

# Parent and Family Advocacy Handbook



ATLANTA  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS



**Center for Equity  
+ Social Justice**

Office of the Organizational Ombuds

ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS | CENTER FOR EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

# Office of the Organizational Ombuds

## Parent and Family Advocacy Handbook

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The Parent and Family Advocacy Handbook is a resource for parents, guardians, and families to assist in supporting their children's academic and developmental growth.

Information provided within the handbook has been developed for the purpose of aiding families in:

- Understanding rights and responsibilities as an Atlanta Public Schools parent or guardian.
- Enhancing knowledge of policies, procedures, and communication strategies used by schools.
- Developing a knowledge of resources and best practices for navigating within school and the larger district community.
- Gaining skills to advocate on behalf of their student at school.
- Learning how to communicate with their student's school and locate helpful resources.

The handbook contains answers to frequently asked questions and provides information to assist in parents and guardians in connecting with the school district and becoming advocates for their students.

### Section I- Parent Advocacy Defined

Parents and guardians play an important role throughout their child's education. Parents can understand and communicate the needs of their child(ren) to support educational growth and success. APS encourages parents and guardians to be develop relationships with teachers, principals, and administrators to articulate the unique needs of your student(s).

### Section II- How to Advocate for Your Student

Suggested strategies for communicating and advocating on behalf of your child include:

#### Engage With Your Student's School

- 1.) Introduce yourself to your student's teacher(s), school principal, and front office staff.
- 2.) Volunteer at your student's school or in the classroom.
- 3.) Join the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) for your child's school.
- 4.) Stay up to date on school communication tools (newsletters; email notifications, and social media announcements).

#### Ask Questions and Ask for Help

- 1.) Know your rights and responsibilities as an APS Parent.
- 2.) Report any concerns that your child has regarding mental health or Special Education needs.

- 3.) Ask questions to seek clarity and gain additional information as needed.
- 4.) Ask for help if you or your child need assistance.
- 5.) If your student is being bullied, document the facts, and contact your child’s teacher or school administrators to ask for help.

## Maintain Communication

- 1.) Sign-up for all electronic portals and communication channels assigned to your child’s school.
- 2.) Provide up to date contact information to your child’s school to ensure that you, or a designated contact can be reached in case of an emergency.
- 3.) Keep in touch with your child’s teacher(s) throughout the year.
- 4.) Save a list of important telephone numbers and email addresses for contacting teachers, school, and district personnel.

## Section III- Connecting with Your Student’s School- Who to Contact?

The leadership and staff of Atlanta Public Schools is here to provide service and support to you and your student(s). Parents and guardians are encouraged to build channels of communication with the teachers and school leaders. Strategies for staying connected with your child’s school include:

- Maintain a list of important school and district telephone numbers and email addresses.
- Sign-up for Infinite Campus and other applicable portals for parent access.
- Learn the channels for how your student’s school communicates with parents (social media; newsletters; calls; the school website).
- Familiarize yourself with platforms and online tools that may be utilized by your student’s school for calendar updates, assignments, and school activities (e.g., Google Classroom; MyBackpack, etc.)

## Staying Connected- Who to Contact?

<b>Teacher</b>	If you have questions, begin with your child’s teacher. Email or call the teacher with questions or concerns. It may also be beneficial to schedule an appointment.
<b>Assistant Principal</b>	If additional information is needed, or your concerns involve a teacher or other staff member, contact an Assistant Principal assigned to your student’s grade level, or the department to which the teacher is assigned.
<b>School Principal</b>	If your child’s teacher, or the assigned Assistant Principal is unable to resolve your concerns, email the School’s Principal to schedule an appointment.
<b>Associate Superintendents</b>	Associate Superintendents and their teams provide direct support and oversight to schools across the district. Associate Superintendents are responsible for building the capacity of school-based leadership teams to meet the needs of students. Email the Associate Superintendent assigned to serve your child’s school if you are

	unable to resolve your concern with the assigned school-level teachers or leadership.
<b>Office of the Superintendent</b>	If you are unable to resolve your concerns, or need additional assistance, contact the Office of the Superintendent, or your designated School Board member.

If you are unsure of the appropriate department or individual to contact regarding your concern, or navigating within APS, you may contact the [Office of the Organizational Ombuds](#).

## Translation Assistance

Translation and interpretation services are available at no charge to parents and guardians who require assistance in understanding all district and school related information. Multilingual Programs + Services provides support to all families, schools, and departments within Atlanta Public Schools.

APS parents, guardians or students who need assistance in a language other than English may call **404-802-7580**.

## Section IV- Navigating Within APS

Atlanta Public Schools is organized into nine high school clusters that consist of a high school, middle, and elementary schools. The cluster model ensures continuity for students and allows APS to create strategies that increase student performance while providing more support, opportunity, and equity.

### [Find your School Cluster and Zone](#)

## APS GO TEAM Information

APS GO Teams are Local School Governance teams responsible for collaborating with school leaders to provide input regarding the school's strategic plan, budget, flexibility requests and other matters impacting the school community. GO Teams are comprised of school stakeholders who are both elected and appointed for service.

Every APS school has a GO Team. Visit the [GO Team webpage](#) to learn more about the team for your school.

## Section V- Parent Expectations and Responsibilities

Atlanta Public Schools encourages parent involvement in the education of their student(s). The Code of Student Conducts outlines key focus areas related to parent participation, expectations, and responsibilities.

### **PARENTS/GUARDIANS MAY EXPECT:**

- To be actively involved in their child's education
- To be treated respectfully by the school principal, teachers, and other staff
- To access information about the Atlanta Public Schools (Board) policies and procedures
- To be notified promptly if their child is disciplined for inappropriate or disruptive behavior and informed of the consequences assigned
- To appeal disciplinary actions taken by the student disciplinary hearing officer
- To receive information about their child's academic and behavioral progress

### **PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- To read and become familiar with the APS Student Code of Conduct
- To make sure their child attends school regularly, on time, and to notify the school before the school day begins if their child is absent
- To give their child's school accurate and current contact information and to update that contact information when and if it changes
- To tell school officials about any concerns or complaints respectfully and in a timely manner
- To work with the school principal, teachers, and other staff to address any academic or behavioral concerns regarding their child
- To talk with their child about the behavior expected in school
- To support their child's learning and school activities at home
- To be respectful and courteous to staff, other parents, guardians, and students
- To respect the privacy rights of other students

*Source: Atlanta Public Schools Board Policy: JCDA-R (1)*

## Section VI- Important APS Resources

Parent Resources	<a href="#"><u>Virtual Parent Resource Center</u></a>
Family Engagement	<a href="#"><u>Office of Family Engagement</u></a>
Ombuds Stakeholder Support	<a href="#"><u>Office of the Organizational Ombuds</u></a>
Student Services	<a href="#"><u>Department of Special Education</u></a>
	<a href="#"><u>Department of Intervention and Support</u></a>
	<a href="#"><u>Department of Student Assignment and Records</u></a>
	<a href="#"><u>Department of Student Discipline</u></a>
Interpretation/ Translation Services	<a href="#"><u>Multilingual Programs + Services</u></a>
Transportation Services	<a href="#"><u>Pupil Transportation Department</u></a>
Questions, Concerns, Feedback	<p><a href="#"><u>Let's Talk</u></a></p> <p><i>* The Let's Talk platform allows students, parents, and stakeholders to contact the district to share questions, concerns, or feedback. Submitting questions or concerns through the Let's Talk platform provides an additional avenue to connect with APS.</i></p>