

NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: Educational Involvement Accords

Senate Bill (SB) 214, Section 17 of the 2005 Nevada Legislative session directs the Nevada Department of Education to “prescribe form for educational involvement accords to be used by all public schools” in Nevada. This Accord must also comply with the state’s adopted Parent Involvement Policy as well as with the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. In addition, the Educational Involvement Accord must be accompanied by a variety of informational materials which every district and its teachers are responsible for distributing to each student’s parent(s).

On October 17, 2005, an Accord Advisory Committee, representing parents, districts, schools, and community members, was assembled. The goals of this committee were to advise the Nevada Department of Education regarding the development of the Educational Involvement Accord and to provide input and insight regarding the distribution of the Accords and its accompanying materials. The development of the Accord as well as the guidance relative to the requirements of this legislation relied heavily on the input and advice of this representative committee.

Throughout this guidance document, you will find information on the newly developed Accord as well as information on the material required to accompany it. This document will also highlight the additional requirements of this legislation and provide suggestions and recommendations relative to the Accord.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Educational Involvement Accords (Accords)

- 1. Who must use the Educational Involvement Accord (Accord) form prescribed by the Nevada Department of Education (NDE)?**
 - . All public schools in this state must use the Accord.

- 2. Who ensures that the Accord prescribed by NDE is used in each public school?**
 - . The board of trustees of each school district shall ensure that the form is used by each public school in the school district.

- 3. Can we change the Accord in any way at all?**
 - . The board of trustees of a school district may authorize the use of an expanded Accord that contains additions to the form prescribed by NDE if the basic information contained in the expanded form complies with the NDE Accord.
 - . Items found in the Parent Involvement Policy such as involving parents as full partners in the decisions that affect children and families, and making community resources available to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning, are examples of what could be considered as possible additions to the NDE prescribed Accord form.

- 4. What about Title I schools? Are the Title I schools required to do both the Nevada Educational Involvement Accords and the parent compacts required by No Child Left Behind (NCLB)?**
 - . All public schools in Nevada must use the Accord, that includes Title I schools. Since the Accords were required to comply with NCLB, the Accords do meet the parent compact requirements. Additionally, if a Title I school determines that an expanded version of the Accord would be appropriate for their population, then that school may use an expanded form if authorized by the district's board of trustees.

- 5. When must the Accords be distributed?**
 - . At the beginning of each school year or upon a student's enrollment in the class, as applicable. In addition, the board of trustees of each school district shall adopt a policy providing for the development and distribution of the educational involvement accord.

- 6. What must the policy adopted by the board of trustees of each school district address?**
 - . The policy adopted by a board of trustees must require each classroom teacher to distribute the Accord to the parent or legal guardian of each student in his/her class at the beginning of each school year or upon a student's enrollment in the class. The policy must also require each

classroom teacher to provide the parent or legal guardian with a reasonable opportunity to sign the Accord.

7. What about Middle and High School classroom teachers? Will a student who has six teachers and that student's parents have six Accords to sign and return?

- . It was determined that in multiple classroom teacher situations, such as Middle and High Schools, the home room or first period teacher, for example, would be acceptable as the identified staff member to ensure that the Accord is distributed. The intent of the Accords is to make all educational participants –parent, student, staff –aware of their roles in the educational process.

8. Are there any other responsibilities relative to the Accord that must be met?

- . Yes; at least once a year, NDE and the board of trustees of each school district shall review and amend, if necessary, their respective educational involvement accords.

9. Must the accompanying material be distributed all together with the Accord or can it be distributed separately?

- . Often districts and schools already have a defined way to distribute much of the required accompanying material. It is not required that all of the items be sent home to parents together and on the same day (see items A – M, under “Accompanying Material” for further detail and suggestions regarding these requirements). It is most important that parents receive the required information at the beginning of the school year so that they will have the benefit of knowing the information from the on-set.

Accompanying Material:

The following will address questions districts and schools might have relative to the required material that must accompany the Accords. Each item will identify what information or material must accompany the Accord as well as provide ideas or suggestions on what would satisfy this requirement.

A. Information describing how the parent or legal guardian may contact the pupil's teacher(s) and the principal of the school in which the pupil is enrolled.

