

PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

2015-2016 Indian Springs Elementary School

I. **Mission and Beliefs of Indian Springs Elementary School**

In order to understand our plan for family engagement, it is first necessary to review our school mission statement and beliefs. These were created by a panel of staff, parents, and community members while keeping our students in the forefront of our mission.

Mission Statement: The mission of Indian Springs Elementary School is to provide a safe, nurturing, and welcoming environment where all students exceed social, ethical, and academic skills as outlined by the Tennessee State and National Standards

Vision Statement: We envision Indian Springs Elementary School as a place where every child will be given the opportunity to learn and grow to their fullest potential.

Beliefs:

- ❖ Every student has the potential to learn.
- ❖ Learning is an ongoing process and should involve participation from teachers, students, parents, and the community.
- ❖ Decisions made concerning school policies are designed to insure the safe learning environment and to maximize student achievement.
- ❖ All school staff, parents, and students are held accountable for actions affecting the school climate.
- ❖ Effective teachers strive to be life-long learners as they seek out opportunities for professional growth to ensure a high performing school.
- ❖ Teachers encourage active learning and academic success as they prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace through the use of best instructional practices and assessments, which meet state standards.
- ❖ Teachers and principal strive to improve instruction based upon data that measures student growth and success.

II. **We believe:**

Teachers, families, students, and community must commit to a shared and articulated plan that focuses on high expectations, academic excellence, and lifelong learning for children. The following are our policies reflected through the PTO's Standards that ensure a positive partnership between the administration, faculty, and parents:

Standard 1: Welcoming All Families into the School Community

Goal 1: Creating a Welcoming Climate: When families walk into the building, do they feel the school is inviting and is a place where they “belong”?

Developing Personal relationships: Level 3

Indian Springs strives to welcome all families into our school community. Families are encouraged to become active participants in the school by creating a welcoming atmosphere where they feel a valued part of our school community. Furthermore, efforts are made to foster a sense of connectedness between parents and school staff by actively recruiting parent volunteers to assist in various school functions.

Creating a family-friendly atmosphere: Level 3

Indian Springs Elementary creates opportunities for parents to participate in as many activities as possible by scheduling them at various times of the day. Family members are welcome in our school throughout the day to volunteer, eat lunch with their student and attend programs. Extracurricular activities that families are encouraged to be involved in are: after school IEP meetings, Open House, PTA, chorus programs, Art Show, and Book Fair. Teachers are available before and after school as well as team planning during the school day. Teachers are also available through emails and phone calls. IEP meetings are scheduled 10 days in advance.

Providing opportunities for volunteering: Level 3

Parents are encouraged to participate and/or volunteer in numerous activities here at school including but not limited to: Special grade-level presentations and activities, tutoring, field-trips, fundraising, walk-a-thon, Mega Party, field day, book fair, choral and musical performances, building art show exhibits, redskin runners, WISE TV, and other day to day operations that require additional assistance.

Goal 2: Building a Respectful, Inclusive School Community: Do the school’s policies and programs reflect, respect, and value the diversity of the families in the community?

Respecting all families: Level 3

We encourage and support the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children, including providing information and school reports in a language understandable to parents:

Removing economic obstacles to participation: Level 3

We identify McKinney-Vento students through the registration process: The student information sheet completed by the parent at registration is utilized to identify students as McKinney-Vento. Students identified are offered services such as free lunch, free school supplies, and free admission to extra-curricular activities. The PTO has an "Aid to Children" mission, which provides shoes and clothing semi-annually. We are also able to utilize a Community Chest fund which are specifically designated to pay for other cost students cannot afford; such as field trips, class t-shirts and special treats. The school system's social worker is also utilized as a resource for the families when additional services are needed.

Ensuring accessible programming: Level 3

Each student is required to complete an English Language Survey which is then screened for possible ESL services. Spanish version forms such as lunch applications and the student's rights and responsibilities handbook are made available for ESL students and parents. An interpreter is also available to assist with translations during meetings if requested for non-English speaking parents as well as parents who are hearing impaired.

