



Applying Title I, Part A Parent and Family Engagement Requirements

Companion Guide for Educators and Administrators

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is committed to supporting local education agencies (LEAs) in implementing effective, equitable, and evidence-based parent and family engagement practices as a core component of school improvement. Consistent with the requirements and intent of the [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#), parent and family engagement is not a stand-alone activity but an essential strategy for improving school climate, educator effectiveness, and student academic outcomes.

Title I, Part A Parent and Family Engagement is a required, evidence-based, and equity-driven component of school improvement under ESSA. NJDOE expects school districts to move beyond compliance-based approaches and toward authentic partnerships that build capacity, improve school climate, and support student success for all learners.

The Purpose of Title I, Part A Parent and Family Engagement

The purpose of Title I, Part A Parent and Family Engagement in schools is to enhance students' educational experiences by creating a strong, supportive partnership between schools and families. Effective parent and family engagement helps foster an environment that promotes learning, development, and overall student success.

Specifically, Title I, Part A Parent and Family Engagement aims to:

- Improve academic achievement by involving the parents and families of Title I-eligible students as active partners in their child's education.
- Support positive behavior, social skills, and social-emotional learning.
- Promote healthy development and well-being, while preventing unhealthy or risky behaviors.
- Establish shared responsibility between schools and families for student learning and success.
- Build parents' and family members' capacity to serve as learning partners throughout their child's educational journey.

Parent and family engagement is a continuous process that evolves as students grow. Regulatory frameworks such as the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** ensure parent and family engagement is grounded in best practice and benefits all students.

This document is designed to help educators and administrators reflect on and apply Title I, Part A Parent and Family Engagement requirements in practical, meaningful ways that align with ESSA requirements, NJDOE priorities, and federal funding expectations. It is intended to be used alongside

the video *Parent and Family Engagement: What Educators and Administrators Need to Know* and the supporting guidance and resources available on the [New Jersey Department of Education Title I Parent and Family Engagement](#) page. The video introduces you to information about Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Section 1116 that explains the responsibilities schools have to support Parent and Family Engagement. Schools and districts may find it especially useful as an annual review or beginning-of-year refresher to assess current practices, identify gaps, and plan next steps for strengthening partnerships with families.

Key Terminology

Title I, Part A is a federal program that provides schools and districts with additional funding to help academically at-risk students meet state learning standards. Your school's Title I, Part A programs provide resources and additional academic opportunities for students who need support in meeting New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS).

Targeted Assistance Programs use Title I funds to provide extra academic support to students who are identified through objective, educationally related criteria as needing enrichment to strengthen their learning.

Schoolwide Assistance Programs provide Title I services to *all* students in a school.

Parent and Family Engagement is the participation of parents and families in helping their child succeed in school. Activities can include staying informed through school communications; participating in meetings, committees, or advisory groups; and directly participating in their child's learning at school, home, and beyond the classroom. This can improve students' academic achievement, strengthen schoolwide practices, and help meet the needs of students and the broader school community.

Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) helps Multilingual Learner (ML) students develop and attain English language proficiency while meeting or exceeding the NJSLS in academic content areas. ML students in these programs develop proficiency in the English language while also developing skills and knowledge within the academic content areas. An LIEP includes services that all ML students are entitled to receive, such as "programs of bilingual education" pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:35-16 and instructional alternative programs.

District- and School-Level Parent and Family Engagement Policies

Parent and Family Engagement Policies set the foundation for how districts and schools will partner with families in Title I programs. These policies should clearly explain how parents and families are involved and should be reviewed annually to stay current and useful.

Review the following and confirm your school or district is meeting these expectations:

- ☐ A written Parent and Family Engagement Policy exists at both the district and school level.
 - District and school policies are aligned.
- ☐ The policies were developed in collaboration with parents and families.
- ☐ The policies explain how parents and families are involved in planning, reviewing, and improving Title I programs.
- ☐ The policies describe how information will be shared with parents and families, how parents and families can offer suggestions and feedback, and when Parent and Family Engagement meetings will be held.
- ☐ The policies are shared directly with parents and families in the best language and format for them.
- ☐ The policies are widely distributed through methods such as mail, email, students' backpacks, or another accessible format.
- ☐ The policies are reviewed and updated periodically, with annual attention to content and effectiveness.
- ☐ Family input, distribution, and revisions are documented.

Reflection questions

- Are parents and families meaningfully involved in revising the Title I policies? How?
- Has anything shifted over the last few years that would be helpful to capture in the policy document (technology, communication, school rules)?
- Are your current distribution methods likely to reach all parents and families? What other distribution methods might be more effective?

