

The Parent and Family Engagement Connection

Home & School

"Together We Can Make a Difference"



Parent & Family Engagement Statewide Initiative Updates

The Parent and Family Engagement Statewide Initiative is meeting with PFE representatives from each Education Service Center to get input on new resources needed, what resources need updating, and what events we could host that will increase parent engagement across the entire state. We continue to firmly believe that in the cohesion of home, school, and the community comes the betterment of our children and our society.

The Initiative attended the 2023 ACET (Association for Compensatory Educators of Texas) Spring Conference that was held in April where we increased our knowledge and understanding of the diverse needs of our entire state, as well as the techniques, strategies, and practices happening and showing success across the entire nation. We also presented on the requirements laid out in section 1116 of the Every Student Succeeds Act in hopes to share what we have gathered, learned, and researched regarding Parent and Family Engagement.



UPCOMING EVENTS

2023 Parent and Family Engagement Statewide Conference on October 4-6, 2023 in Corpus Christi, Texas. Register here: www.statewideparents.com

School Transitions

Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher once said, "The only constant in life is change." Transition periods in life as well as school are proof of this. Many children struggle with transitioning to new environments, especially in school, around their peers, while they themselves are growing and developing. No matter the transition situation, there are certain tips parents can keep in mind during these trying times.

1. **Talk about emotions:** Throughout their life, children will experience a range of emotions. Continually and consistently talk to your child about how they're feeling and encourage them to express their emotions in healthy ways. Reassure them that you are there to support them. When they face social pressures and conflicts, talk to them about it and help them develop strategies for navigating these challenges.
2. **Stay involved:** Stay involved in your child's education by attending school events, volunteering in the classroom, and staying in communication with the teacher. This is just as important in middle school, high school and beyond as it is in elementary school.
3. **Celebrate milestones:** Celebrate your child's milestones, no matter how small. Every step in life is a big step, and your child will be continuously learning and growing, no matter their age. Celebrating their accomplishments throughout their life can help them feel confident and proud of themselves.
4. **Encourage independence:** Independence is gained slowly throughout a lifetime. Parents can help guide children to independence in steps such as:
 - a. At younger ages, encourage your child to do things on their own, such as dressing themselves, using the bathroom, and carrying their own backpack.
 - b. Adolescence is a time of many changes. Encourage your child to take responsibility for their schoolwork, organize their own materials, and advocate for themselves when they need help.
 - c. Young adults need guidance just as much as any age group. Encourage your child to take responsibility for their decisions, manage their finances, and advocate for themselves when they need help. Guide them to resources to help them, research with them if needed, and allow them to come to their own conclusions.

There are also some transition specific tips parents can keep in mind for different transition times when their children are at specific ages.

Daycare/Home to Pre-K Program or Kindergarten

- **Read books about kindergarten:** Reading books about kindergarten can help your child understand what to expect and feel more comfortable about starting school. Look for books that are age-appropriate and that your child can relate to.
- **Attend orientation:** Many schools offer orientation programs for new kindergarteners and their parents. Attend these events to meet the teachers, learn about the curriculum, and get a sense of the school environment.
- **Create routines:** Establishing routines can help your child feel more secure and prepared for school. Create a morning routine that includes getting dressed, eating breakfast, and packing their backpack. Also, establish a bedtime routine to ensure your child gets enough sleep.
- **Practice social skills:** Kindergarten is a time when children start to develop social skills. Encourage your child to interact with other children, share toys, and take turns.
- **Foster a love of learning:** Kindergarten is a time when children start to develop a love of learning. Read books, play educational games, and engage in other learning activities with your child to help them develop a love of learning.
- **Build a positive relationship with the teacher:** Building a positive relationship with your child's teacher can help you stay informed about your child's progress and support their learning. Be sure to discuss what communication method works best for you. Remember that they are trained in education and learning, you are the expert on all aspects related to your child.

Elementary to Intermediate or Middle/Junior High

- **Visit the school:** Many middle schools offer orientation programs for new students and their parents. Attend these events to meet the teachers, learn about the curriculum, and get a sense of the school environment.
- **Help them stay organized:** Middle school can be overwhelming with multiple teachers, assignments, and schedules. Help your child stay organized by providing them with a planner or digital calendar, and teach each them how to prioritize their work.

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School Transitions

- **Encourage healthy habits:** Middle school is a time when children's bodies and brains are still developing. Encourage your child to get enough sleep, eat healthy foods, and engage in physical activity to support their overall health and well-being.
- **Foster good study habits:** Middle school is a time when academic demands increase. Help your child develop good study habits, such as setting aside a dedicated time and space for homework, breaking down larger assignments into manageable parts, and reviewing their work before submitting it.
- **Foster a love of learning:** Middle school is a time when children start to develop their own interests and passions. Encourage your child to explore new subjects, extracurricular activities, and hobbies to foster a love of learning.

