



Family Communication & Engagement Plan 2014-15

INTRODUCTION

We achieve better outcomes for students when we work together with and invest their families. Just as we have ambitious measurable goals for student achievement, we set and work purposefully toward goals for family engagement and satisfaction. While we are responsible for student achievement regardless of family involvement and satisfaction, engaging with families in positive, productive ways that invest them in their child's education at CCA and beyond is a critical part of our work. **It is our responsibility to assume the best of every family, and to engage with them in ways that demonstrate both our respect for them and our high expectations for them and their child.**

The document that follows outlines:

- Priorities
- Goals
- Communication & Engagement Strategies
- Best Practices for Communication
- Best Practices for Parent Conferences
- Volunteer Guidelines
- Student Achievement Council (SAC)

PRIORITIES

As we do with our staff and students, we articulate a clear set of expectations that every CCA parent commits to when they enroll their child. While there are many ways to be involved and invested in their child's school program, we prioritize five actions that directly align with our mission and ensuring 100% of our students achieve at proficient or advanced levels. While many parents may choose to be involved beyond this minimal level, **all parents must commit to the following:**

- Send their scholar to school *on time, every day*.
- Ensure their child arrives prepared in correct uniform
- Ensure their child arrives prepared with their completed Collegiate Work AND signed behavior report
- Attend 3 family conferences each year
- Return all school communication on time

GOALS			
	Goal	As Measured By	Timeline
Families are engaged members of the Capitol Collegiate school community	96% of families sign and return Collegiate Work daily	Classroom Collegiate Work tracker	Monthly
	95% of families attend every conference round	Conference completion tracker	Nov, Mar, June
	85% of families complete a family survey	Survey completion	Nov, June
	Student Achievement Council (SAC) plans and executes 6 school wide events / initiatives per year	Event Calendar	Monthly
	80% or more families from each class participate in school events / activities (e.g. Book Fair, Field Day, Open House etc.)	Event attendance rosters	Monthly
Families are satisfied with the Capitol Collegiate Academy experience	95% of families are satisfied with the following aspects of the CCA program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic standards / expectations - Quality of teachers - Quality of administration - Quality of instruction - Level of individualized support for students - Level of child's engagement in the school - Child's overall progress at CCA 	Family Survey	Nov, June
	95% of families are overall satisfied with Capitol Collegiate Academy		

STRATEGIES	Timeline
<u>New Family Orientation</u> The Principal executes an orientation for all new families prior to the start of the new school year that includes information about: school mission and philosophy; instructional program; policies and procedures; school discipline; and family expectations. If a new student is enrolled <u>after the first day</u> of school, an administrator prepares orientation materials, proactively meets with the family, and coordinates with the teacher to ensure classroom-related preparation is complete.	MAY <i>(Prior to the first day of new school year)</i>
<u>Family Handbook</u> All families receive a handbook that outlines our policies as they relate to attendance; academics; school safety and culture; discipline and behavior; and other school operations. The handbook clearly articulates a set of minimum expectations for all CCA families.	MAY, JUNE & JULY <i>(Prior to the first day of new school year)</i>

