



## Alief Montessori Community School

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### FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The opportunities for a child's growth and academic success are maximized when the home and the school share common goals. Active family engagement is critical to create an environment that will encourage the full development of every child's unique potential.

1. **Facilitating family-to-family support.** Effective support can only be achieved when families are well informed of school policies, procedures and the AMCS educational approach both before and during the child's enrollment.

Upon enrollment the parent/s of every PK child is required to meet with the teacher for a one-on-one orientation. The goal of this interview is to expand awareness and provide greater understanding of the child and the home environment. A parent involvement agreement is also signed. On this occasion, the parents learn about the school and the classroom. The parents also learn that Montessori works best when there is close collaboration between parents and teachers.

At the beginning of each year a school orientation is offered to refresh parents on school policies, procedures, and the AMCS educational approach. In the spring AMCS holds an Open House where AMCS families and prospective families can visit to learn more about our primary, lower elementary, upper elementary, and middle school programs.

2. **Increasing participation in decision-making with regards to their child's learning.** Parents actively participate in decision-making committees in special education, English language proficiency, safety and health, grade placements, etc.

AMCS classrooms are open for school visits and observations from October through May. Classroom observation is strongly encouraged at all levels but required in PK, at least twice a year. This helps broaden the parents' understanding of the Montessori approach.

Fall and spring parent-teacher conferences are required for each family every year. These are occasions for parents and teachers to share information and insights about the child and to answer any questions the parents may have. In addition to regularly scheduled conferences, parents and/or teachers may request a conference at any time during the year. Teachers are always interested in any information that provides greater understanding of a child's behavior and needs. They are also ready to discuss any questions or concerns which parents may have about their child's school experience.

Several other types of meetings are also scheduled to foster family engagement with in a student's learning:

- a. Elementary and Middle School Orientation
- b. Kindergarten Parents' First Look (An Orientation to the Elementary Program)

- c. STAAR Night (Orientation on STAAR test content, resources and dates)
  - d. Montessori At Home Workshop (Parents learn to incorporate montessori activities in the home)
3. **Providing educational opportunities and resources that will enrich knowledge and skills in meeting their child's developmental and learning needs.** AMCS recognizes the challenge of parenting and is committed to provide valuable learning resources and tools to parents.
- a. AMCS conducts "Parenting with Love and Logic" seminars for all parents. These groups are open to all and approach parenting with respect for all cultures and parenting styles and provide proven methods for approaching common parenting challenges with love, respect and firm guidance.
  - b. AMCS teachers and curriculum directors are all Montessori-trained and readily available to help parents with their questions specific to their children's needs.
  - c. Periodic workshops are presented to all parents based on survey results and parenting class feedback. Some topics are: Helping Your Child to Be An Eager Reader, Montessori at Home, How to Manage Technology and many more.
  - d. Experienced staff are available for individual counseling whenever needed.
4. **Providing a network of community resources.** AMCS strives to build community and connect our families to various available community resources.
- a. The AMCS Website, ClassDojo (Elementary & Middle School), AMCS Facebook page, AMCS Parents Facebook page and the monthly newsletter provide information on various resources available in the community for parents and students including: recreation programs, local community events, library information, neighborhood center information, tutoring, and more.
  - b. All About AMCS Townhall (the history and workings of AMCS as a school and organization)
  - c. An AMCS Student Directory is created every year for AMCS families to opt-in to and connect with fellow AMCS families.
  - d. AMCS Fall Festival is held in October with the goal of bringing our families together to celebrate the changing of the seasons.
  - e. S'mores & Stars event will be held for 6th Graders and their parents to experience the great outdoors together.
  - f. Primary teachers work with their student's families to attain a library card for their local library.
  - g. AMCS Community Runs encourage families to meet up, exercise, and get outside together.
5. **Equip families with tools to enhance and extend learning.** AMCS believes that learning does not stop at school and will work to equip our families with tools, resources, and opportunities to enhance and extend their student's learning.
- a. Montessori Journey (Parents are presented lessons in various content areas by the teachers in PK thru middle school)
  - b. Parent-Child Night (The child shows the parents a few lessons he/she has been doing in class)
  - c. AMCS Open House

- d. AMCS Incoming 1st Grader (Lower Elementary), 4th Grade(Upper Elementary), and 6 Grader Orientations(Middle School) Parent and Student Orientations offer a peek of our I for our classroom and montessori learning to our families who have students entering the next phase of their Montessori education.
  - e. Montessori At Home Workshop (Parents learn to incorporate montessori activities in the home)
  - f. A Parent Lending Library located in our main office offers parents a place to check out books related to Montessori education and parenting topics.
  - g. Families are encouraged to volunteer in many capacities to strengthen the ties between the school and parents.
6. **Developing staff skills in evidence-based practices that support families in meeting their children’s learning benchmarks.** AMCS provides its faculty members and staff with training opportunities to enhance their practice in supporting students’ learning goals. AMCS sponsors its teachers to attend the Annual AMI Refresher Course, and Region 4 ESC trainings. All AMCS staff attend a five-day in-service training at the beginning of year, including a training on Teaching With Love and Logic. Additionally, workshops are frequently offered on such topics as classroom management, encouraging enthusiastic reading, incorporating music into the curriculum, refresher courses on Montessori theory, and ongoing support in maintaining and developing a vibrant, academically sound and effective classroom. To this end, each classroom has at least twice monthly observations followed by discussion between administrative staff (principal or curriculum director) and teacher. Teachers are required to complete annual hours of training, some of which is reading and discussing evidence-based information and practices.
7. **Evaluating family engagement efforts and using evaluations for continuous improvement.** AMCS utilizes conferences with parents and at times, surveys to receive feedback from students and parents on the school’s family engagement efforts. During workshops and trainings, there is always time for a Q&A and workshop evaluation forms for the participants.
- a. At the beginning of the year a survey is sent to each family to collect information so that we can best serve our AMCS families.
  - b. Every year a school climate survey is distributed to the entire school and the data is collected and presented.
  - c. AMCS maintains an “open door” policy for meeting with the Principal, Vice Principal, and Family Engagement Liaison.