District-Level and School-Level Parent and Family Engagement Policy templates can be found on the NJDOE Title I website:

- [District Wide Parent and Family Engagement Policy Template](#)
- [School Parent and Family Engagement Policy Template](#)
- [District-School Parent and Family Engagement Policy Template](#)

Building Capacity for Parent and Family Engagement

Building capacity means helping parents, families, and staff members develop the knowledge, access, and support needed for strong partnership. Under Title I, Part A, Parent and Family Engagement should go beyond information sharing and provide opportunities for parents and family members to support student learning.

Implementation checklist

- ☐ Parents and families receive support to understand standards, assessments, and how to support learning at home.
- ☐ Staff members receive support or training in effective parent and family partnership practices.
- ☐ All outreach, supports, and training are documented.
- ☐ Information is shared in accessible formats and, whenever practicable, in languages families can understand.
- ☐ Written correspondence is sent to notify parents and families of their child's eligibility for Title I, Part A services, including the entrance and exit criteria used and the option to refuse services (required for Targeted Assistance Programs).

Reflection questions

- In looking at school and district data related to parent and family engagement, which supports are most helpful to parents and families in your setting?
- What topics related to parent and family engagement do you see arise most often?
- What barriers make participation difficult for some parents and families?
- Are your efforts helping parents and families support learning or mainly sharing out information?

Annual Title I Meeting

The Annual Title I Meeting is a required opportunity to explain the school's Title I program, parent and family rights, and the ways parents and families can stay informed and involved. Planning should support participation and follow-up.

Implementation checklist

- ☐ The school holds an annual Title I meeting at the beginning of the school year (no later than mid-October) for parents and families of participating students.
- ☐ The meeting explains:
 - That the school participates in a Title I Targeted Assistance Program or Schoolwide Program and what that means for students.
 - What the program requires and offers.
 - How participating students are identified and the entrance and exit criteria used (required for Targeted Assistance Programs).
 - How parents and family members will be kept informed about the program and how they can ask for clarifying information.
 - The right of parents and families to be involved in the policy planning process.
- ☐ The meeting is held at a convenient time for parents.
 - Multiple meeting times or flexible options are offered when needed, such as in the morning, in the evening, or in a virtual format.
- ☐ If appropriate, Title I funds are used to cover reasonable and necessary expenses, such as childcare and transportation, to support parent and family engagement in school-related activities.
- ☐ The meeting is documented with an agenda, sign-in sheets, and minutes.
- ☐ Follow-up information is shared with parents and families who could not attend.

Reflection questions

- What made the meeting accessible or inaccessible for parents and families?
 - What changes could you make to ensure the meeting is accessible to as many parents and families as possible?
- How are you following up with parents and families who could not attend?

Here is a [Sample Meeting Agenda](#) and [Meeting Flyer](#) that you can customize for your needs.

Parents' Right-to-Know Letter

The Right-to-Know Letter helps parents and families understand their right to request information about the qualifications of the educators working with their child. This letter must also explain that districts are required to notify parents and families if their child is taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet applicable state certification or licensure requirements.

Implementation checklist

- ☐ At the start of each school year, the district notifies parents and families that they have the right to ask about the qualifications of their child's teachers and paraprofessionals including their certification or licensure status, degrees, and qualifications.
- ☐ The district has a process in place for promptly responding to family requests.
- ☐ If a parent or family member asks, the district must provide information about:
 - Teacher certification or licensure status.
 - Degrees held by a teacher.
 - The qualifications of paraprofessionals working with their child.
- ☐ The district notifies parents and families if their child is taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet applicable state certification or licensure requirements.
- ☐ The Right-to-Know letter is written in clear and understandable language.
- ☐ The district keeps a record of all Right-to-Know letters and responses.

Here is a sample [Parents' Right-To-Know Letter Template](#).

Reflection questions

- Do parents and families clearly understand what information may be provided to them?
- Is there a clear system and responsible person/people for tracking and responding to requests?

School-Parent Compact

The School-Parent Compact is a shared agreement describing how the school, parents and families, and students work together to support academic achievement. It should communicate shared responsibility in clear, practical terms.

Implementation checklist

- ☐ A School-Parent Compact is in place for all students participating in Title I activities, services, and programs.
- ☐ The compact:
 - Was developed collaboratively with parents and families.
 - Is shared with parents and families, not just posted on a website.
 - Explains how the school, parents and families, and students share responsibility for improved academic achievement.
 - Is aligned with other school policies.
- ☐ The compact includes:
 - The school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction.
 - The parent or family member's role in supporting learning.
 - The student's responsibilities.
 - A communication plan between teachers and parents and families.
 - Home support strategies, communication about progress, and opportunities for families to volunteer, observe, and participate. (Optional but suggested.)

