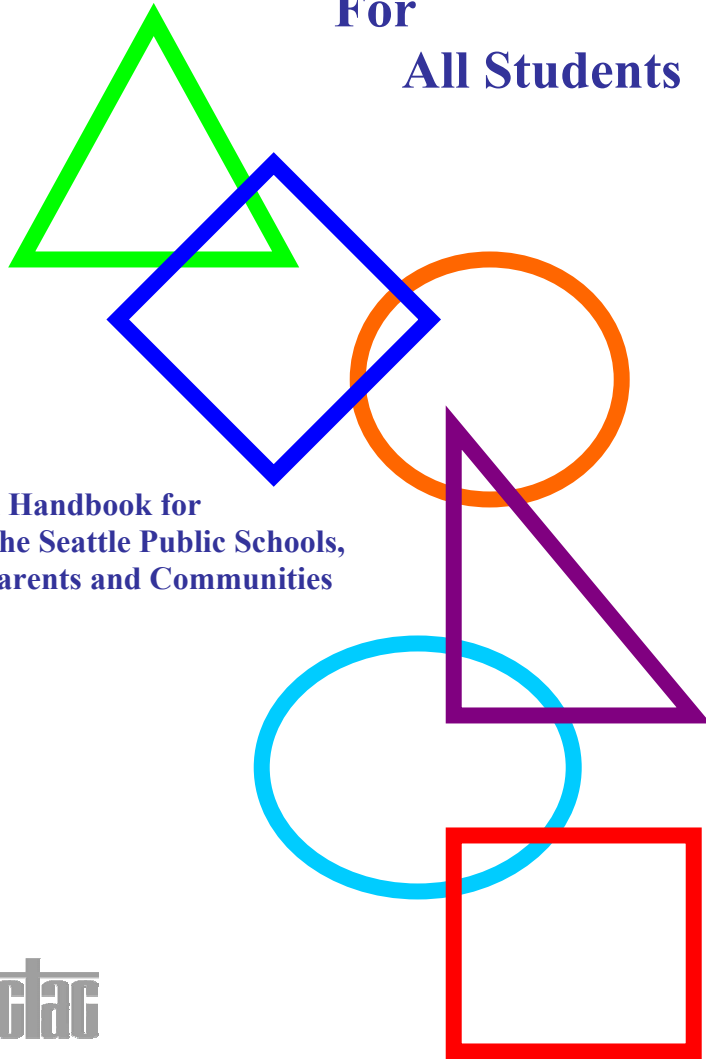


Working Together on

**Academic Success
For
All Students**



**A Handbook for
The Seattle Public Schools,
Parents and Communities**



This handbook is available from the Seattle Public Schools in the following languages:

- Amharic
- Cambodian
- Chinese
- Lao
- Somali
- Spanish
- Tigrigna
- Vietnamese



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INTRODUCTION

Every Student Can Achieve Academic Success

This handbook is presented as a guide for parents, school staff and community organizations that are interested in supporting the academic success of students.

Parents,¹ schools and community organizations² contribute to the success of students in different ways. Each has critical information and an important perspective. Together, they complete the educational support system for students.

Working together, schools, community organizations and families can create:

- High expectations for all students;
- A caring, supportive learning environment at school, at home and in the community;
- A high quality educational program with appropriate resources and materials, skilled teaching staff and extra support as needed to help students learn; and
- An educational team (students, schools, families and community) that coordinates efforts.

Sharing information, asking questions and finding solutions are key steps in a parent-school-community partnership that supports student academic progress for each child and every school.

¹ The word “**parents**” includes primary caretakers or guardians, foster parents and grandparents.

² “**Community organizations**” are government, non-profit, and faith-based groups that support families and student success in various ways. Examples include family centers, neighborhood centers, social service agencies, youth organizations, parent associations, churches and other organizations that offer community programs or services.

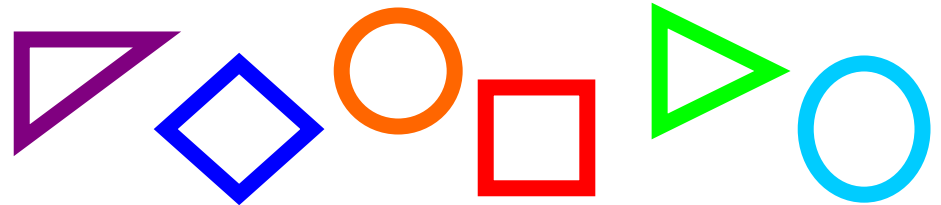
CONTENTS

This handbook contains eight topics related to the academic success of students. For each topic, important information and tips are provided. The topics can be used as a starting place for communication between parents, school staff and community organizations. Additionally, the handbook provides useful resources and contacts.

