

Overview of Parental Involvement Under ESSA

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) serves as the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) which was last reauthorized in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Since its inception, the intent of the law has been to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps. Parent and family engagement and consultation have always been a key piece of the law, focused on the low-income parents of “Title I-participating” children. We know that gaps in educational opportunity and achievement will only be remedied when those closest to the affected students – parents, families, and communities – are driving decision-making.



QUICK REVIEW OF THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA): WHAT'S IN IT FOR PARENTS?

The most important thing to know is that the major requirements of districts and schools to engage parents and families are the same in the new law, including:

1. The School District must offer programs and activities to involve parents and family members, and seek meaningful consultation with parents.
 - Develop with parents a written parent and family engagement policy
 - Build schools' capacity to engage families
 - Evaluate its family engagement policy and practices, with meaningful input from familiesInvolvement in the activities of Title I schools
 - Reserve at least 1% of its Title I funds to support parent and family engagement activities; involve parents in deciding how to use these funds.
2. Title I schools must:
 - Develop with parents a written policy, agreed on by parents, that describes how the school will carry out its required family engagement activities
 - Hold an annual meeting for families to explain the program and the rights of parents to be involved and offer other meetings, at flexible times
 - Involve parents in the planning, review and improvement of the Title I program
 - Develop a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, students, and school staff will share the responsibility for improving student achievement, and that describes how parents and teachers will communicate.
3. The school district and Title schools must build capacity for involvement:
 - Offer assistance to parents in understanding the education system and the state standards, and how to support their children's achievement
 - Provide materials and training to help parents work with their children
 - Educate teachers and other school staff, including school leaders, in how to engage families effectively
 - Coordinate with other federal and state programs, including preschool programs
 - Give parents information in a format and language they can understand
 - Provide reasonable support that parents may request.

What's New?

- Statewide Family Engagement Centers replace Parental Information Resource Centers (PIRCs) in the new legislation, with \$10 million allocated; until PIRCs were defunded in 2011 they regularly received in the area of \$40 million, but received no funds between 2012 and 2015.
 - Of the 1% of Title I funds mandated to fund family engagement, the school district now must send 90% of funds directly to the school; previously it was 95%
 - In many places the law uses the term "parent and family engagement" rather than parental involvement.
 - In the district policy, the district must establish its expectations and objectives for meaningful parent and family engagement.
 - Schools may establish a parent advisory board to represent families in developing and evaluating the school policy.
 - The district must carry out **at least one** of the following strategies to engage families effectively: professional development for school staff (and may include parents); home-based programs; information dissemination; collaboration with community organizations; and other related activities.

RESOURCES:

- What's in it For Parents:
<http://nafsce.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ESSA-Review.pdf>
- Quick Brief on Family Engagement in Every Student Succeeds Act
<http://ra.nea.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/FCE-in-ESSA-in-Brief.pdf>
- Parent and Family Engagement Provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act
<http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/ESSA-Parent-Family-Engagement.pdf>

