

Quick Brief on Family Engagement in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015

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The purpose of Title I: “ To provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.”

I. Overview:

1. What looks the same, or *mostly the same*:

- States will test all students each year in grades 3-8, and once in high school, in both reading and mathematics. Testing in science will be once per grade span.

A new provision will allow up to seven states to pilot test new kinds of assessments that would then be deployed in districts across the state.

- States will need to report assessment data at the school level disaggregated for groups of students – by race/ethnicity, income, students with disabilities, and English learners.

Despite previous waiver policy, states will no longer be able to combine groups of students into “super-subgroups” for accountability purposes.

- Similar to the Priority Schools approach in the current waiver policy, states must identify the lowest performing 5% of schools based on test results and graduation rates. States also need to identify schools where specific subgroups of students are struggling – similar to today’s Focus School approach.

At least initially, however, local districts will have greater discretion in how they support these schools.

2. What looks *different*:

- **States will have greater autonomy to select academic and non-academic indicators for accountability.** They must include and give greatest weight to: proficiency on state assessments, another academic indicator (such as student growth rates), and English language proficiency. In addition, they must include at least one non-test indicator, such as student engagement, completion of advanced coursework, post-secondary readiness, etc. High schools will also need to include graduation rates.
- **States are pretty much on their own to set school performance goals based on these indicators.** States will need to set goals that call on improvement from all groups of students, but faster progress for students that start out farther behind.
- **ESSA does not include any federal requirements for teacher evaluation, as in the current waiver policy, or for highly-qualified teachers, as in NCLB.**

II. Title I parent and family engagement (Note: no longer parent involvement) (Items highlighted in yellow are new with ESSA)

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District policy:

(1) ***In general*** -- A school district may receive funds under this part ***only if***:

- **It conducts outreach to *all* parents and family members;**
- Implements programs, activities, and procedures to involve parents and family members in Title I programs.
- Plans and implements such programs, activities, and procedures with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children.

(2) ***Written policy***: Each school district that receives Title I funds ***shall*** develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents **and family members** of participating children a written **parent and family engagement** policy. In addition, the policy ***shall*** be incorporated into the district's plan, **establish the agency's expectations and objectives for meaningful parent and family involvement**, and describe how the agency will:

- ***Jointly develop district plan***: Involve parents and family members in jointly developing the district plan under section 1112, and developing support and improvement plans under section 1111(d).
- ***Build school capacity***: Provide coordination, technical assistance and other support to assist and build the capacity of all participating schools within the district in planning and implementing effective parent and family involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance. **This may include meaningful consultation with employers, business leaders, and philanthropic organizations, or individuals with expertise in effectively engaging parents and family members in education;**
- ***Link to family engagement in other programs***: Coordinate and integrate these parent and family engagement strategies with engagement strategies within other relevant Federal, State, and local laws and programs (to the extent feasible and appropriate);
- ***Jointly evaluate***: Conduct, with meaningful parent and family involvement, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parent and family engagement policy in improving the academic quality of Title I schools, including identifying:
 - ☐ ***Barriers*** to greater participating by parents in Title I activities (with focus on parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background;
 - ☐ ***The needs*** of parents and family members to assist with the learning of their children, including engaging with school personnel and teachers;
 - ☐ ***Strategies*** to support successful school and family interactions;
- ***Improve the programs based on evaluation findings***: Use the evaluation findings to design evidence-based strategies for more effective parent involvement, and to revise the parent and family engagement policies;

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- **Involve parents in the activities of Title I schools:** These activities *may* include establishing a parent advisory board comprised of a sufficient number and representative group of parents or family members served by the district to adequately represent the needs of the population served by the district for the purposes of developing, revising, and reviewing the parent and family engagement policy.

(3) Reservation of funds for parent and family engagement

- **Minimum 1 percent:** Each district *shall* reserve *at least* 1 percent of its Title I allocation to assist schools to carry out the parent and family engagement activities (except for districts where 1 percent of the district grant is \$5,000 or less). **This provision shall not limit districts from reserving more than 1 percent.**
- **Parent and family input:** Parents and family members of children receiving Title I services *shall* be involved in the decisions regarding how these funds reserved are allotted for parent involvement activities.
- **Distribution of funds:** Not less than **90 percent** of the funds reserved *shall* be distributed to schools served under this part, with priority given to high-need schools.
- **Use of funds:** Funds reserved by the district *shall* be used to carry out activities and strategies consistent with the district's parent and family engagement policy, including *at least* 1 of the following:
 - a. **Professional development:** Supporting schools and nonprofit organizations in providing professional development for local educational agency and school personnel regarding parent and family engagement strategies, which may be provided jointly to teachers, principals, and other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, early childhood educators, and parents and family members.
 - b. **Home-based programs:** Supporting programs that reach parents and family members at home, in the community, and at school.
 - c. **Disseminating information:** Informing on best practices focused on parent and family engagement, especially best practices for increasing the engagement of economically disadvantaged parents and family members.
 - d. **Collaborating with community-based organizations:** Providing subgrants to schools so they can collaborate, with community-based or other organizations or employers with a record of success in improving and increasing parent and family engagement.
 - e. **Other activities:** Engaging in any other activities and strategies that the local educational agency determines are appropriate and consistent with such agency's parent and family engagement policy;

School parent and family engagement policy

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(1) ***In general***: Each Title I school ***shall*** jointly develop with, and distribute to, parents and family members of participating children a written **parent and family engagement** policy that shall meet these requirements:

- Agreed on by parents,
- Describes the means for carrying out the requirements that follow,
- Notifies parents of the policy in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand,
- Made available to the local community and updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school.