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. School Buildings as Welcoming, Safe Places of Learning	3
2. Classroom Learning	5
3. Report Cards and Progress Reports	6
4. Standardized Tests	7
5. Education Plans for Individual Students	9
6. Programs and Assistance for Students	11
7. School District Improvements	13
8. Questions and Concerns	15

<u>Resources and Contacts</u>	<u>Page</u>
No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Overview	1
Seattle Public Schools’ Family Partnership Policy	16
Additional Resources	17

Please share the information in this handbook as well as your own ideas and suggestions with others.



NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB) OVERVIEW

NCLB is a national education law. The purpose of NCLB is to provide all children with a “fair, equal and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education.” With NCLB, public schools must demonstrate the academic progress of students. Schools must have qualified teachers and demonstrate they are safe.

NCLB gives parents and the community the right to be informed about the progress of students and schools, and the right to become involved in planning and solutions. NCLB provides a basis for schools, parents and the broader community to work together for the education of children and the improvement of schools and school districts.

The NCLB Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 2002, is currently being implemented in the Seattle Public Schools and across the country. Following are some of the provisions and requirements of NCLB.

Student Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students in public schools take standardized tests to measure what they have learned. • Results can be compared by school and progress measured yearly. • Schools in the State of Washington use the WASL test. Schools may use other tests for measuring progress of some students with disabilities. • Schools distribute individual student test results to parents, demonstrating the specific academic needs of children.
Teacher Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the end of the 2005-2006 school year, all teachers of academic subjects must be highly qualified. • A highly qualified teacher is one with full certification, a bachelor’s degree and demonstrated competence in subject knowledge and teaching.
School Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yearly, districts provide information about school performance and teacher qualifications in a school report card that is available to parents and the community. • When a school demonstrates low academic performance and lack of progress for two or more years: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – School districts must notify parents and explain how parents can be involved in school improvement efforts. – If a school continues to demonstrate lack of progress in the third year, students may be eligible to receive extra academic assistance (Supplemental Educational Services). – Parents are provided options for transferring students to higher-performing schools.
School Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on school safety and drug use is collected by the state and is available to parents, schools and community leaders. • Parents of children who have been victims of violent crime at school or attend “persistently dangerous schools” are offered school choice.
School Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts are required to involve parents in planning education improvements at individual schools and in planning reforms that impact education throughout the school system.

1. SCHOOL BUILDINGS AS WELCOMING, SAFE PLACES OF LEARNING

Schools Visits

Seattle Public Schools encourages parent and community participation in the classroom, in school activities and at school-sponsored meetings. Parents are welcome to observe classroom activities which should be scheduled in advance. Parents and other visitors must enter through the main office when they arrive at the school building.

Safety and Discipline Policies

Every school has safety and discipline policies to maintain a positive, orderly place of learning. Copies are available upon request at the school's main office. Parents, school staff and community leaders should become familiar with these policies, ask questions and/or offer suggestions for improvements.

The national No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires information be shared with parents and members of the community about school safety and student drug use so they can work with schools to improve any problems.

Tips

- **Parents, students, school staff and community members** of diverse backgrounds respect each other and share their experiences and special skills with each other.
- **Schools:**
 - Offer events for all families including open house or back-to-school nights.
 - Provide child care and translation services.
 - Provide a meeting space away from interruptions where parents and/or community organizations can work together with school staff and students.
 - Sometimes conduct school events and meetings in neighborhoods and other community facilities where families can more easily participate.
 - Integrate multi-cultural awareness into academic work, celebrations and the school environment.
- **Parents and schools** know how to contact each other in an emergency.
- **Parents** know the bus stops and/or safe walking routes for students.
- **Parents and school staff** discuss safety and discipline concerns and together they find solutions.

Other Suggestions:

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- _____

2. CLASSROOM LEARNING

Student Learning

Parents, school staff and community organizations can better assist students if they know what students are expected to learn in the classroom.

The Seattle Public Schools has established *academic standards* that define *what* students need to learn in *each* school subject at *every* grade level. These standards meet state guidelines and local needs. For a copy of the academic standards or questions about those standards, ask a teacher or a school principal or go to the Seattle Public Schools website to read the standards for each subject by grade level.

www.seattleschools.org/area/acastan/index.dxml

Tips

- **Schools** invite parents to visit the classroom.
- **Parents** go to schools to find out what teachers are teaching and see students' work.
- **Parents** and **teachers** discuss what students are expected to learn and the ways each child learns best at school orientations, parent-teacher conferences and/or other meetings.
- **Parents** and **community organizations** provide quiet places for students to work on homework.
- **Parents** ask students what they are working on in class (at least once a week) and review textbooks and materials used by students.
- **Teachers** inform students, parents and other community partners about activities, projects and homework planned for the semester or year.
- **Parents** and **community organizations** ask school staff what they can do to help students learn.

