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SENATE BILL 179

**52ND LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2016**

INTRODUCED BY

Linda M. Lopez

AN ACT

RELATING TO PUBLIC EDUCATION; PROVIDING FOR FAMILY AND  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS; MAKING AN  
APPROPRIATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. A new section of the Public School Code is  
enacted to read:

"[NEW MATERIAL] SHORT TITLE.--This act may be cited as the  
"Family and Community Engagement Act"."

SECTION 2. A new section of the Public School Code is  
enacted to read:

"[NEW MATERIAL] LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.--

A. The legislature finds that the engagement and  
support of families and community partners in the education of  
children is an integral part of improving academic achievement

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1 and is therefore critical to student success. Properly  
2 constructed family and community engagement programs resulting  
3 from collaborative decision-making processes can play an  
4 important and effective role in the participation of families  
5 and community partners in schools and in improving children's  
6 learning.

7 B. The legislature confirms its commitment to the  
8 rights of students, families, community partners and school  
9 employees to nondiscriminatory treatment, including freedom  
10 from harassment and retaliation based on disability, race,  
11 ethnicity, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity,  
12 national origin or ancestry, religion, age, veteran status,  
13 immigration status and any other protected status as defined by  
14 law in all of its programs and activities.

15 C. The purpose of the Family and Community  
16 Engagement Act is to ensure that family and community  
17 engagement programs are properly designed and implemented and  
18 to provide a focus and structure for those programs based on  
19 prior experience and research while maintaining sufficient  
20 local flexibility to design a program that best meets the needs  
21 of the local community."

22 SECTION 3. A new section of the Public School Code is  
23 enacted to read:

24 "[NEW MATERIAL] FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM.--

25 A. The goals of family and community engagement

1 programs are to:

2 (1) utilize the histories and cultures of  
3 children, families and communities as the foundation of  
4 educational programs that prepare every student for academic  
5 success;

6 (2) engage families from diverse cultures in a  
7 positive way in their children's education by:

8 (a) fostering safe and welcoming school  
9 environments for children, families and community partners;

10 (b) building effective and consistent  
11 methods of communications between schools and families;

12 (c) supporting families in developing  
13 skills that enhance their children's academic efforts and their  
14 development as responsible members of society; and

15 (d) helping school professionals and  
16 community partners to learn to work comfortably with diverse  
17 families and to view these families as valuable sources of  
18 information about their children;

19 (3) inform families that they can directly  
20 affect the success of their children's learning and offer  
21 families various techniques and strategies to improve their  
22 children's academic success or to assist their children in  
23 learning at home, if they desire; and

24 (4) integrate family and community engagement  
25 programs, including compliance with the provisions of the

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1 Family and Community Engagement Act, into a school's master  
2 plan for academic accountability.

3 B. Each local school board shall, in conjunction  
4 with parents, teachers, administrators and community partners,  
5 establish a family and community engagement program for each  
6 school in the school district. The local school board shall:

7 (1) ensure that parents, families and  
8 community partners participate in the planning, design,  
9 implementation and evaluation of the family and community  
10 engagement program;

11 (2) provide for regular and periodic programs  
12 throughout the school year that offer learning opportunities  
13 for families, school personnel and community partners in areas  
14 such as:

15 (a) the ability of families and  
16 community partners to directly affect the success of a child's  
17 learning through the support given at home, at school and by  
18 the community;

19 (b) home activities, strategies and  
20 materials that can be used to assist and enhance the learning  
21 of children at home and at school;

22 (c) the developmental needs of children,  
23 positive guidance techniques and ways for families, teachers  
24 and community partners to build healthy relationships with  
25 children; and

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1 (d) the ability of families and schools  
2 to develop consistent and effective communications concerning  
3 the progress of the children in school and concerning school  
4 programs;

5 (3) prepare an annual statement identifying  
6 specific objectives of the program; and

7 (4) conduct an annual review and assessment of  
8 the program's progress in meeting its objectives, which shall  
9 be made available to families and the community.

10 C. A family and community engagement program may  
11 include any of the following:

12 (1) a plan to encourage participation by  
13 families from diverse cultures;

14 (2) a program that builds on parenting  
15 strengths, that helps families develop the skills that they  
16 desire and that facilitates networks to support families in  
17 effectively nurturing their children;

18 (3) a communication element that provides an  
19 effective two-way communication process to enable school staff  
20 to reach families, both individually and collectively, and to  
21 ensure that families and school staff communicate back and  
22 forth about their children;

23 (4) a home learning element that provides for  
24 families and school staff to work together in developing  
25 learning goals and that offers opportunities for learning

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1 activities at home and in the community;

2 (5) a volunteer element that recruits and  
3 organizes volunteer participation from families and the  
4 community at large;

5 (6) a governance and advocacy element that  
6 provides a democratic governance structure that ensures that  
7 families are partners in policymaking about school programs and  
8 that family representatives are elected to act as advocates or  
9 decision-makers for other parents and families;

10 (7) a community outreach element that  
11 establishes partnerships with individuals and organizations in  
12 the community; or

13 (8) a plan to encourage parents to visit  
14 schools, which may include providing an area designated as a  
15 family center in each school."

16 SECTION 4. A new section of the Public School Code is  
17 enacted to read:

18 "[NEW MATERIAL] STATEWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE--CREATION.--In  
19 order to institutionalize family and community engagement  
20 programs across the state, the department shall establish  
21 structures and positions with well-defined responsibilities and  
22 accountability to promote genuine family and community  
23 engagement."

24 SECTION 5. A new section of the Public School Code is  
25 enacted to read:

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1           "[NEW MATERIAL] STANDARDS FOR FAMILY-SCHOOL

2 PARTNERSHIPS.--The standards for family-school partnerships  
3 are:

4           A. welcoming all families. Families shall be  
5 active participants in the life of the school and feel  
6 welcomed, valued and connected to each other, to school staff  
7 and to what students are learning and doing in school;

8           B. communicating effectively. Families and schools  
9 shall engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication  
10 about student learning;

11           C. supporting student success. Families and school  
12 staff shall continuously collaborate and support students'  
13 learning and healthy development both at home and at school and  
14 have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and  
15 skills to do so effectively;

16           D. speaking up for every child. Families shall be  
17 advocates for their own and other children to ensure that  
18 students are treated fairly and have access to learning  
19 opportunities that will support their success;

20           E. sharing power. Families and school staff shall  
21 be equal partners in decisions that affect children and  
22 families and together inform, influence and create policies,  
23 practices and programs; and

24           F. collaborating with the community. Families and  
25 school staff shall collaborate with community members to

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1 connect students, families and staff to expand learning  
2 opportunities, community services and civic participation."

3 SECTION 6. APPROPRIATION.--Seventy-five thousand dollars  
4 (\$75,000) is appropriated from the general fund to the public  
5 education department for expenditure in fiscal year 2017 to  
6 distribute to local school districts to design and implement  
7 family and community engagement programs. Any unexpended or  
8 unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2017  
9 shall revert to the general fund.

10 SECTION 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the  
11 provisions of this act is July 1, 2016.