<u>Kindergarten Open House</u> All kindergarten families and students are strongly encouraged to attend Open House prior to the first day of a new school year. Open House serves three primary purposes. First, teachers meet and set the tone for a positive, professional relationship with the family. Teachers answer questions about the program, and begin to invest and excite the family about the year ahead. In addition, teachers meet and observe students, getting important initial information on their temperament, interactions with peers and adults, and behavior. Finally, Open House is a preventative measure to help our youngest students transition to a new place with unfamiliar people.	AUGUST
<u>Grade-Level Orientation (1st -8th Grades)</u> Returning and new families in first grade and up attend a grade-level specific Orientation prior to the start of the new school year to meet their child's teacher and learn about curricula and other grade-level expectations and events.	AUGUST
<u>Back to School Night</u> Families are invited to again visit the school and their child's classroom, this time after 6-8 weeks of instruction. Teachers reinforce classroom and school expectations; review academic goals and the key levers for growth; and show student work. Families have an in-person opportunity to ask questions, deepen their understanding of and investment in the school, and meet other CCA families.	OCTOBER
<u>Monthly Student Progress Calls</u> We want all of our families to be well informed of their child's behavior, academic progress, and social wellbeing. In addition to the daily behavior log and weekly CAL report, each teacher makes a proactive call to each family every month to discuss student progress.	MONTHLY
<u>Daily Behavior Report</u> (STAR Report; Credit / Debit Log) The grade-level specific daily behavior report summarizes the student's behavior for the day, and serves as communication between home and school. Teachers complete this daily for every child and send it home for the family to review, sign and return. For more information see the <u>School Discipline & Culture Manual</u> .	DAILY
<u>CAL Report</u> The <u>C</u> lassroom <u>A</u> chievement <u>L</u> etter (CAL Report) is sent home weekly to summarize the content taught each week. Our goal is to give a family-friendly 'snapshot' of what students are learning to inform their conversations and work with their child at home.	WEEKLY
<u>Collegiate Work Binder / Folder</u> Daily Collegiate Work is important for our student's academic success and ensuring families stay accountable and involved in their child's academic progress. Families are expected to sign Collegiate Work daily and ensure it is returned to school completed and on time with their student. When Collegiate Work is not turned in – or is incomplete or not completed up to standard - the family is contacted immediately via automated call.	DAILY
<u>Family Volunteers</u> We encourage families to participate in their child's education in ways that are meaningful and feasible to them. This will be different for each family depending on time, interests and talents, but may include: 1. Volunteering time on campus	ONGOING

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Volunteering to help plan and/or execute or attend a grade-level or school wide special event 3. Being a member of our Student Achievement Council or a Room Parent 4. Donating materials (beyond the minimum requested from each family) for school or classroom use 5. Completing at-home projects 	
<p><u><i>Family Conferences</i></u> All families are required to attend 3 conferences per year – in November, March and June. Families schedule a 20-minute time with their child’s primary teacher to discuss academic and social progress and receive their child’s report card.</p>	NOVEMBER, MARCH & JUNE
<p><u><i>Family Survey</i></u> Family feedback is a valuable part of our growth and success as a school. Families are asked to complete two formal surveys annually gauging their satisfaction and feedback. Surveys are sent home in hard copy the week prior to conferences, and families are asked to complete and bring the survey to their conference. A link to an online version of the survey is sent to families whose email addresses we have on record.</p>	NOVEMBER & JUNE
<p><u><i>Grade-Level and School Wide Special Events</i></u> We have several school wide and grade-level specific events annually. CCA staff work together with families to plan and execute these events. For more information on school events see the School Discipline & Culture Manual.</p>	ONGOING
<p><u><i>Reminder Calls</i></u> Our office makes a daily automated reminder calls (robo-calls) to families whose student is absent and/or does not complete Collegiate Work.</p>	DAILY
<p><u><i>Monthly School Calendar & Menu</i></u> An events calendar is sent home with each student at the beginning of a new month, including school closures, special events, lunch menu items and all other relevant calendar information.</p>	MONTHLY
<p><u><i>Family Bulletin Board</i></u> All school wide information that is sent home with students (e.g. monthly calendars, upcoming event or policy reminders) is also posted on the family information board in the multi-purpose room.</p>	MONTHLY
<p><u><i>Student Achievement Council</i></u> The Student Achievement Council (SAC) is a committed action-oriented group of CCA families with a focus on strengthening the school program through school events; fundraisers; community outreach; and other initiatives.</p> <p>The Student Achievement Council is open to any CCA parent, guardian or adult family member who wants to work collaboratively with other parents and school staff and make measurable additions to the school program. Given the rich diversity in our school community, we all benefit from a group that represents different parent experiences and perspectives.</p> <p>The Operations Manager serves as SAC liaison. Initially she helps bring structure to and facilitate meetings. She also ensures communication is flowing within and between meetings, and ensures the CCA staff is aware of and invested in SAC’s efforts on behalf of the school. Overall, the OM supports the efforts of the group, and ensures that the common driving force is always our</p>	ONGOING

student's achievement.	
<p><u>Room Parent</u></p> <p>A room parent serves as the important liaison between the teacher and the class parents. A room parent's main task is to facilitate communication between other parents and the teacher, the school parent group (SAC), and occasionally school administration. Room Parent duties typically include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating and distributing a class roster - Supporting school events throughout the year by communicating event details and soliciting volunteers when needed - Coordinating classroom special events (e.g. winter celebration, Valentines card exchange) - Organizing teacher appreciation activities <p>A reliable, responsive room parent can be an enormous asset to a teacher – and to fostering a class community in which families know one another and feel 'in the know.' Teachers set expectations for and support the room parent in their contributions, always ensuring they are aligned with our school's vision and policies.</p>	ONGOING