Other Suggestions:

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3. REPORT CARDS AND PROGRESS REPORTS

Student Progress

The Seattle Public Schools provides all parents with a report on student progress in the form of a report card and/or progress report several times per year. Teachers determine how well students are doing in class based on student tests, homework, projects and participation in class.

The policy of Seattle Public Schools states that students are promoted to the next school level only when they have achieved the academic requirements of the previous level.

Tips

- **Schools** provide report cards and progress reports that are clear and understandable to parents. Translation services are provided when needed.
- **Parents** know when report cards or progress reports are scheduled to arrive at home.
- **Teachers** are available to answer questions and discuss report cards with parents.
- **Parents** call or come to the school if they have questions or concerns about the reports.
- **Parents** know teachers' names and how to reach them at school (by phone, email, or by appointment).
- **Teachers** and **school staff** have parent information so they can be in communication about student progress.
- **Teachers** and **parents** discuss the progress and strengths of students, not only failures or concerns. They discuss strategies to help students improve.
- **Parents** and **students** discuss report cards together to identify progress, challenges or difficulties, and strategies for improvement appropriate for the age of the student.

Other Suggestions:

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4. STANDARDIZED TESTS

Standardized Tests and Assessments

Students in all grades are given tests to determine what they have learned. These include standardized tests or assessments that are given to students across the state and country. Some schools also collect samples of student work in a student portfolio. Although these assessments do not usually affect students' report card grades, they are important for:

- Finding out what students already know and what they need to learn.
- Providing a way for parents, schools and community leaders to know how students and schools are doing compared to others in the state and in the country.
- Determining which educational efforts are working and what might require changes or improvements.

The national No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that public schools use standardized tests to measure the academic success of students. In Seattle, students take the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) test in the spring of every year beginning in the third grade and continuing through high school. The results of student tests are mailed to parents.

Other assessments used by schools to measure progress include:

- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (**DIBELS**): elementary school reading and writing skills assessment
- Washington Language Proficiency Test (**WLPT**): assessment tool for students with limited English skills
- Developmental Reading Assessment (**DRA**)
- Direct Writing Assessment (**DWA**)
- Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (**PSAT**): college readiness assessment for high school students

Tips

- **Schools** inform parents of the student assessment schedule.
- **Parents** help students get ready for the tests with proper rest, nutritious food and on-time arrival at school.
- **Schools** mail WASL test scores (and other assessment results) to parents.
- **Schools** and **community groups** sponsor workshops to help parents understand assessment results.
- **Parents** carefully review assessment results and compare them with the year before, if possible. Any questions or concerns are taken to teachers, counselors or other school staff.
- **Parents** know if their child's test scores for each subject are low, average, or high, compared with other students at that grade level.
- **Teachers** and **parents** discuss assessment results at parent-teacher conferences or other meetings with school staff. They develop specific strategies to improve student learning.
- **Schools, parents** and **community leaders** join together to review school test data. They develop creative solutions to assist students and schools that are not demonstrating adequate progress.

Other Suggestions:

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5. EDUCATION PLANS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

Academic Goals

Every student should have age-appropriate goals for education shared by the family and school. With guidance and support, students will be able to meet those academic goals.

Support from Schools, Families and Community Organizations

Report cards and assessments provide important information to guide teachers, families and community organizations in supporting student academic goals. Support can take many forms. Familiarity with each student and family is important for providing appropriate support.

Parents can get help with planning a student's educational path from teachers, counselors, other school staff and community organizations. In the Seattle Public Schools, parents have the right to be involved in all decisions regarding their child.

Tips

- **Teachers** help students and families set student academic goals and support high expectations for students.
- **Schools** offer parent-teacher conferences or meetings with parents that support the ongoing progress of students and address problems or challenges that arise.
- With the support of school staff, **parents** investigate school options, magnet school programs, optional classes and other choices within the public schools to determine the best direction for the student.
- **Parents** seek opportunities to enrich the school curriculum with programs and services in the community for students such as sports, arts, music and community service activities.
- **School staff** and **community organizations** help parents identify opportunities in the community to support educational goals.
- **Schools, parents** and **community organizations** work together to ensure programs in and out of school are best for the child.
- **Parents, teachers, counselors** and **community organizations** work together to prepare students for college and other options beyond high school.

Other Suggestions:

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6. PROGRAMS AND ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENTS

Academic Tutoring and Assistance

A variety of after-school, weekend and summer programs are available for students. Academic tutoring and other programs may be offered by schools, at community centers, through local churches and from other sources.