Standard 2: Communicating Effectively

Goal 1: Sharing Information between School and Families: Does the school keep all families informed about important issues and events and make it easy for families to communicate with teachers?

Using multiple communication paths: Level 3

Indian Springs Elementary uses a multitude of different communication paths to correspond with our family and community members. We send home hardcopy letters, report cards, and newsletters. We also utilize school messenger, Groupvine and the school website to ensure all information is communicated effectively and reaches all parents and guardians quickly.

Surveying families to identify issues and concerns: Level 2

Parental input is solicited through surveys that will be given at the end of the year and incorporated into the School Improvement Plan. Additional parent input is gathered through PTO and informal discussions on an as needed basis. We encourage participation in a variety of school-wide committees and parent-teacher conferences/meetings to ensure that policies and procedures continue to focus on academic excellence.

Having access to the principal: Level 3

The principal at Indian Springs Elementary emphasizes the importance of open and frequent communication between administration, teachers, parents, and students to ensure a successful school year both academically and socially.

Providing information on current issues: Level 3

The school Leadership Team and PTO collaborate on current issues and work diligently together to devise a plan that is safe and effective for all students. The two groups also collaborate within the community to determine evacuation and relocation plans as well as transportation and security strategies for specific incidents. Once an action plan is determined, the parents are notified immediately about the issues at hand.

Facilitating connections among families: Level 3

The PTO plans events at different times of the day to ensure that all parents feel welcome to attend and be involved in as many of their child's events as possible. Indian Springs also secures resources beyond the school for families in need: such as utilizing the Community Chest, Salvation Army, 2nd Harvest Food Bank, Cassidy Church, and Indian Springs Church for additional connections.

Standard 3: Supporting Student Success

Goal 1: Sharing Information about Student Progress: Do families know and understand how well their children are succeeding in school and how well the entire school is progressing?

Ensuring parent-teacher communication about student progress: Level 3

Communication between teachers and parents is vitally important. The following measures are taken to ensure families and the school are communicating regularly regarding student progress: Communication between parents and teachers is strongly encouraged as evidenced by teacher accessibility (emails, phone calls, and opportunities to meet before, during and after school hours.) Other opportunities to meet are at the annual parent teacher conference day, which extends to evening hours to accommodate parents' schedules and additional meetings determined by either parent or teacher. Students have journals that go home daily which also provides parents with additional information regarding school and student information. The school's website, school messenger calling system, and the school's Facebook also communicate assignments and upcoming events.

Linking student work to academic standards: Level 3

The school takes measures to describe the school curriculum, explain the types of assessments-what it measures, how to understand the results, and explain student proficiency levels: Grade level curriculum information is posted on the school website and is talked about at open house and orientation. Parents are also given a guide to assist in the interpretation of the test results. A summary of the school's report card is also sent home to inform parents of the changes in the standards and the performance of ISE. In addition, student academic achievement is posted on our data wall outside the main office.

Using standardized test results to increase achievement: Level 2

Efforts are made to increase parents' understanding of the Tennessee Curriculum Standards through online curriculum information. Parent information brochures are sent home after TCAP, MIST writing assessments, and STAR testing to ensure parents are knowledgeable of their student's and school's progress. The SCDE and ISE websites also provide valuable curricular and assessment information regarding school data and progress.

Sharing school progress: Level 2

School data is shared with parents through a host of different avenues. Indian Springs is open to sharing school progress with our stakeholders through letters home, emails and at PTO meetings. Step by step directions are available to our parents by accessing the SCDE or school website. We also direct parents to the tn.gov website where they can select the county and school of their choice and compare Indian Springs to other schools in the surrounding area.

Goal 2: Supporting Learning by Engaging Families: Are families active participants in their children's learning at home and at school?

Engaging families in classroom learning: Level 3

The PTO conducts a parent skills survey that assesses parents strengths and how they can enrich students at Indian Springs. Each parent's strengths are utilized to the fullest to support growth in both the climate and classroom. All parents that are willing are used as homeroom parents, while others with more specific skills are using as volunteers in their respected areas. Specialized areas of expertise will be used as needed in musical performances, art shows, and field day.

