



BPS Office of Family and Community Engagement

The Boston Public Schools' Office of Family and Community Engagement exists as a support to schools in the important work they do with families. Based on the core beliefs that all families want their children to do well, that all families have the capacity to support their children's learning and that families and school staff should be equal partners with the school taking responsibility to build those partnerships, the Office of Family and Community Engagement builds its work around three main areas:

- Help make schools places where families would want to be...where they feel welcomed and that their opinions are valued.
- Make it easier for schools to be able to do this work through the sharing of best practices.
- Give families the tools they need to feel comfortable as active members in these home/school partnerships.

To accomplish this work, our department is organized in to the following three teams:

School, Family and Community Engagement Unit

All School, Family and Community Engagement specialists work to engage school staff, families and the community in developing meaningful family involvement in the school.

General Specialists

There are 4 general specialists – 1 per triad and 1 who works specifically with the high schools. In their roles, the general specialists:

- ◆ Work with school Principals/Headmasters, parent/family coordinators and other school staff to plan and strategize ways to engage families and increase their leadership involvement at the schools.
- ◆ Share information with schools and families about opportunities for families to better support the academic success of their children.
- ◆ Facilitate elections of and provide technical assistance to School Site Councils on a variety of topics including the relationship of family involvement to the Whole School Improvement Plan, family and community engagement strategies, and School Parent Council- School Site Council collaborations.
- ◆ Provide training and assistance to SPC Executive Committee members on executing their roles effectively, running efficient council meetings and increasing the involvement of parents.
- ◆ Work in collaboration with Enrollment Services to field questions about family involvement in schools.
- ◆ Work with community partners to provide workshops, trainings, and other opportunities to Boston Public School families at schools, the FCE Title I Training Center, or other community agency locations.

Special Education Specialists

There are three Special Education Specialists – 1 per triad. In their roles, the special education specialists:

- ◆ Help families navigate the Boston Public School system as it relates to Special Education and Special Education issues by working collaboratively with Unified Student Services.
- ◆ Work with school based and district level school personnel to resolve issues at the district level.
- ◆ Collaborate with community groups and initiatives that support education, as a voice for the special needs community.
- ◆ Provide training and assistance for families on special education issues and student success.
- ◆ Provide training and workshops for school staff and community partners on special education and family involvement.
- ◆ Provide referral and resources to families as needed.

Bilingual Outreach Specialists

There are currently two Bilingual Outreach Specialists on staff who support outreach to Spanish and Haitian speaking families as well as assist school staff to reach out to families who speak other languages. In their roles, the bilingual outreach specialists:

- ◆ Support Principals/Headmasters and Family Engagement personnel in their efforts to reach out to and engage families whose first language is not English in their child's education.
- ◆ Assist the School, Family and Community Engagement team in thinking about ways to reach out and engage families of diverse cultural and language backgrounds.
- ◆ Assist families with questions and concerns related to school policies and encourage their participation on the School Parent Councils and School Site Councils.

For more information about the School, Family and Community Engagement unit, call Deborah Gray, Director, at 617-635-7750. Numbers for the individual staff members are listed on the OFCE Directory.

Parent Outreach Network

The Peer Network is a structure for school-based family engagement staff to support each other, share best practices, network and learn together. The network meets monthly, and participants are given an opportunity to learn from their peers as well as showcase some of the activities they have done at their own schools.

For more information about the Parent Outreach Network and the Peer Network, call Katie Madrigal, Director, at 617-635-9569.

FCE Training Center

The FCE Training Center provides academic skill-building workshops for families. This past year the training center's efforts have been concentrated on English as a Second Language (ESL) and computer literacy programming. Beginning in October, a Family Education Project Director will work with some district elementary schools to provide ongoing classes for families based on the district's math curriculum – the goal being to provide families with the skills and a higher level of comfort in supporting their children's math learning at home.

For more information about the FCE Training Center, contact Cyntoria Grant, Director, at 617-635-7750.