



Parental Involvement

September 2009

The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB Act) expands parents' vital role in their children's education. With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), *No Child Left Behind* became law in 2002. The law holds Title I schools more accountable than ever for helping all children succeed. NCLB gives parents more information, more options, and more help than ever before.

NCLB requires that all school districts in America that receive Title I funds have a written parent involvement policy. This policy must be developed jointly with and agreed upon by both educators and parents. It must be given to parents and educators of children participating in Title I programs. The policy must be evaluated every year to guarantee that worthwhile strategies to encourage and maintain parental involvement are in place. It must explain how the district will involve parents in developing its Title I plan and how parents will be informed about ways they can be included in decision-making for the program.

What are Title I schools required to do?

- Title I schools are required to develop with parents a written parent involvement policy that is then agreed upon and made available to parents and the local community.
- Title I schools are required to notify all parents of the policy in an understandable format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand.
- Title I schools are required to hold a yearly meeting of parents to inform them of the policy and their right to be involved. The meeting must be scheduled at a time that is convenient for families.
- Title I schools must offer a flexible number of parent involvement meetings (such as meetings in the morning and evening) and may use Title I money to provide child care, transportation, or home visits as they relate to parental involvement.
- Title I schools must involve parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of school programs, including the planning, review, and improvement of the school parental involvement policy.
- Title I schools must develop with parents a school-parent agreement that details how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement.
- Title I schools must determine how the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's academic standards.
- Title I schools are required to increase opportunities for parent involvement in the school by helping parents understand academic content standards, academic achievement standards, and assessments.
- Title I schools must provide materials and training to help parents keep an eye on their children's progress and to work with their children and educators to improve the success of the children.
- Title I schools must provide materials and training for parents, teachers, and other school personnel to promote greater parent involvement and strengthen ties between parents and the school.
- Title I schools must try to combine parent involvement activities with other school programs including Head Start, English as a Second Language (ESL), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and others.

Why is parental involvement necessary?

“Three decades of research provide convincing evidence that parents are an important influence in helping their children achieve high academic standards. When schools collaborate with parents to help their children learn and when parents participate in school activities and decision-making about their children’s education, children achieve at higher levels. . . .when parents are involved in education, children do better in school and schools improve.” (Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education)

Studies have found that students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, are more likely to—

- ✓ Earn high grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs.
- ✓ Pass their classes, earn credits, and be promoted.
- ✓ Attend school regularly.
- ✓ Graduate and go on to post-secondary education.

What can parents do to be involved?

The law requires Title I schools to guarantee that each parent involvement policy statement be written together with parents, school staff, and school district personnel. This requirement allows parents to sit at the table with school administrators and other educators and write a parent involvement statement. This statement should address how the school—in partnership with parents—will promote the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. By law, parents are required to be part of the discussion about how schools will help all children meet the state’s academic performance standards. (Source: Parents Reaching Out, New Mexico PIRC)

- **Ask for a copy of your school’s Parent Involvement Policy.** Take time to review it and ask to meet with the principal or superintendent if you need more information.
- **Ask how parents were involved in developing, approving, and reviewing the policy.** NCLB says the policy must be developed jointly with parents and agreed on with parents.
- **Ask what notification requirements apply for school parental involvement policies.** A school served under Title I must notify parents of its written parental involvement policy in an understandable format and, to the extent practicable, in a language parents can understand. Each school must make its written parental involvement policy available to the local community.
- **Ask what information schools must provide parents.** Schools served under Title I must provide a description and explanation of the school’s curriculum, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and information on the proficiency levels students are expected to meet.
- **Ask if the policy explains how parents, including those with limited English proficiency, will be involved in school review and improvement.** Districts must state how parents will be involved in addressing academic issues for schools receiving Title I funds. In order to keep parents up to date, schools must invite parents of children participating in Title I programs to informational meetings.
- **Ask which parents are eligible to participate in parental involvement activities.** All parents are eligible to participate in parent involvement activities. However, a schoolwide program should ensure that its parent involvement activities include the parents of the lowest-achieving students in order that they may better assist in the education of their children.

For the full Non-Regulatory Guidance and sample parental involvement policy agreement forms, call the US Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at (202) 260-0826, or go online at www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta.

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