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*Family engagement--The mutual responsibility of families, schools, and communities to build relationships to support student learning and achievement and to support family well-being and the continuous learning and development of children, families, and educators. Family engagement is fully integrated in the child's educational experience and supports the whole child and is both culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate.*

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➤ **ESSENTIAL COMPONENT: Facilitate family-to-family support:**

As part of the SSAID HIGH QUALITY PREK PROGRAM FAMILY ENGAGEMENT proposal and its operating plan, parents will be invited, starting from day one, into the prekindergarten classroom and school campus. To help develop a strong family friendly environment, school campuses must create a warm and responsive staff. They must also help create a comfortable, safe, respectful, and welcoming environment where families will be more open to communicate and build a stronger connection to the school staff. In addition, school staff must promote the value of an education, empower and encourage families, be culturally aware and sensitive to the family system, and focus on building up their strengths to help create change. Such an environment can help increase confidence in our parents and promote family networking. School campuses will help provide opportunities for families to (1) receive parent training, (2) attend workshops, (3) volunteer both in the classroom and campus wide, (4) help lead school campus projects, or (5) serve as mentors for students.

School administration and support staff recognize the necessity to accommodate the diverse needs of our students and families we serve by developing jointly, with families, multiple, innovative, and flexible ways for families to be involved educationally with their child. In order to accomplish this goal, parent and family engagement activities will be scheduled at various times of the day, an effort to accommodate parent's schedules.

➤ ***ESSENTIAL COMPONENT: Establish a network of community resources:***

THE SSAISD PREK PROGRAM will connect and engage families with local area resources that can provide assistance on important issues, including: (1) personal and family safety; (2) housing stability; (3) mental and physical health providers; (4) employment and job skills development; and (5) budget and finances (including financial literacy). The assigned Family Engagement Specialist (FES)/Parent Liaison (PL), working in collaboration with the Social Worker will work with each family to ensure that community resources are allocated to meet the family's needs.

Health and mental health issues will be referred to appropriate and culturally competent community agencies who are qualified to provide mental health services. Job-search resources, training programs, job skill development and, as appropriate, unemployment benefits. Such resources can be made available through the Texas Workforce Development Commission, which serves as a large integrated system that provides on-going case management to help find and provide stable employment. Short-term and long-term housing barriers will be addressed via a referral to local Bexar County agencies that are equipped and competent in the areas of affordable housing, economic stability, and integrated case management services to families in need.

The parent education classes, groups, presentations, and workshops will be ongoing based on a family strengths assessment and surveys. Such areas can include the following: (1) needs of the prenatal and postnatal pregnant women and their families; (2) needs of parents who are parenting a child with a disability; (3) mental health and wellness; (4) fatherhood initiative activities; (5) communication and leadership skills for parents; (6) child development; (7) the effect of trauma on parent-child relationships; (8) how to create nurturing environments, and (9) parenting practices. Trainings and services provided will be assessed to ensure that families are receiving the intended benefits.

➤ ***ESSENTIAL COMPONENT: Increase family knowledge and participation in the decision making process:***

To develop families as advocates and leaders SSAISD PREK PROGRAM will ensure that parents' opinions are heard and included, even in the initial program planning activities, via the Campus Parent Committees, the Family Advisory Council, and the other parent committees (FISAC, Education Committee, etc.). As needed and as appropriate, parents involved in committees will be provided with opportunities for professional development, evaluations for continuous improvement, understanding of multicultural principles, leadership development, and additional engagement and participation activities. Local area advocacy groups that have similar beliefs and ideas will be contacted and the SSAISD PREK PROGRAM parents will be supported as they collaborate with these advocacy groups on issues related to child, family, and community needs. Further, SSAISD PREK PROGRAM will link families with meaningful support networks, peer-to-peer groups, and volunteer opportunities in the community.

Parents may also chose to participate on the Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) that is composed of staff, parents, and local health care providers to talk about the planning, operation, and evaluation of the health services in a multitude of significant ways: (1) helping link children to ongoing sources of continuous, accessible health care; (2) ensuring that the learning environments in the home and on the campus support each child’s social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development; (3) establishing and implementing policies and procedures for responding to medical and dental health emergencies; (4) engaging parents in identifying and accessing health services and resources that are responsive to their interests and goals; (5) helping SSAISD PREK PROGRAM establish ongoing collaborative partnerships with community organizations to make it easier for children and families to access health services that are responsive to their needs; (6) developing long- and short-term goals and objectives for implementing services that meet the needs of the community; and (7) participating in the annual self-assessment of SSAISD PREK PROGRAM ’s effectiveness.