Parents can find the options for their child by contacting the school, local community organizations and other parents. A program can be selected based on the needs of the student, eligibility, location, cost and other factors.

The national No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requires that schools provide free tutoring and extra help for children needing assistance if a school has been identified by the state as “needing improvement” for three or more years. Parents may ask if these services (called “Supplemental Educational Services”) are available at their child’s school.

Student Intervention Teams (SIT) are set up to find appropriate solutions for students having difficulties in the classroom. These teams may involve students, parents, teachers, counselors or other school staff.

Individualized Education Plans (IEP) are developed to support students who have specific learning challenges or disabilities by providing appropriate learning programs and services. The IEP is established by a parent-school team and includes other community agencies as needed.

Tips

- **Parents, school staff and community organizations** work together to find appropriate solutions for students needing special services.
- **Parents** inform teachers about academic programs students are involved in outside of school.
- **Parents, school staff and service providers** regularly communicate to ensure everyone is aware how the student is progressing and if changes are needed.

Other Suggestions:

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7. SCHOOL DISTRICT IMPROVEMENTS

Making Schools Better

To improve education for every child, school systems must constantly improve. Students, parents, community leaders and school staff need to communicate the problems they experience, suggest improvements and participate in solutions for better schools.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires school districts to involve parents in planning school improvements. School districts also must publish a school report card telling parents and the community how each school is doing. The school report card includes WASL results for the school and other information such as the number of students per teacher and the percentage of students that finish high school. This data can help to determine what is working well in schools and what needs improvement.

When parents, schools and community organizations review data and plan school improvements together, they ensure the success of the school and every child.

Tips

- **Schools** and **parents** establish parent-teacher associations (PTAs) at each school that are inclusive of families in the school. They develop an agenda that supports student and school success.
- **Schools, parents** and **community leaders** participate in meetings to review and discuss the school's performance data together. They identify successes to be supported and problems to be solved.
- **School staff** and **parents** develop school transformation plans for each school, every year, that identify top priorities and specific steps to improve the school.
- **School staff** and **parents** are part of decision-making at the school, including how money will be spent (the school budget).
- **Parents** actively participate in committees or advisory councils to advise the Seattle Public Schools on issues ranging from transportation and facilities to the development of new programs and policies.
- **Parents** know when school board meetings are held. Parents voice their opinions and become involved in solutions for the Seattle Public Schools.
- **Community organizations** identify and communicate education needs and opportunities, based on their work in the community and areas of expertise. They help identify solutions that can be worked on together with parents and schools.

Other Suggestions:

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8. QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Communication

Good communication between parents, schools and community organizations is essential for creating a strong educational support system for students. Everyone involved in this system must be willing to share information, ask questions and work together to find solutions that benefit students.

Tips

- **Parents and teachers** meet, in person, at the beginning of the school year at a school open house or orientation, a scheduled meeting in the home or school, or a meeting place in the community.
- **Schools** provide an opportunity for parents to meet the school principal early in the school year.
- **Parents, school staff or community organization staff** make appointments in advance (if possible) when they have questions or concerns about student academic progress to discuss with each other.
- **Parents, school staff and community organization staff** allow time in any conversation or meeting for listening to each other.
- **Schools** keep sensitive student information confidential according to Seattle Public Schools privacy policies.
- **Parents, teachers** and other **school staff** attempt to resolve questions or concerns regarding individual students before involving the school principal.
- **Parents** or representatives from **community organizations** with continued unresolved questions or concerns contact Seattle Public Schools' Customer Service department at (206) 252-0010.

Other Suggestions:

- _____
- _____

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Seattle Public Schools Family Partnership Policy

“It is the policy of the Seattle School Board to encourage and support family involvement in education, at home, in our schools and communities, and in school governance. The Board recognizes the diversity of family structures, circumstances, and cultural backgrounds and respects families as important decision-makers for their children’s education. The Board is committed to the creation and implementation of culturally inclusive and effective school-family partnerships throughout the School District and in each school, and believes these partnerships to be critical to the success of every student.”

(Seattle Public Schools Policy F05.00,
Adopted August 2004)

Additional School Board policies of interest to parents and the community include:

- Communication with Community
- Citizen Advisory Groups and Committees
- Citizen Advisory Committee Procedure
- Complaint Procedure for Citizens
- Community Cooperation
- Parent Teacher Organization
- Public Participation in Board Meetings
- Use of Volunteers
- Visitors to Schools

These and other policies related to students, schools and learning can be viewed on the Seattle Public Schools website (www.seattleschools.org) or by contacting the central administrative offices.