Developing family ability to strengthen learning at home: Level 3

We have several online programs that can aid the family in strengthening the learning with their student at home. Some resources our students can utilize online are MobyMax, Math facts in a flash, Reading eggs, and Abcya computer based programs. These programs can be accessed from any location and are structured to meet the specific needs of each child and allows students to work at their own pace. Parents can also access our school's website to ensure accurate homework assignments and projects are being completed each night.

Promoting after school learning: Level 3

Indian Springs collaborates with community organizations to help enrich our students academically outside the classroom. The YMCA is housed on school premises after school where they work with students one-on-one to tutor and complete homework assignments. Several students also attend AWANAS at Indian Springs Baptist Church throughout the week where they too have tutoring and academically enriching programs for our students to participate in.

Standard 4: Speaking up for Every Child

Goal 1: Understanding how the school system works: Do parents know how the local school and district operate and how to raise questions or concerns about school and district programs, policies, and activities? Do they understand their rights and responsibilities under federal and state law as well as local ordinances and policies?

Understanding how the school and district operate: Level 2

The Student Right's and Responsibility Handbook is distributed to parents at the beginning of each school year and an electronic copy of this book can also be accessed online at the SCDE website. Any input or suggestions regarding policies are forwarded to a representative of Sullivan County Department of Education.

Understanding rights and responsibilities under federal law: Level 3

A student's rights are outline very clearly in the Right's and Responsibility Handbook which designates what parents should do if a concern arises. In addition to this handbook, Special Education has an additional handbook provided to its students, outlining their specific rights under the NCLB and IDEA Act. If for some reason a parent has a concern they can either present it to the PTO or a voice it at a SCDE Board meeting where their concern will be addressed properly and the appropriate avenues will be created to find a resolution that will adhere to all federal and educational laws.

Learning about resources: Level 3

Each student is required to complete an English Language Survey which is then screened for possible ESL services. Spanish version forms such as lunch applications and the student's rights and responsibilities handbook are made available for ESL students and parents. An interpreter is also available to assist with translations during meetings if requested. The student information sheet completed by the parent at registration is also utilized to identify students as McKinney-Vento. Students identified are offered services such as free lunch, free school supplies, and free admission to extra-curricular activities. The school system's social worker is also utilized as a resource for the families. The school counselor and county social worker also provides other resources to families as needed. Some of these services include weekly food backpacks, semi-annual clothing distribution, free counseling services, free child care services, transportation and supplemental water and electricity payments.

Resolving problems and conflicts: Level 3

School staff and PTO work with the principal to resolve any complaints and compromise on solutions together. The school counselor also teaches conflict resolution in guidance class as well as sending information home to help parents discuss this topic with their student and how to properly resolve conflict both at home and school.

Goal 2: Empowering families to support their own and other children's success in school: Are parents prepared to monitor students' progress and guide them toward their goals through high school graduation, postsecondary education, and a career?

*Developing families' capacity to be effective advocates: Level 3

Planning for the future: Level 3

All students are exposed to career awareness through our guidance program. Each child learns about different occupations in the community and then researches that specific job and what it entails. Students in 4th grade participate in career day where they hear guest speakers from the community talk about different career opportunities. The 4th graders also participate in Chemistry Day where they can learn all about science and math careers. Girls have an additional opportunity to attend ETSU over the summer to learn more about career in science and math as well.

Smoothing transitions: Level 3

Cassidy preschool comes to tour our school and participates with kindergarteners for the day to help prepare them for coming to kindergarten. 5th grade students are exposed to numerous activities before they transition to middle school. Both Holston chorus and band come to Indian Springs and perform for the students then invite them to come and try out different instruments they would like to play at the middle school level. Holston administration also comes to visit our students and discuss expectations for middle school, and then our students actually travel to Holston and tour their campus so they can become more acclimated with the facility.

Engaging in civic advocacy for student achievement: Level 3

The PTO advocates on behalf of our entire school when needs arise to ensure that our needs are met quickly and accurately. Our PTO holds two fundraisers a year that provide funding for all technology in the classrooms to help enrich student testing and learning.