy. School administrators consider any feedback received when seeking to make improvements at the next relevant annual opportunity (e.g. policy updates, budgeting, program planning, writing the consolidated application, etc.). As the school creates, improves, and implements its Title I Schoolwide Program, the planning team takes into account family feedback received at the annual Title I informational meeting, comments from regular monthly family association meetings, survey results, and relevant informal suggestions made by families.

In order to facilitate family access, school events that provide opportunities for family involvement throughout the year are held at a variety of times, both during the school day and in the evening. Title I funds may also be used to pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with family involvement activities, including transportation, childcare, or home visit expenses to enable families to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions.

A family member who feels that the school is not meeting its responsibilities under Title I of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act should consult the Title I page of the school’s website to find school and state complaint procedures and contact information.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The State of Delaware imposes mandatory school attendance requirements for all public-school students. When a student accumulates excessive unexcused absences, Freire must refer that student’s case for prosecution and subsequent intervention by the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families.

Only the following will be accepted as valid reasons for **excused absences** or tardiness:

1. Illness of the student – a physician’s note will be required.
2. Scheduled appointments to a physical or mental healthcare provider, including, but not limited to, a physician, dentist, orthodontist, or psychologist (verified by a doctor’s note).
3. Contagious diseases within the home of the student subject to regulations of the Division of Public Health and the Department of Health and Social Services.
4. Death in the family or of a close friend (verified by a funeral or death announcement).
5. Legal business requiring the student’s presence.
6. Observance of religious holidays.
7. Remedial health treatment (verified by a doctor’s note).
8. Absence, pre-approved by the administration, to participate in other educational experiences or authorized school activities.
9. Emergency situations as determined by the administration.