BEST PRACTICES: COMMUNICATION	
<p>Families may have different opinions, values, and beliefs than your own. Our ability to exchange information, understand each other's perspectives, solve problems and partner effectively <i>is contingent on how effectively we communicate with them.</i></p>	
<p>1. Be Aware Of All the Ways You Are Communicating.</p> <p>It's not just what you say - your words account for less than 20% of what is perceived and understood by others. In addition to verbal communication, be very aware of your nonverbal, and paraverbal communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Verbal Messages:</i> The words we choose • <i>Paraverbal Messages:</i> How we say the words (tone, pitch, pacing). When we are angry or excited, our speech tends to become more rapid and higher pitched. When we are feeling defensive, our speech is often abrupt. Paraverbal messages account for about 38% of what is perceived and understood by others. • <i>Nonverbal Messages:</i> Our body language, including facial expressions, posture, gestures, account for about 55% of what is perceived and understood by others. Through our body language we are always communicating – whether we want to or not. 	
<p>2. Listen Effectively.</p> <p>Listening requires more than hearing words. It requires a desire to understand the family, an attitude of respect, and a willingness to try and see things from their point of view. Listening demands that we set aside our own thoughts and agenda, and put ourselves in another's shoes. True listening requires that we suspend judgment, evaluation, and approval in an attempt to understand the family's frame of reference, emotions, and attitudes. <i>This does not mean that we necessarily agree with what we hear, but that we seek to understand.</i></p> <p>- <i>Be Aware of the Speaker's Nonverbal Messages.</i> When we pay attention to a family member's body language we gain insight into how he or she is feeling as</p>	

well as the intensity of the feeling. Through careful attention to body language and paraverbal messages, we can understand a lot about what he or she is trying to communicate.

- *Pay Attention to the Words and Feelings.* In order to understand the total meaning of a message, pay attention to both the *feeling* and the *content* of the message. We are often more comfortable dealing with the content rather than the feelings, particularly when the feelings are intense. Our tendency can be to try and ignore the emotional aspect of the message – especially if it is one of potential conflict - and move directly to the substance of the issues. This often leads to intense emotions escalating. It may be necessary to openly acknowledge and name the feelings, and have a brief honest discussion about them prior to moving into the substantive issues. If we leave the emotional aspect unaddressed, we risk derailing the relationship.
- *Use Reflective Listening Skills.* Restate, in your own words, the feeling and/or content that is being expressed. By reflecting back to the family member what you believe you understand you validate them by giving them the experience of being heard and acknowledged. (It also gives them the opportunity to clarify if we are misperceiving the message). Paraphrasing, reflecting feeling, summarizing and questioning are some common ways to listen reflectively.

Paraphrasing is a concise statement of the content of the family member's message. It should be brief, succinct, and focus on the facts or ideas of the message rather than the feeling. This should be in our own words rather than "parroting back", using their words.

Reflecting Feeling is when we concentrate on the feeling words and ask ourselves "How would I be feeling if I was having that experience?" Then restate or paraphrase the *feeling* of what we heard to convey our understanding.

Summarizing pulls together the main ideas and feelings of the message to show understanding. (Use this after a considerable amount of information sharing has gone on to show we grasp the total meaning of the message).

Questioning is when we ask *open ended* questions to get information and clarification. This helps focus the family member on the topic, encourages him/her to talk, and provides him/her the opportunity to clarify their message.