(2) ***Special rule***: If the school has a parent involvement policy that applies to all parents **and family members**, such school ***may*** amend that policy to meet these requirements.

(3) ***Amendment of existing policy***: If the district has a school district-level parent and family engagement policy that applies to all parents and family members in all district schools, the district ***may*** amend that policy to meet the requirements of this subsection.

(4) ***Parent comments***: If the school district plan is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, the district ***shall*** submit any parent comments along with the plan when submitting the plan to the State.

Parent and family policy involvement at the school

Each school served under this part ***shall***:

(1) ***Annual meeting***: Convene an annual meeting, at a convenient time, to which all parents of participating children shall be invited and encouraged to attend, to inform parents of their school's participation in Title I and to explain the program requirements, and the right of the parents to be involved;

(2) ***Additional meetings***: Offer a flexible number of meetings, such as meetings in the morning or evening, and ***may*** provide, with Title I funds, transportation, child care, or home visits, as such services relate to parental involvement;

(3) ***Review and improvement of the program***: Involve parents, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs. This includes the planning, review, and improvement of ***both*** the school parent and family engagement policy, and the joint development of the **schoolwide program plan**. Except: if a school already has a process for involving parents in the joint planning and design of the school's programs, the school may use that process, if such process includes an adequate representation of parents of Title I children;

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(4) **Required information for parents:** The school *must* provide parents of participating children:

- Timely information about programs under this part;
- A description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the **achievement levels of the challenging State academic standards**; and
- **If requested by parents**, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to their children's education, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible.

(5) **Parent Comments:** If the **schoolwide program plan** is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, the school shall include any parent comments on the plan when the school makes the plan available to the district.

Shared responsibility for high student academic achievement: School-Parent Compact

As a component of the school-level parent and family engagement policy developed under this section, each school served under Title I **shall** jointly develop with parents for all Title I children a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards.

The compact shall:

(1) **Describe shared responsibility:** The school's responsibility is to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children served under Title I to meet the challenging State academic standards. The parents' responsibility is to support their children's learning; volunteer in their child's classroom; and participate, as appropriate, in decisions about the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time;

(2) **Describe parent-teacher communications:** Address the importance of ongoing communication between teachers and parents through, at a minimum:

(A) Parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as it relates to the individual child's achievement;

(B) Frequent reports to parents on their children's progress;

(C) Reasonable parent access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities; and

(D) **Regular two-way, meaningful communication between family members and school staff, and, to the extent practicable, in a language that family members can understand.**

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Building dual capacity for involvement

To ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a school-parent-community partnership to improve student achievement, each Title I school and district **SHALL**:

(1) Provide assistance to parents of children served by the school or district, as appropriate, in understanding such topics as the challenging State academic standards, State and local academic assessments, the requirements of Title I, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children;

(2) Provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology (**including education about the harms of copyright piracy**), as appropriate, to foster parent involvement;

(3) Educate teachers, **specialized instructional support personnel, principals and other school leaders, and other staff**, with the assistance of parents:

- In the value and utility of parents' contributions,
- In how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners,
- In how to implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school;

(4) To the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate parent involvement programs and activities with **other Federal, State, and local programs, including public preschool programs**, and conduct other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents to participate more fully in their children's education.

(5) Ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the parents of participating children in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand;

(6) Provide such other reasonable support for parental involvement activities under this section as parents may request

In addition, each Title I school and district **MAY**:

(1) Involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of such training;

(2) Provide literacy training from Title I funds received if the district has exhausted all other reasonably available sources of funding for such training;



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- (3) Pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with local parent involvement activities, including transportation and childcare costs, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions;
- (4) Train parents to enhance the involvement of other parents;
- (5) Arrange school meetings at a variety of times, or conduct in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, with parents who are unable to attend such conferences at school, in order to maximize parental involvement and participation;
- (6) Adopt and implement model approaches to improving parental involvement;
- (7) Establish a district wide parent advisory council to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement in Title I programs supported under this section;
- (8) Develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities;

Accessibility

In carrying out the Title I parent and family engagement requirements, districts and schools, to the extent practicable, shall provide opportunities for the **informed participation of parents and family members (including those who have limited English proficiency, those with disabilities, and those with migratory children)**, including providing information and school reports required under section 1111 in a format, and, to the extent practicable, in a language such parents understand.

Family Engagement in Education Programs

In a State operating a program under part E of title IV, each local educational agency or school that receives assistance under this part **shall** inform parents and organizations of the existence of the program

State Education Agency Review

The State educational agency **shall** review the local educational agency's **parent and family engagement** policies and practices to determine if the policies and practices meet the requirements of this section.