

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT GUIDE



SPECIALIZED FOR SUCCESS



MISSION

To support and empower students of all learning abilities to excel to their greatest potential

VISION

All students realize their full potential in life and learning

CORE VALUES

Equity · Commitment · Collaboration

Special School District

of St. Louis County, the largest specialized education provider in the state, **equips and empowers** students of all learning abilities to excel to their **greatest potential**. This is realized through an **inclusive, collaborative** approach, supported by our comprehensive resources and **deep expertise** - all of which is centered on each student's unique needs.

SSD's COMMITMENT TO FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Special School District (SSD) believes that the responsibility for the education of a student is shared between the family and the school. Parents and families of all economic, racial and ethnic, cultural, and educational backgrounds can have positive effects on their student's learning. SSD recognizes the importance of eliminating barriers that limit family engagement, and believes that it is important to provide an environment that encourages partnership with families.

Special School District welcomes the support of families and encourages involvement in their student's learning both at school and at home.

We hope you find the information in the **Family Engagement Guide** to be helpful when communicating with your student's teacher and the school team. The administration, teachers, and staff of SSD are here to help in every transition of your student's life, from early childhood through post-secondary.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (FACE)

The **mission** of the SSD Family and Community Engagement (FACE) is to partner with students, families, and staff to support students' specialized academic, social, and emotional needs to promote self-determination, equitable opportunities, and authentic inclusion. FACE utilizes high-quality, evidence-based strategies and supports to partner with families and school personnel for:

- Consultation
- Resource and referral
- Problem-solving
- Collaboration with community agencies
- Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
- Support and leadership development
- Free Family Workshops/Training (topics include transition, behavior supports, and understanding the IEP process)

For questions or to make an appointment, contact FACE Staff:

- **Latrisa Morgan**, Administrator: 314.989.8438
- **Adrienne Eaglin**, Administrator: 314.989.8311
- **Debra Fiasco**, Administrator: 314.989.8108

Email: face@ssdmo.org

INFORMATION NAVIGATION LADDER



As you look for information about supporting your student's special educational success, follow this optional order of contacts.

- 1
School Handbook, Newsletter, or Website
Check your school district's resources for answers.
- 2
Your Child's Teacher
Name: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
- 3
Your Child's Case Manager
Name: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
- 4
Your Child's Social Worker & Counselor
Name: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
- 5
Your Special Coordinator
Name: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
- 6
Your Partner District Director
Name: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____
- 7
Chief of Partner Districts
Chaketa Mack-Riddle
314.989.8535
cmack-riddle@ssdmo.org
- 8
Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Elizabeth Keenan
314.989.8281
ekeen@ssdmo.org

WHO SHOULD I CALL?

Use the chart to fill in contact information for your child's educator team. When written information doesn't answer your questions, it is usually best to start with your child's teacher. **Family Tip: Share your preferred communication method with your child's educator team!

Additional Contacts

SSD Central Office: 314.989.8100

SSD School Board: 314.989.8149

District Nurse: 314.989.8484

District Website: www.ssdmo.org

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Office: 314.989.8411

Family & Community Engagement:

face@ssdmo.org

Federal Programs (Title I, EL, Homeless, Foster Care): 314.989.8542

Related Services: 314.989.8142

Social Workers Office: 314.989.8142

Student Records: 314.989.8170

SSD Student Transportation Office:
314.989.7118

Central Garage: 314-989-7160

North Garage: 314-989-7753

South Garage: 314-989-7561

You may also want to contact your school directly to find out about programs, staff/counselor support resources, workshops, leadership opportunities, and school-based community partnerships available in your particular district.

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR STUDENT

Sometimes, just knowing what questions to ask can make all the difference in helping you support your student's success. Here are a few suggestions to get you started.

- Can you show me something you learned or did today?
- What was the hardest thing you had to do today?
- Tell me about the best part of your day.
- Tell me about what you read in class.
- Who did you sit with at lunch?
- How did you help somebody today?
- Tell me something that made you laugh today.
- What rules are different at school than our rules at home?

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

Below are questions families can ask that support monitoring student progress.