3. Know and Avoid the Barriers to Effective Communication.

When we are busy, under stress, and have limitations to our time we are more apt to inadvertently inject communication barriers into conversation. Be aware enough to notice your verbal and non-verbal communication (listen to yourself as you speak; feel and note your body language etc.). If you are inadvertently putting up 'barriers' use strategies to calm and re-focus yourself and then "try again."

- Verbal Communication Barriers

- Attacking (interrogating, criticizing, blaming, shaming). *"If you had read the memo that was in his backpack you would know the information and we probably wouldn't be in this situation . . ."*
- "You Messages" (moralizing, preaching, advising, diagnosing). *"You don't seem to understand how important it is for [insert student] to do this . . ."*
- Showing Power (ordering, threatening, commanding, directing). *"We are going to keep her in detention regardless of what you think . . ."*

- Nonverbal Communication Barriers

- Flashing or rolling eyes
- Arms crossed, legs crossed
- Gestures made with exasperation
- Slouching, hunching over
- Doodling
- Staring or avoiding eye contact
- Excessive fidgeting with materials

4. Address the Emotions

At times we have to address difficult situations with families. In these cases it is critical to remember there are two aspects to a conflict: substance and emotions. Until the emotional aspects of a conflict are resolved, it is usually difficult to address the substantive ones. We give the family an opportunity to appropriately share or 'vent' their emotions within reason. When their feelings have been acknowledged and accepted, the emotional intensity often subsides and problem solving about the substantive issues can proceed. (Per our communication norms with families if a family's emotions are inappropriate or abusive calmly *end the interaction immediately*).

Allowing a family member to appropriately share strong emotions about a situation is not the same as counseling or otherwise crossing professional boundaries! We are not *friends* with the families of our students, nor is it our job to address family, personal or other issues they may be having that do not relate directly to the student issue at hand.

5. Identify Challenges with Families in Terms of Interest – Not Positions!

In a problem or conflict situation, go beyond what the family *says* is the issue (his/her position), and figure out what they really need to have satisfied. *An interest* is the family member's concern, desire or goal *behind* what they say the issue is. It is the underlying need that must be met if agreement is to be reached. Getting to the interest sometimes requires asking clarifying questions because it is not always immediately evident.

- *Position*: "I don't want my son going outside for recess when it's that cold out." *Interest*: I can't afford to take any more time off of work if he gets sick and has to stay home from school.
 - **Questions to Ask to Get at Underlying Interests** (Remember your nonverbal and paraverbals when using these!)
 - Tell me more about why that is important to you
 - What would you experience if you had that?
 - What changes would that solution make?
 - What would that mean to you?
 - How will you benefit from that?
 - What's your basic concern in wanting that?

If a position is expressed in negative terms ("I don't want my daughter . . . ") you might ask the following questions:

- Why do you think that won't work for you?
- What problems do you see with that?
- What bothers you most about that?

- There are also *basic human need interests* that include:

- Security
- Economic well-being
- A sense of belonging
- Recognition
- Control over one's life

6. *Win by Joining*

Though both our school and families want the best for the student, at times families can resist our means of getting there. The key to dealing with resistance is not to fight it, but to *join* it. How is it possible to join with someone who is resistant or hostile, and why would we even want to? Because ultimately it gives us control over the situation, the chance to return the family member to calmness and clarity, and to maintain a relationship we will have for an entire school year or longer.

Joining is not simply giving in. It is rather a process of, from a balanced position, moving to *align with the 'attacking' energy so that we can begin to change the direction of that energy*. A good analogy is to think of a rocket in flight. If you want to change the direction of the rocket, would your choice be to stand in front of it and try to smash it onto a new course, or would you prefer to fly alongside it and gently nudge it to the desired new direction?

Consider this example: (Kiara's mom, Ms. Smith, is extremely angry that 2 pairs of her daughter's uniform pants have gotten very soiled / stained during outside recess and wants her to stay off the grass at all times).

Teacher: "I know how you must be feeling, Ms. Smith – pants are expensive and I know you don't want stains on her clothes. We definitely want her to be able to run around and get her energy out during recess. We know if she doesn't she won't be able to focus on math, and we both want her to achieve in math."