Here is a sample [School-Parent Compact template to use](#).

Reflection questions

- Does the compact accurately reflect the goals and reality of your school environment? Why or why not?
- Is the compact written in plain language that parents and families can understand? Identify sections that could be rewritten in plain language.
- Does the compact support and encourage meaningful two-way communication between the school and parents and families? What could be improved?

Multilingual Learner Parent Notification

This notification helps parents and families understand why their child was identified as a Multilingual Learner (ML) and will be placed in a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP), which program will be provided, and what rights families have. These notices must be timely and provided in a language parents and families can understand.

Implementation checklist

- ☐ Parents and families are notified when their child is identified for and placed in a Language Instruction Educational Program.
- ☐ Notification is sent within 30 days of the start of the school year, or within two weeks of placement if the student is identified later.
- ☐ Each notice explains:
 - Why the student was identified.
 - The student's current level of English proficiency.
 - The instructional program and methods used.
 - How the program will support academic and language growth.
 - The requirements for exiting the program.
 - Expected transition timelines and, for high school students, expected graduation timelines.
 - How the language program supports the student's individualized education program (IEP) goals (if applicable).
 - Options that the parent or family member has, including the right to remove their child from the program.
- ☐ The notice is provided in a language the parents or family members can understand.
- ☐ The district documents all outreach efforts, placement notices, and parent and family rights.

You can find [additional resources](#) including a list of these requirements, home language surveys, and letter templates related to program placement, program continuation, and program exit.

Reflection questions

- Are these notices timely, complete, and understandable?
- Do parents and families clearly understand their program options? Are staff members available to explain these options in a language parents and families can understand?
- What resources and opportunities are provided to ML parents and families to help them participate in their child's learning?

Military Opt-Out Notification

Military opt-out notifications give eligible students and their parents and families the opportunity to prevent student information from being shared with military recruiters. The process should be clear, timely, and easy to use.

Implementation checklist

- ☐ Eligible students and their parents and families are notified that they may opt out of disclosure of student information to job, military, and postsecondary recruiters.
- ☐ Parents and families of students under 18, and students who are 18 or older, are given the opportunity to opt out in writing.
- ☐ The notice explains:
 - What information may be shared.
 - Who may receive the information.
 - How to opt out.
 - When the opt-out request must be submitted.
- ☐ The opt-out process is clear and usable.
- ☐ Opt-out requests are accurately collected and recorded and are honored.
- ☐ Student information is withheld when required.

This sample [Title I Military Opt-Out Letter](#) template includes a form parents or families can complete and return.

Reflection questions

- Is the notice clear about what may be shared and how to opt out?
- Is there a reliable system for honoring opt-out requests?

Ongoing Communication, Input, and Improvement

Strong parent and family engagement includes ongoing two-way communication, meaningful parent and family input, and regular evaluation of what is or is not working. These practices help schools improve over time rather than relying only on one-time compliance activities.

Implementation checklist

- ☐ Parents and families receive timely information about Title I programs, curriculum and instruction, assessments, student progress, and expected achievement levels.
- ☐ Parents and families have clear opportunities to ask questions, share suggestions, and participate in decisions related to their child's education.
- ☐ Schools have a timely process for documenting and responding to parent and family suggestions.
- ☐ The district and school evaluate the content and effectiveness of parent and family engagement policies and activities annually, at minimum.
 - A broad and representative group of parents and families are meaningfully involved in that evaluation.
- ☐ There is a process to identify participation patterns, barriers, and parent and family needs.
 - Policies and practices are revised based on the findings.

Reflection questions

- What meaningful opportunities do parents and families currently have to provide input?
- How is parent and family member feedback being used to improve practice and decision-making?
- What changes in two-way communication would strengthen engagement over time?

References

Jeynes, W. H. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school student academic achievement. *Urban Education, 40*(3), 237–269.

Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Urban Education, 42*(1), 82–110.

Mapp, K. L., & Kuttner, P. J. (2013). *Partners in education: A dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships*. SEDL.

Weiss, H. B., Bouffard, S. M., Bridglall, B. L., & Gordon, E. W. (2009). *Reframing family involvement in education: Supporting families to support educational equity* (Equity Matters, Research Review No. 5). Campaign for Educational Equity, Teachers College, Columbia University.