Intermediate or Middle/Junior High to High School

- **Help them stay organized:** High school can be overwhelming with multiple classes, assignments, and extracurricular activities. Help your child stay organized by providing them with a planner or digital calendar, and teach them how to prioritize their work.
- **Foster good study habits:** High school is a time when academic demands increase. Help your child develop good study habits, such as setting aside a dedicated time and space for homework, breaking down larger assignments into manageable parts, and reviewing their work before submitting it.
- **Encourage healthy habits:** High school is a time when children's bodies and brains are still developing. Encourage your child to get enough sleep, eat healthy foods, and engage in physical activity to support their overall health and well-being.
- **Encourage them to explore their interests:** High school is a time when children start to explore their interests and passions. Encourage your child to take electives and extracurricular activities that align with their interests and goals.
- **Help them plan for the future:** High school is also a time when children start to think about their future goals and plans. Help your child explore different career paths, colleges, and other post-secondary options that align with their interests and goals.
- **Support their emotional and mental health:** High school can be a stressful and challenging time for children. Support your child's emotional and mental health by encouraging them to take breaks when needed, seek help when necessary, and engage in activities that promote well-being, such as exercise and mindfulness.

High School to Post-Secondary or Work

- **Help them plan for the future:** Help your child research and plan for their future goals, whether it's college, trade school, or work. Encourage them to explore their interests and passions, and help them find resources and opportunities to achieve their goals.
- **Teach them life skills:** Help your child learn essential life skills, such as managing finances, cooking, doing laundry, and basic household chores. These skills will prepare them for living on their own and managing their own affairs.
- **Foster good communication:** Encourage your child to maintain good communication with you and other family members. Teach them to express their needs and concerns, and encourage them to listen to and respect other people's viewpoints.
- **Encourage healthy habits:** Encourage your child to maintain healthy habits, such as getting enough sleep, eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and taking breaks when needed. These habits will support their overall health and well-being.
- **Encourage time management:** College or work can be busy and overwhelming. Encourage your child to develop good time management skills, such as using a planner or digital calendar, setting priorities, and breaking down large tasks into manageable parts.
- **Support their emotional and mental health:** College or work can be stressful and challenging. Support your child's emotional and mental health by encouraging them to take breaks when needed, seek help when necessary, and engage in activities that promote well-being, such as exercise and mindfulness.
- **Let them make mistakes:** Allow your child to make mistakes and learn from them. These experiences will help them grow and develop important life skills. Encourage them to take risks and embrace new experiences, even if they may be challenging or outside their comfort zone.

Parent Information on the School-Parent Compact



Family involvement in a child's education is twice as predictive of student academic success as family socioeconomic status. Because of that, schools are working to ensure regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities. Our goal is for families:

- to play an integral role in assisting their child's learning,
- to be encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school,
- to be full partners in their child's education,
- to be included in the decision-making,
- to be invited to serve on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child, and
- to be included in other activities that are carried out as described in the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Any school that accepts Title I, Part A funds, is required to jointly develop with parents 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. At the elementary level, it is required that this compact be discussed as it relates to the individual child's achievement, at an annual parent-teacher conference. All other levels are required to distribute this compact to every parent of participating children. This compact is required to outline:

1. The school's responsibilities:

- High-quality curriculum & instruction,
- A supportive & effective learning environment,
- Opportunities to volunteer in their child's classroom,
- Opportunities for participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to,
 - The education of their children and
 - The positive use of extracurricular time.

2. The parent's responsibilities:

- Supporting their child's learning,
- Volunteering in their child's classroom,
- Participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to:
 - The education of their children, and
 - Positive use of extracurricular time.

3. The student's responsibilities:

ESSA 1116 does not specify what the student's responsibilities are. This needs to be determined by local education agencies via their Campus Needs Assessment or other methods.

4. Addresses the importance of on-going communication between teachers & parents; such as:

- Annual Conferences (elementary- must discuss compact),
- Frequent progress reports,
- Access to staff, volunteering opportunities, classroom observations, and
- Regular two-way, meaningful communication (in a language family understands).

Now that it is the spring semester of the school year, this compact should have already been put into place and distributed. Title I, Part A funded schools should also have hosted PFE activities throughout the year, and might still have some planned. The spring is a good time for schools to review and improve their PFE programs, activities, and procedures including the School-Parent Compact. This process needs parent and family input, so please talk to your school about how you can help improve parent and family engagement at your child's school, as well as how you can give feedback on the PFE program and its procedures.