When we *join*, there are profound effects both on ourselves and on the other party. If we are successful, we get back an increased appreciation of where the family is coming from; we understand their point of view, even if we hold different views ourselves. We also can better understand what will work in order to reach a workable solution.

From the point of view of the family member, our actions may be even more profound. They begin to feel that they are understood and more importantly that perhaps we are a bit more like them than they thought. (As people come to feel that they are more like each other, it becomes more difficult to attack, because it becomes like attacking oneself. Resistance and argumentativeness depend upon separateness. There must be a *you* and a *me*. The more *you* are like *me*, the more *you* understand *me*, the more *I* become hard to single out as *other* and therefore hard to attack. There becomes no one on whom to focus aggression, and

the door is opened for cooperation).

Our goal through joining is to walk a mile in their shoes and perhaps even think like they do. When we can do this, solutions that will work for both us *and* the family appear as possibilities in our minds, whereas before we could only see our own needs.

Joining Strategies. The overall goal of all joining strategies is to help the family to feel understood and listened to, and for us to truly understand what their want or need is.

- Listen intently and actively.
- Acknowledge the strength of their position.
- Acknowledge the validity of their feelings.
- Acknowledge them as a person (authority, generosity, competence etc.).
- Apologize if it is appropriate to do so.
- Use humor.
- Use *Yes.....and*, rather than *yes...but*.
- Ask questions that elicit a *yes* response.
- Make a language change from *you* to *us*.

- **Listen intently and actively.** This is a fundamentally important skill, as indicated above, and one we often assume we are better at than we actually are. (Someone once said that the only reason most people ever listen is because they have to wait until it is their turn to talk. We can and must do better than that). Good listening enables us to truly understand the family, as well as send them a clear message that we understand. Separation is lessened and joining occurs.

- **Acknowledge the strength of their position.** Everyone wants to be right, strong, and powerful, just as everyone wants to be heard. Instead of looking for holes and weaknesses in the family member's position, look for their strengths and acknowledge those.

Parent: I know my rights!

Teacher: You do have rights and there are powerful laws make sure schools implement IEPs, which ultimately give rights to your child, too.

- **Acknowledge the strength of their emotion.** Many times it's not enough to acknowledge or comment in a dispassionate way. Just as we are, families are passionate about what they believe and if we ignore those passions we risk appearing aloof and not truly understanding or sympathetic. Imagine if a teacher colleague storms up to you and says, "I absolutely don't know what to do anymore with Jimmy. I can't have him in my class again tomorrow with this behavior!" If your first response is trying to explain Jimmy's good points, at this juncture that may only make your colleague angrier. *Her feelings first need to be validated.*

- **Acknowledge them as a person.** Sometimes there are opportunities to acknowledge a family member outside of the topics of discussion. "It was great to see you at the Open House last week. Jimmy was excited you were coming" may not be related to the meeting topic, but if said and felt genuinely, it may go a long way in building a willingness to cooperate.
- **Apologize if it is appropriate to do so.** It can be relatively rare for someone to sincerely apologize. It takes strength of character and a solid ego to admit wrong. For those of us interested in joining, all the better to apologize when it is appropriate. A well worded apology sends a powerful message to the family that we hear their concerns and are responsive to them. Sometimes, we really did nothing wrong but the whole situation is a disaster. An apology about the lousy way things are going sometimes is very effective.

Parent: I can't believe that your bus driver left the stop and didn't make sure Jay Jay got off! I was worried sick!

Administrator: I'm really sorry this happened. I can't imagine how worried you were. I am so glad you called us right away.

- **Use humor (where appropriate).** If you can find something that everyone can laugh at, go for it. Laughter brings people together, reduces stress, and lightens the mood. Of course, humor which only one side finds funny or which puts down others should be avoided.
- **Use "yes, and" rather than "yes, but".** "Yes, but..." is an automatic script almost everyone seems to use when someone says something they disagree with. We can powerfully change this script by replacing the "but" with "and." This simple change *acknowledges* another's point, even while making room for our own.
- **Ask questions to elicit a yes response.** Every time someone answers in the affirmative, it is a subtle joining with us. Many times there are two ways to begin to discuss an issue: one will elicit a response in the negative, and the other in the positive. For example: "Are you happy with the way the school drop off is working?" (No!) "Do you think it's important to work out a system so drop-off is safe and fast for everyone?" (Yes!)
- **Make a language change from you to us.** Starting a sentence with you has an almost automatic finger pointing quality to it. "You should have...." It creates a duality, a separation between people. The more sentences can start with *us* or *we* the more we are using the language of cooperation and togetherness.