- What is the best way for us to communicate?
- Is my child performing at a proficient level (up to standard) in basic skills? If not, is my child above or below? (If it's below, ask: What is your plan for helping my child catch up? How can I help?)
- What assessments does my child complete? How often? How do the assessments support my child's post-secondary goals?
- What do my child's test scores show? What are his/her strengths and weaknesses?
- Can we go over some examples of my child's work? Will you explain your grading standards?
- How can we work together to help my child?
- Does my child seem to like school and get along with classmates?

5 ROLES FAMILIES PLAY TO ACCELERATE STUDENT LEARNING



COMMUNICATE HIGH EXPECTATIONS for student performance. Teachers can help families by sharing information about standards and skills.

MONITOR THEIR STUDENT PERFORMANCE by regularly checking in with them and the teacher. Teachers can support families by proactively engaging with them about student progress.



SUPPORT LEARNING AT HOME by reinforcing what is being taught in schools. Teachers can help families through consistent partnership and communication.

GUIDE THEIR STUDENT'S EDUCATION from preschool to college. The school community can support by connecting them to resources and activities to support their unique needs.



ADVOCATE FOR THEIR STUDENT to ensure they get the necessary support needed. Teachers can engage in two way communication and create feedback-friendly environment

3 QUESTIONS TO ASK TO BE AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATOR



Is this the right person to help me in this situation? Will my approach motivate and encourage the person to cooperate?

1

What would help my student improve? What do I want the person to do for my student or me?

2

What can I do to partner with staff to help my student?

3

WHAT DOES EFFECTIVE FAMILY ADVOCACY LOOK LIKE?

To be an effective parent or family advocate, I should know:

- General and current information about student progress
- How to communicate in a way that can bring about desired results
- The person to contact to get information (See Navigation Ladder)
- Rights and responsibilities
- The services and resources available
- Policies that govern those services

When should I advocate for my student?

When you have concerns about your student's education that have not been addressed.

When you recognize gaps in services that may hinder your student's ability to learn.

How do I know when I need partnership support?

When you are unsure about roles and responsibilities.

When there are gaps in your understanding of policies and procedures.

When you do not feel that you have been understood.

Q: What does it mean to advocate for my student?

A: An advocate is one who supports or promotes the interests of another. A parent or family member can be their student's best advocate.

Are you looking for tools and resources to strengthen your student's skills?

The IRC, located at SSD Central Office, is a lending library available to SSD staff and families. We offer instructional and curricular items, adaptive and assistive technology devices, professional materials, and more that can help impact and improve student learning. Since we are a lending library, all items are provided free of charge.

Visit the IRC website at <https://www.ssdmo.org/irc> for more information and to browse the online catalog. You can also contact Amy Sauvage, Library Media Specialist at 314.989.8308 or by email at asauvage@ssdmo.org.

DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

- Monthly School Board Meetings (live and archived on YouTube)
- Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings
- SSD Family and Community Resource Center
- Fred Saigh Parent Leadership Institute
- SSD Family Education Workshops
- SSD Family Resource Hub

FOLLOW US @ssdstlco



Should you have any suggestions about ways that SSD can further support your families' engagement efforts, please contact:

Adrienne Eaglin 314-989-8311
aleaglin@ssdmo.org
Family and Community Engagement Manager

Michelle Franklin 314-989-8034
mfranklin@ssdmo.org
Family and Community Engagement Support

Special School District Notice of Non-Discrimination and Accommodation

Special School District does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation against an individual based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation, ancestry, disability, veteran status, age, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by federal or state law in its programs, activities and employment and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. Direct inquiries and complaints under this policy to Special School District's Director – Compliance Liaison, 12110 Clayton Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63131, telephone (314) 989-8100 or to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, One Petticoat Lane, 1010 Walnut Street, 3rd Floor, Suite 320, Kansas City, Missouri 64106, telephone (816) 268-0550, fax (816) 268-0599, TDD (800) 877-8339, email OCR.KansasCity@ed.gov. Information about the existence and location of services, activities, and facilities accessible to impaired persons can be obtained from the Special School District's Director – Compliance Liaison at the phone number and address listed above. 6/2018