Thomas County Schools
System Parent and Family Engagement Policy/Plan
School Year 2025-2026
Revision Date 5/20/25

In support of strengthening student academic achievement, Thomas County Schools receives Title I, Part A funds and therefore must jointly develop with, agree on with, and distribute to parents and family members of participating children a written parent and family engagement policy that contains information required by Section 1116(a)(2) of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The policy establishes the LEA's expectations and objectives for meaningful parent and family engagement and describes how the LEA will implement a number of specific parent and family engagement activities, and it is incorporated into the LEA's plan submitted to the Georgia Department of Education.

The Thomas County School System agrees to implement the following requirements as outlined by Section 1116:

- The school district will put into operation programs, activities, and procedures for the engagement of parents and family members in all of its schools with Title I, Part A programs. These programs, activities, and procedures will be planned and operated with meaningful consultation with parents and family members of participating children.

- The school district will work with its schools to ensure that the required school-level parent and family engagement policies meet the requirements of Section 1116(b) of the ESSA, and each include as a component a school-parent compact consistent with federal law.

- In carrying out the Title I, Part A parent and family engagement requirements to the extent practicable, the school district and its schools will provide full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, limited literacy, disabilities, of migratory children, who are economically disadvantaged, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background, including providing information and school reports required under Section 1111 of the ESSA in an understandable and uniform format including alternative formats upon request and, to the extent practicable, in a language parents understand.

- If the LEA plan for Title I, Part A, developed under Section 1112 of the ESSA, is not satisfactory to the parents of participating children, the school district will submit any parent comments with the plan when the school district submits the plan to the state Department of Education.

- The school district will be governed by the following definition of parental involvement / family engagement and expects that its Title I schools will carry out programs, activities, and procedures in accordance with this definition in Section 8101 of the ESSA:

  Family Engagement means the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:

  (A) Parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning,
  (B) Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school,
  (C) Parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child, and
  (D) Other activities are carried out, such as those described in Section 1116 of the ESSA.

Part II: DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE SYSTEM WILL IMPLEMENT REQUIRED SYSTEM-WIDE PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT POLICY COMPONENTS

JOINTLY DEVELOPED

The Thomas County School System will take the following actions to involve parents and family members in jointly developing its LEA plan under Section 1112, and the development of support and improvement plans under paragraphs (1) and (2) of Section 1111(d) of the ESSA:

The district will provide coordination and technical assistance to schools to facilitate parent and family engagement in the planning, review, and improvement of family engagement programs and activities, which include the District and School level Family Engagement Policy, the Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan (CLIP), and School Improvement/Title I Schoolwide or Targeted Assistance Plans, and if applicable the Comprehensive Support and Improvement and the Targeted Support and Improvement Plans. The Assistant Superintendent for Federal Programs reviews surveys in the spring and uses results to improve the family engagement program. Building level meetings are held to engage stakeholders in the review and update of annual plans listed above. Ideas and suggestions are researched and discussed with parents, teachers, and administrators. Teachers and administrators are encouraged to review and respond to parent suggestions.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Thomas County School System will provide the following coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist and build capacity of all Title I, Part A schools in planning and implementing effective parent and family engagement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance, which may include meaningful consultation with employers, business leaders, and philanthropic organizations, such as Thomas County Head Start, local pre-school providers, parent resources centers and other individuals with expertise in effectively engaging parents and family members in education:

Parent Involvement Coordinators are employed to work with the Assistant Superintendent for Federal Programs to provide coordination, technical assistance, and other support services in planning and implementing effective family engagement. Parent Involvement Coordinators provide assistance at Title I schools by meeting with parents individually and in groups, by providing transportation and child care when appropriate for parent workshops, and by providing translation of information when needed. Programming will be coordinated to assist families in transitioning to elementary, middle, high, and post-secondary schools or careers.

Parent and family engagement activities at the system level are coordinated between our Title I programs in our schools. Title I, Part A activities are also coordinated with the Early Intervention Program (EIP), Title I, Part C Migrant Education Program, Title III English to Speakers of Other Languages Program (ESOL), Title VI Exceptional Education, Title XI McKinney-Vento program, and our Preschool Program. In addition, parent and family engagement activities are coordinated with community-wide programs such as Family Connection, Literacy for Thomas County, Thomasville Community Resource Center, Business Education Exchange Partnerships (B.E.E.), Thomas County Homeless Coalition, The Treehouse Children's Advocacy Center, and Hands On Thomas County Volunteers.