BEST PRACTICES: PARENT CONFERENCES

Families are required to attend one conference each trimester to discuss their child's academic progress. We want and expect at least 95% of our families to attend all three conferences – and must plan for timely, proactive communication with families to invest them and ensure their attendance. Though conferences are “required” of families, the way in which we communicate about it can set a positive tone and excite and invest a family to attend – rather than this being something they “have to do for the school.”

Scheduling & Communication with Families

- Teachers and the front office share responsibility for communicating with families around parent conference logistics.

- The front office sends home initial communication to families (a letter) 2 weeks prior to the first conference day that includes: Conference days / dates; Process and timeline for signing up for a conference slot; DATE that the sign-up clipboard will be up; Reminder that we are OPEN for students on conference day; and message that we invite all parents / guardians / adults family members who are regularly a part of the child's life to participate.
- Teachers let the front office know the specific time slots for their conferences (in 20 minute slots during prep or planning time).
- The front office creates class-specific sign-up clipboard based on teacher schedule. These are put out in front office 7-8 school days in advance of the first conference date.
- Families sign-up for conferences via the clipboard in the front office. The sign-up sheet includes the *day of week, calendar date*, and has all the *time slots* listed with a line for families to write the names of all adults coming to the conference.
- Families sign-up on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- Bus riders will be scheduled via messages sent home to families and/or phone by the OA.
- Front office coordinates translation for Spanish-speaking families. A schedule is sent out to teachers within 24 hours of conference sign-ups closing that includes which staff member will be translating.
- Teachers should check and manage conference sign-up regularly – especially for those families who typically ‘miss’ communication the first time around or who have a non-parent regularly dropping off and picking up. While the front office supports your work, **it is your responsibility to ensure 95% of your families attend every conference.**
- Teachers must do a proactive, individual reminder to their families the morning-of or day prior to the parent's scheduled conference. Leaving a friendly voicemail or reminding a parent you see at drop-off is important to ensure 95% conference attendance.

Conference Logistics

- Each lead teacher has a conference day and a half in which he/she is scheduled to conference - not teach. Conferences take place in shared school spaces that are designated to a teacher during his/her conference day (e.g. library, MP room).
- Stay on track for time! It is appropriate to use a timer or stopwatch to keep yourself on schedule. Though it can be hard to wrap up at times, you should honor the next family waiting and not keep them waiting more than a minute or two. If it is more than 5 minutes into a scheduled family's time slot and they are waiting in the front office, front office staff or administrators may interrupt and ask you to wrap up.

Approach & Goals for Conferences

1. Set the Context

- This is a purposeful conversation and **you** are the guide. Your goal is to share specific student growth and achievement data with families. This data should be

the focus of the conversation.

- Every purposeful meeting has some sort of action step or task. Have a clear plan for what you want families to leave with. As they walk away from the conference, what is it, above all, that you want families to know and be thinking about? What are next steps you ask of and from them? Is there a specific follow up that needs to be set?
- Strive to invest families in the conference. Though you have information to share, the conference should not be a 20-minute session where you talk AT a parent, but a time to engage in real dialogue about their child's performance.
- Set expectations in advance for how you want parents to prepare for the conference. This might include bringing examples of what students do at home, something surprising they learned at school, things they've shared that they like and don't like, etc. There should be a clear and communicated list.

2. Have a Clear Agenda

The most effective conferences have a clear agenda. This will always involve a warm welcome, sharing data (e.g. STEP, other assessments), discussing areas of strength and challenges, and discussing specific ways family can support achievement at home.