Adapted from **Strategies for a Successful Summer Break**
 Tips for managing your kids' downtime to help make it relaxing for everyone
 Writer: Beth Arky
 Clinical Expert: Clark Goldstein, PhD



While your child may be thrilled by the end of the school year, anticipating lazy days and sleeping in, the prospect of summer break isn't quite that unalloyed pleasure for parents. Here are some tips to help keep your child on track so summer can be as rewarding as possible for everyone in the family:

Maintain your schedule

While you may never be able to duplicate the structure school provides, it helps to maintain the school year's daily schedule, right down to meal times and bedtime, as much as possible. It can be very tempting to let your kids stay up late and sleep in—especially on weekends, when you want to do the same—but in the long run, sticking to the same

schedule pays off by keeping your child more comfortable, and hence more cooperative.

Make plans

Try to schedule as many activities as possible, as early as possible, and keep your kids posted. This can mean anything from “we're going to Aunt Mary's Thursday at 5pm for dinner” to having a set routine that every day, weather permitting, you'll be going to the playground or pool. Even one such activity can give kids a center of gravity, so to speak, around which the rest of the day can be structured.

Get outdoors

Home can become a safe cocoon, but no child should spend hours in front of a screen. Even if camp isn't in the cards, try to find something your child enjoys—riding a bike or scooter, playing tag, or splashing at the community pool, water park, or beach—and do it. Plus, physical activity is good for everyone's mind, body and spirit, especially those kids with energy to burn.

Maintain—or create—a behavioral system

Children and teens, especially, may act like they want to be in charge, but the truth is they feel safer knowing exactly what you expect of them and the rewards that result from good behavior. This is never truer than during the seemingly boundless—and boundary-free—summer break. You should choose the two or three most desired positive behaviors to nurture with consistent and positive reinforcement, and try to ignore as many of the negative ones as possible. This teaches kids the definite rewards of desired behavior, and that acting out gets them nothing—not even negative attention. A chart with stickers for tasks accomplished can work wonders as positive reinforcement for preschool children. And remember: if you have limits, such as 30 minutes a day of earned computer time, you should stick to them.

Find support

Don't feel bad booking a sitter and spending time with friends; it'll help you keep from feeling marooned, and your well-being is critical to caring for your child. If you can't afford a sitter, close friends with or without kids can also provide good company and support for parents, even if mom or dad is still doing the supervising and discipline. It's always nice to have an extra adult or even an older child around to help keep an eye on yours.

Pinpoint your child's anxieties

Summer can bring camp, new activities, and different authority figures like new sitters, all which can be stressful. First, says psychologist Clark Goldstein, you need to figure out your child's fears, whether it's separating from you or striking out at baseball. If you're having trouble doing this, try asking open-ended questions. Rather than pose a yes-or-no question like “Are you worried about camp?” ask “How are you feeling about going to camp?” Once you know, you can encourage her to face her fear. The goal is to teach her that feeling anxious is uncomfortable but anxiety will ebb if you push through it.

Give the child time to adjust

A technique called gradual exposure is a good way of relieving a child's anxiety about a new experience. For instance, says Dr. Goldstein, if he has separation anxiety or social anxiety—he's worried that others won't like him or he'll embarrass himself in baseball—you might watch the entire first game. The next time, you could stand further back or leave at an appointed time. Eventually, you'll be able to drop off your now-comfortable child. It can also be helpful to give those working with him a head's up, without overstepping your bounds. Your goal is to set your child up for success; that includes making sure all the adults are on the same page.

Prepare yourself for some tough times

Even with the best-laid plans, you may see some regression and worsening behavior over vacation. Give yourself a break for not being able to magically avoid it. And be ready to hold your ground in as calm, firm, and consistent a manner as possible. Yelling or becoming physical only escalates things, while giving in teaches your child that if he screams loud enough, he'll get what he wants.

Summer Meal Programs Help Texas Children Stay Healthy, Active

Every summer, no-cost meals are available for children 18 and younger and enrolled students with disabilities up to age 21 in low-income areas. Federally funded Summer Meal Programs make it possible for food banks, schools, and other nonprofits to serve these meals in a supervised and welcoming setting. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) oversees the federal programs in Texas for sponsors serving meals and encourages families to access this source of good nutrition when school cafeterias are closed for summer.

On June 1, meal sites will begin opening in communities across Texas. Families have the following three tools they can use from June 1-August 30, to find a meal site:

- Dial 211 to speak to a live operator
- Visit www.SummerFood.org for an interactive site locator map
- Text FOOD to 304-304

In addition to finding a site, it is important for families to use these tools frequently to confirm dates and times and get more information about how meals will be served. Families are encouraged to call, text, or go online, and connect with meal sites throughout the summer to access healthy meals for young Texans.



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The Parent and Family Engagement Connection is posted on our website four times a year for parents and educators of Texas. This newsletter is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, German, Tagalog, Korean, and is also published on SMORE.

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