ANNUAL EVALUATION

The Thomas County School System will take the following actions to conduct, with the meaningful engagement of parents and family members, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of this parent and family engagement policy in improving the academic quality of its Title I, Part A schools. The evaluation will include identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in activities (with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background). The evaluation will also include identifying the needs of parents and family members to assist with the learning of their children, including engaging with school personnel and teachers and strategies to support successful school and family interactions. The school district will use the findings of the evaluation about its parent and family engagement policy to design evidence-based strategies for more effective parental involvement, and to revise, if necessary, its parent and family engagement policies.

Thomas County Schools maintains a Parent Advisory Council (PAC), comprised of a sufficient number and representative group of parents and family members served by Thomas County Schools to adequately represent the needs of the population for the purposes of developing, revising, and reviewing the parent and family engagement policy. The Assistant Superintendent of Federal Programs is responsible for conducting PAC meetings on behalf of the System. PAC meetings are held each fall and spring to review the content and effectiveness of family engagement on the quality of our Title I school-wide programs. Parents, administrators, and Parent Involvement Coordinators from the Title I schools, along with system administrators, participate in these yearly meetings. Information is gathered and recorded from parents concerning barriers to parental involvement in all subgroups including economically disadvantaged, disabled, limited English proficient, limited literacy, and racial or ethnic minorities. Parents are also encouraged to complete surveys from the Parent Involvement Coordinators. Results from these annual reviews and from the surveys are used to evaluate and update the System Family Engagement Policy and school based family engagement plans. These results are also used to design evidence-based strategies for more effective family engagement activities for the following school year.

RESERVATION OF FUNDS

The Thomas County School System will involve the parents and family members of children served in Title I, Part A schools in decisions about how the 1 percent of Title I, Part A funds reserved for parent and family engagement is spent and will ensure that not less than 90 percent of the 1 percent reserved goes directly to Title I schools.

Thomas County Schools shares the annual budget for parent and family engagement activities and programs during the system PAC each year. Each spring the system solicits feedback and input from parents and family members to evaluate and identify activities and programs for future implementation. Parents and family members also complete surveys in the spring of each year to provide input on how the 1 percent reservation is spent. For FY26, the following activities will be implemented:

(a) hiring parent and family engagement coordinators at Title I schools to implement family engagement activities;
(b) providing professional development for school personnel regarding parent and family engagement strategies;
(c) supporting programs that reach parents and family members at home, in the community, and at school;
(d) disseminating information on best practices focused on increasing the engagement of economically disadvantaged parents and family members; and
(e) collaborating with community-based agencies, organizations, or employers with a record of success in improving parent and family engagement.

COORDINATION OF SERVICES

The Thomas County School System will coordinate and integrate parent and family engagement strategies with parent and family engagement strategies, to the extent feasible and appropriate, with other relevant Federal, State, and local laws and programs: Title I, Part A, Early Intervention Program (EIP), Title I, Part C Migrant Education Program, Title III English to Speakers of Other Languages Program (ESOL), Title VI Exceptional Education, Title XI McKinney-Vento program, and our Preschool Program, to encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children by:

Additionally, parent and family engagement activities are coordinated with community-wide programs such as Family Connection, Literacy for Thomas County, Thomasville Community Resource Center, Thomas County Head Start, 21st Century Learning, Business Education Exchange Partnerships (B.E.E.), Thomas County Homeless Coalition, The Treehouse Children's Advocacy Center, Hands On Thomas County Volunteers, and school booster groups. The school system uses a phone conference system in order to provide translation for parents on an as needed basis. Meeting notices and workshop materials are made available in print and online via school and district webpages. Families in need of translation are provided avenues to request support for meetings, school events, and workshops.

BUILDING CAPACITY OF PARENTS

The Thomas County School System will, with the assistance of its Title I schools, build parents' capacity for strong family engagement by providing materials and training on such topics as literacy training and using technology (including education about the harms of copyright piracy) to help parents work with their children to improve their children's academic achievement. Assistance will also be provided to parents in understanding the following topics:

- The challenging state academic standards;
- The state and local academic assessments including alternate assessments;
- The requirements of Title I, Part A;
- How to monitor their child's progress; and
- How to work with educators.