3. Approach it with Respect

- Families may come in with a variety of mindsets & expectations. Some might not have had positive school experiences themselves and/or feel intimidated; some might see and/or expect you to be 'expert;' some might not want to be there or understand why they have to be if their child is 'doing fine.' Some families might be coming with concerns you don't yet know about – either about their child or about the program / your classroom. Some (kindergarten families) are new to raising children and do not notice their child's academic or behavioral needs as being anything other than ordinary. Others might fear that their children will be rejected or judged if they are honest about concerns or share family information.
- This is somebody's baby – the most important thing in their life. Approach the conference with a real, honest desire to support their child's progress in any and every way. Ask yourself: Might parents sense negative judgment in my questions, tone, and body language? Are my comments framed in a way that conveys my belief in this child's ability?
- Don't assume that parents know our 'education jargon' - words like 'phonemic awareness' and 'STEP level' are not every day vocabulary outside of schools. Use brief, clear language to give context or explain as necessary.
- Differentiate for (the parent) audience. Reflect on the relationship you have with the parent - is this a family you are talking to in person for the first time or do you email or call this family weekly? As each family and individual parent is unique, approach each differently. Keep in mind what the parent has shared they want to know or get out of the conference - if they haven't told you – ask! What is parent's conversation style? What kind of relationship do you already have with them?
- *Reflect on what you bring!* We bring our own beliefs to our work. We are human and have frustrations about our job, our students, what families may or may not be doing to support their child. Know this, and notice this.

- Balance confidence and humility. You are speaking from your experience as an educator. You do have a relationship with their child (and in some cases see their child more hours a day than they do). You also have the benchmark of working with many children over the years across a broad spectrum of development. You are there to first and foremost share what you see and hear from their child in a school context. At the same time, bear in mind the limitations of your perspective – the family has known the child from birth.

4. **Discuss Progress & Strengths Reflected in the Data**

Start with the student's strengths. If it is difficult to find them, look harder! Every parent wants to know how her child is doing and it is up to you paint a picture for them. Don't assume the parent knows what 'STEP 3' means - bring a book to show them. Make your goals for their child explicit, "by early February, we want her to be on STEP 5."

5. **Discuss Areas of Focus and/or Concern**

Be real with families – do not sugar coat! There are positive, professional ways to share your concern about academic or behavioral challenges. Your job is to help the family understand the specific benchmark we are working toward for their child; where we want them to be as they begin the next grade-level.

Give an overview of plans / instructional strategies you will be using AND things you want parents to use or do at home. Remember, you want to invest the parent in working with you on this – make sure your next steps for the parent are clearly stated and actionable.

PARENT VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

We strongly encourage all families to support other families, staff and CCA students by volunteering and supporting school initiatives and activities. We encourage their participation in ways that are meaningful and feasible for their family. This will be different for each family depending their time, interests and talents. There are 5 broad ways we encourage participation:

1. Volunteering time at school: Family members may desire to volunteer on campus during the school day. While we want to create a welcoming school environment for families, we first take into account the impact it may have on the academic program. **Though well-meaning, families have not been trained on our highly specific routines, procedures and management systems. As such, their participation directly in classrooms during the regular school day is limited to classroom administrative tasks** (e.g. filing, organizing, bookmaking etc.), not engaging with students. Parents do not volunteer during recess, meal times or Afterschool.
2. Participating in school and classroom special events: We want families to attend grade-level and school wide events every year. We communicate information about special events in advance, early in the school year, and remind families as they approach.
3. Participating in Student Achievement Council: See the description in the section below.
4. Being a Room Parent: See the description in the section below.
5. Donating Supplies or Materials (beyond the minimum requested): Families may choose to donate additional supplies or materials to an individual classroom of the school as a whole. If this is the case, families should check with the classroom teacher (for classroom supplies) or the Operations Manager for school wide supplies. Given our capacity it is very difficult to take donations from well-meaning families “on the spot.”
6. Completing at-home projects At times there may be ‘nice to have’ at-home projects (E.g. sewing together a class quilt, binding a class book, or making a school play costume) that families can do. Do not send families home with student work or other school paperwork or information that is sensitive, important and/or you are accountable for.

For families choosing to volunteer time at school / in classrooms, we have a set of guidelines they must follow:

Schedule your volunteer time in advance.

Our teachers are responsible for preparing and delegating work to family volunteers. So that teachers can prepare for your productive time on campus, all family

volunteers must be scheduled in advance.