➤ ***ESSENTIAL COMPONENT: Equip families with the tools to be able to enhance and extend learning:***

The SSAISD PREK PROGRAM SOCIAL WORKER, working with the SSAISD PREK Family Engagement Specialists (FES) and the SSAISD PREK Parent Liaisons (PL), will arrange for educational classes and workshops for families in the areas of health, nutrition, mental health, dental, CPR and First Aid, and Parenting Classes. They will also ensure that all parent training is culturally responsive, sensitive to diversity, and addresses varying needs of families. Further, parent involvement will be encouraged in the area of child development and education. Empowering families to be more aware and educated in these areas will help parents improve relationships between their child and themselves (e.g., improving reading skills for parents in order to help them better help their child). By developing a parent’s

educational and child development skills the parents are assuming a much larger role and becoming an “advocate” for their child. This is an essential capacity for parents and one that SSAISD will attempt to develop in all SSAISD PREK parents.

Activities for parents and families will be multiple and varied, including: (1) offering videos and/or handout information on parent training topics to families; (2) parent training on child development and early education; (3) parent training on appropriate early behavior; guidance on child observations through the use of age-appropriate checklists; and (4) guidance on developing and implementing homework stations at home and home learning environments. Extended learning tools and information will be offered in various ways, including but not limited to event flyers, newsletters, online videos and technology, social media, parent-teacher conferences, and campus and district directed activities.

➤ ***ESSENTIAL COMPONENT: Develop staff skills in evidence-based practices that support families in meeting their children's learning benchmarks:***

To help develop the essential skills within school staff, SSAISD PREK PROGRAM will provide training opportunities that help increase the knowledge and capacity of teachers and staff improve their communication skills with families. Resources and literature from program initiatives, such as *Supporting Teachers, Strengthening Families*, can help provide teachers and staff with strategies to support families. *Supporting Teachers, Strengthening Families* is specifically geared to equip teachers and staff to help facilitate friendships and support, strengthen parenting skills, respond to family crises, link families to community resources, promote social and emotional development, and recognize and respond to early signs of abuse or neglect, as well as how to truly value and support parents.

In addition, cultural competency training will be made available to all school staff to help increase their knowledge, self-awareness, and ability to engage in culturally and linguistically responsive practices. Continuing education opportunities will be made available year round so that all teachers and staff have access to progress the communication and engagement with families. Teaching strategies and ideas will also be made available to help guide teachers on diversity in the classroom. Curriculum, such as *Scholastic Big Day for Pre-K*, will also promote and support teachers and staff by incorporating research-based guidance that engages families, modifies instruction for diverse learners, celebrates the diversity of the children's own culture and language, family background, and any special needs.

➤ ***ESSENTIAL COMPONENT: Evaluate family engagement efforts and use evaluations for continuous improvement:***

SSAISD PREK Family Engagement Plan will also encourage and support continuous improvement by implementing and conducting a goal-oriented home visit component. This allows for the SSAISD PREK Program Family Engagement Specialist (FES)/Parent Liaison (PL) to build rapport, learn the family dynamics, and operation of the family system, and cater to the family needs based on the hierarchy of the home. Home visits will occur at periodic times in the academic year. Initial visit will occur, if possible, shortly after the Prekindergarten Orientation Meeting to provide an introduction and welcome, as well as information on the program, curriculum and parenting activities. Goal-oriented home visits will also help identify any needs, strengths, or interests the family may have. Home visits will also be conducted to help alleviate any challenges the family may face with absenteeism. If home visits are not possible, school staff will effectively communicate with the families at the beginning of the year to establish an alternative plan.

Family goals are assessed twice a year, initially during the beginning of the first semester and again at the end of year to show projection and growth. The evaluation baseline for family goals are originated in the management software, CHILD PLUS. This system allows for family goals to be altered and measured to help cater to the strengths and needs of the families. Other evaluation measures, such as the Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality (FPTRQ) tool(s), will also be implemented. The FPTRQ assesses the quality of the relationship between families and providers/teachers of early care and education for children birth to 5 years of age.