

Understanding ESSA 1116 Family Engagement Law:
A Guide for Parents

Your child's success starts with us working together. Parent and Family Engagement (PFE) is all about uniting our schools, our district and your family to give your child the brightest possible future.

The District's Requirement (LEA Policy)

A school district or charter school that receives Title I, Part A funding must promise to:

- **Reach out** to every parent and family member of students in this program.
- Co-create activities and programs with families of students participating in the Title I program as part of the district's Title I plan. This plan helps families become a partner in their child's education.
- **Create a written PFE policy** with the help of parents and families of students in the district.
  - The policy must specify the resources needed for family partnership and the school's strategy to support it.
  - This PFE Policy must also be distributed to parents and family members of students in the Title I program.
- **Give schools in their district help and advice** so they can have effective PFE programs.
- **Review the written PFE policy every year with parents** to see what's working and what needs to be fixed.
  - The families involved in the review and evaluation process should represent the diverse backgrounds and needs of the students served by Title I.
  - **Identify barriers** to participation - like parents who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, are limited in English, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background.
  - Use the findings of this evaluation to design strategies for more effective involvement.
- **Set aside at least 1% of the money** for parent involvement activities. This applies only if the school district receives $500,000 or more per year from this program.
  - **Parents must help the district decide** how this money is spent, and most of it must go to the school campuses for programs and activities that support effective partnerships with families.

The School's Requirement (School Policy)

Each school that gets Title I funding must also work with families to write its own PFE policy.
The school must:

- Co-create activities and programs with families of students participating in the school's Title I program to help families become a partner in their child's education.
- Parents must be invited to write a PFE Policy to help plan and improve the school's family partnership programs.
  - The policy must specify the resources needed for family partnership and the school's strategy to support it.
- **Share the policy** with parents in a clear and easy-to-read way, and in a language they can understand.
- In Texas, schools must hold at least **two Annual Title I Meetings** to explain the program and tell parents they have the right to be involved. These meetings must be held on different days and at different times of day - to allow more parents to attend.
- Give parents information that describes and explains what students are learning, the curriculum being used, how the school checks their student's progress, and what the state expects students to know.
- The school will also hold regular meetings where families are invited to share ideas and help make decisions about their child's education.

The School-Parent Compact

Each school who gets these funds must work with parents to create a **School-Parent Compact** - an agreement that explains how **parents, school staff, and students** will all work together for the student's success. The compact can be part of the School PFE Policy.

The compact must include and explain:

- **What the school promises** to do to give students a high-quality education. It must describe:
  - The curriculum it will use to educate its students.
  - How it will help students meet academic goals set by the state.
- **Ways parents and families can help their students.** For example:
  - How they will support learning at home.
  - Encouraging daily school attendance.
  - Volunteering at their child's school, if they can.
- **Ways to keep in touch,** like:
  - Parent-Teacher Conferences (at least once a year in elementary schools)
  - Regular updates on the student's progress.
  - Ways for parents to talk to school staff and watch classroom activities.

Supporting Families' Ability For Building Strong Partnerships

Both the district and the school must help families become equal partners in their child's education. They must:

- **Help parents understand** things like state learning goals, school tests (including the STAAR test), and how to track their child's learning progress.
- **Offer parents tools and training** (like helping with their child's reading and math or how to use technology).
- The district will work **with parents** to **train teachers and staff** on how important parents and families are, the value parents bring to teaching students, and how to work with parents as partners to help students be successful.
- **Share information** about school events and programs in an easy-to-understand way and in the family's language.
- **Find ways to remove roadblocks** so parents can attend meetings to help their students be successful.

Include All Families

Schools and districts must do their best to **include all parents and family members.** This is very important for families who:

- Don't speak or read English well or need any kind of translation service.
- Have disabilities that make partnership more challenging.
- Move often for work.