- Sign up with the Office Administrator, *the week prior to* your desired volunteer day.
- To allow all families the opportunity to participate on campus, and to limit the amount of adults in classrooms, you may schedule a one-hour or two-hour volunteer block up to 3 times per week.
- Check-in with the front office when you arrive for your scheduled volunteer time.

Use the structures in place to guide your work.

Each teacher has a system in place in their classroom to delegate work to family volunteers. The first time you volunteer our Operations Manager will guide you to the classroom and help you access the work list and materials the teacher has set aside for you.

Refrain from talking to, engaging with or disciplining students – including your own.

Students are expected to remain focused on their learning while in school. Please do not engage with them during instructional time by talking with them, observing their work etc. We strive every minute of every day for 100% student and staff engagement in learning and ask that you respect our efforts by disrupting our natural school day as little as possible. Our staff has been extensively trained on specific teaching methods and behavior management techniques. Please allow the teacher to lead all aspects of the instructional program, and do not discipline students, including your own.

Respect the teachers' time and focus on students.

Our teachers spend upwards of 12 hours a day planning for and teaching students. They commit 100% of their focus to instruction and will not have capacity to questions or engage in discussion with you. If you observe something that you'd like to discuss with the teacher please follow up with them by phone or email after your visit.

Do not take pictures or video.

Thank you for not taking pictures or video of students

ROOM PARENT

Room Parent is a way for a parent leader to be involved at the classroom and school level supporting both teachers and the family.

Who: Room Parent is open to any CCA parent, guardian or adult family member who wants to work directly with and support their child's teacher and the school. Room Parent is a great communicator, and someone who can effectively reach out and invest / involve classroom parents. He/she is a *worker*; someone wanting to roll up their sleeves largely behind the scenes. He/she is reliable, responsive, committed to CCA, and respectful of our vision and school policies.

The teacher works most closely with the room parent in their classroom-specific efforts. At times throughout the year Room Parents may support administration or school wide efforts directly via focus groups or other activities.

What: Room Parent has two primary roles. First, he/she coordinates communication among families in the class, primarily through developing and maintaining a class roster. A great room parent solicits support for and ensures all families are aware of class events, school wide or classroom volunteer opportunities etc. Second, he/she

directly supports the classroom teacher in planning and facilitating events such as class parties etc.

How & When: Teachers reach out to families in the first 6 weeks of the school year to share the ‘job duties’ for and solicit interest in the Room Parent role. Grade-level teams, together with their administrator, collaborate around which of the interested families would be the best fit.

A reliable, responsive room parent can be an enormous asset to a teacher – and are only as effective as the teacher sets them up to be. A great room parent is one who you’ve invested in your vision; set clear expectations for; and whose driving force is to help your class be the most spirited, organized class on campus.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL (SAC)

Student Achievement Council is a meaningful way for families to be involved, empowered advocates for their child’s education and achievement

By contributing to projects and initiatives, and giving feedback, the group directly supports the school to live out our mission and meet our ambitious student achievement goals.

Who: SAC is open to any CCA parent, guardian or adult family member who wants to work collaboratively with other parents and school staff and make measurable additions to the school program. Given the rich diversity in our school community, we all benefit from a group that represents different experiences and perspectives.

Families are given initial information about SAC at both Kindergarten Open House / Grade-Level Orientations that include meeting dates for the year. SAC members also give a brief presentation at Back to School Night.

The Operations Manager serves as SAC liaison. She ensures communication is flowing within and between meetings, and makes connections with the SAC and the CCA staff. Overall, she supports the efforts of the group, and ensures that the common driving force is always our student’s achievement.

What: SAC has two primary roles. First, they are an *action-oriented* group who plan and execute projects (e.g. school events, fundraisers, community outreach etc.) that support the school program. Second, the group plays an *advisory role* to our administration. They are a critical parent voice to give solicited feedback, ideas and suggestions on things such as school operations, special events, initiatives etc. Their focus question will always be – ‘*how will this support our children’s education at Capitol Collegiate?*’

How & When: Each year SAC develops a set of priorities, action plan and timeline to guide their work. They meet on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month.