- . Typically, schools and districts already have a policy or practice in place that addresses this item. Many districts or schools have handbooks or newsletters that cover this information. Other suggestions include the following:

- Send a cover letter containing this information home with the Accord
- Include this information in planning books provided to the students

- B.** *The curriculum of the course or standards for the grade in which the pupil is enrolled, as applicable, including, without limitation, a calendar that indicates the dates of major examinations and the due dates of significant projects, if those dates are known by the teacher at the time that the information is distributed.*
- C.** *The homework and grading policies of the pupil's teacher or school.*
- . Most middle and high school teachers provide students with a syllabus that includes critical course requirements, test and project due dates, and homework and grading policies. Likewise, elementary teachers often provide an overview of classroom practices and procedures as well as outline the curriculum, highlighting major projects and/or requirements. It is suggested that this information in both B and C is provided to parents not only in writing at the beginning of the year, but also at parent/teacher conferences and back-to-school night. The intent of this legislation is to keep parents "in the loop" so they can become partners with the school and staff in promoting effective student educational involvement.
- D.** *Directions for finding resource materials for the course or grade in which the pupil is enrolled, as applicable.*
- . Along with course/class descriptions and requirements, resources, where applicable, must be identified for parents. The following are suggestions for satisfying this activity:
 - Provide a list of relevant websites and where computers can be accessed to search for those websites
 - Provide a list of places to find materials such as stores, school and community libraries
 - Provide a schedule of tutoring opportunities for the students
- E.** *Suggestions for parents and legal guardians to assist pupils in their schoolwork at home.*
- . Many districts, even within its parent involvement policy, offer suggestions on how parents can assist their children at home. In fact, within the Accord itself, actions such as monitoring their children's activities or reading to their children are steps towards facilitating proper homework/study habits. Additionally, districts and/or schools may want to include this information in student handbooks or have handouts dedicated strictly towards particular types of course work.
- F.** *The dates of scheduled conferences between teachers or administrators and the parents or legal guardians of the pupil.*
- G.** *The manner in which reports of the pupil's progress will be delivered to the parent or legal guardian and how a parent or legal guardian may request a report of progress.*
- H.** *The classroom rules and policies.*
- I.** *The dress code of the school, if any.*
- . Again, a school handbook or newsletter often contains these types of important dates, information, and procedures. Another time that this

information might already be distributed by schools is during the school registration process. However, in order to satisfy the legislation, it is important to remember that this information needs to be distributed at the beginning of the school year even if many of these events, such as conferences, do not take place until the middle of the school year. Of course, if this is the case, it would be wise to again send out notices to parents as the dates for these activities approach.

J. *The availability of assistance to parents who have limited proficiency in the English language.*

- Schools often encounter parents who speak a language other than English and who would like assistance in communicating with their child's teacher, school staff, and/or district. Schools and Districts are required to provide information relative to the availability of assistance for these parents. Listed below are several suggestions that would provide parents with the required information:

Provide information in the parent's native language that indicates who the English as a Second Language

Coordinator is and how to access that person.

Inform parents (in their native language) how to access a language interpreter or request translated material

Help parents to understand how to access resources, such as ESL classes or support groups

K. *Information describing the availability of free and reduced-price meals, including, with limitation, information regarding school breakfast, school lunch and summer meal programs.*

- Traditionally, schools and districts have routinely sent this information out to students and families at the beginning of the school year. This already established practice meets the requirements of this legislation.

L. *Opportunities for parents and legal guardians to become involved in the education of their children and to volunteer for the school or class.*

- This type of information for parents varies not only from district to district, but also from school to school. Often parent involvement and volunteer information happens informally or is conveyed in a parent newsletter periodically. However with the creation of the Educational Involvement Accord, parents must now sign the Accord indicating that they anticipate volunteering at least 5 hours per year toward student/school activities or events. Consequently, it is suggested that this activity be addressed in any one or more of the following ways:

Identify and include parent volunteer information in registration packets

Provide monthly parent newsletters that outline how to volunteer or become involved

Highlight parent involvement opportunities at parent-teacher conferences and back to school night
Maintain list of opportunities and share with parents throughout the school year

M. *The code of honor relating to cheating prescribed pursuant to section 17.5 of this act.*

- Most schools address the issue individually. However, with the development of the Nevada Code of Honor, it is now required that this document be distributed along with the other items that must accompany the Accords. It is anticipated that Nevada Code of Honor will be available for distribution in time for spring registration.