Parents are provided a handbook at the beginning of each school year that describes and explains the school curriculum. Written information and parent workshops are provided to explain assessments used to measure student progress and proficiency. Report cards are sent home to parents, and open houses are held regularly at each school. School newsletters and the system publications are available to parents in print and on the system website. Parent Involvement Coordinators maintain a page on their school's website that provides parent support information. Each Title I school also has a parent resource center with a variety of free materials and items that can be borrowed, including computers to be used on site. Title I schools will plan parent workshops to present strategies parents and family members can use to support their child's academic achievements, such as literacy training and using technology (including the harms of copyright piracy) to foster parent and family engagement.

BUILDING CAPACITY OF SCHOOL STAFF

The Thomas County School System will, with the assistance of its schools and parents, educate its teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, principals, and other school leaders, and other staff in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and schools by:

System federal programs staff and school level Parent Involvement Coordinators provide professional learning opportunities and printed material throughout the school year for administrators, faculty, and staff to develop an understanding of the value of parental involvement. Parent Involvement Coordinators maintain a page on the school website to share information about outreach methods that are effective in establishing partnerships between families and schools. Certified and classified school personnel are encouraged to include parents as equal partners in the education process. Learning opportunities are not limited to local events but may include participation in regional, state, or national conferences. Teachers and staff are informed of the responsibility to communicate information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities to parents in a format, to the extent practicable, in a language that parents can understand.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INVOLVEMENT

The Thomas County School System provides additional discretionary activities for parent and family engagement that the school system, in meaningful consultation with its parents, chooses to undertake to build parents' capacity for engagement in the school and school system to support their children's academic achievement, such as the following discretionary activities listed under section 1116(e) of ESSA:

- **Trainings:** involving parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of that training;

  Parent Involvement Coordinators at each school solicit parent input in planning ongoing staff development training for system employees.

- **Literacy Training:** providing necessary literacy training for parents from Title I, Part A funds, if the school system has exhausted all other reasonably available sources of funding for that training;

  Parent Involvement Coordinators are able to connect families with resources that will enable them to support development of student literacy.

- **Expenses to Enable Participation:** paying reasonable and necessary expenses associated with parent and family engagement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions;

  Parent Involvement Coordinators serve as the point of contact for families that experience difficulty in participating in school related events and activities. They work with principals and district administrators to ensure transportation and childcare needs are met such that parents are able to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions.

- **Parent Leadership:** training parents and/or family members to enhance the involvement of other parents and family members;

  Parent Involvement Coordinators develop a core group of parent volunteers that are available to support the academic mission of their school. As such, these volunteers serve as parent leaders that have the potential to enhance the involvement of other parents and family members. Volunteer orientation is conducted in the fall of each school year and additional training is scheduled by each coordinator as needed.

- **Flexible Options:** maximize family engagement and participation in their children's education by arranging school meetings at a variety of times, or conducting in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, and with parents who are unable to attend those conferences at school;

  Each Title I school has a designated Parent Involvement Coordinator who ensures that school meetings are conducted at a variety of times and is available to communicate the content of meetings in family friendly terms. Coordinators also facilitate difficult to schedule conferences and are available to conduct in-home conferences and teleconferences between teachers or other educators who work directly with participating children, and with parents who are unable to attend those conferences at school.

- **District Parent Advisory Council:** establishing a system wide parent advisory council to provide advice on all matters related to parent and family engagement in Title I, Part A programs.

  The System Parent Advisory Council is established annually to include membership of representative parents from each school. The PAC meets twice annually, and may meet more often by request.

- **Community and Business Roles:** developing appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses, including faith-based organizations, in family engagement activities.

  The system organizes a group of supportive business partners called the Business Education Exchange. This group is facilitated by school and district representatives and serves to provide avenues for partners to implement activities of mutual support.

ADOPTION

This LEA parent and family engagement policy has been developed jointly and agreed on with parents and family members of children participating in Title I, Part A programs, as evidenced by sign-in sheets, and minutes from System Parent Advisory Council meetings conducted in the spring of the 2024-2025 school year.

This policy was adopted by the Thomas County School Board of Education on June 10, 2025 and will be in effect for the period of the 2025-2026 school year. The school district will distribute this policy to all parents of participating Title I, Part A children on or before September 1, 2025.

Superintendent

Board Chair

June 10, 2025