

STRENGTHEN FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS



Because effective family-school partnerships lead to student success

National PTA calls upon Congress to strengthen family-school partnerships by:

- Building upon key provisions included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to provide schools with guidance and tools needed to meaningfully share power with parents, welcome and communicate effectively with all families, and meaningfully collaborate to support student success;
- Providing funding to incentivize and support family engagement initiatives in schools and communities across the country; and
- Creating an Office of Family Engagement in the U.S. Department of Education to provide support and guidance to schools and state departments of education on effective family engagement strategies.

Decades of research shows that family engagement matters for student success—students whose families are engaged are more likely to attend school, avoid discipline problems, achieve at higher levels and graduate. Family engagement also helps schools—research suggests it is equally as important as school leadership and a rigorous curriculum in predicting school improvement. Parents, guardians and other caregivers are key partners in their children’s educational success and provide important perspectives on decisions impacting their children and schools.

In 2015, the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed and signed into law, making critical improvements to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), enabling greater transparency for parents in K-12 education and encouraging schools to invest in family engagement. While the law made critical improvements, **many school districts still struggle to meaningfully connect with families in their community**. The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships provide much-needed guidance on effective strategies for equitable and intentional family engagement by schools, but this important work needs to be reflected in law and policy at the federal, state and local levels for it to have true impact on our nation’s students and schools.

National PTA urges Congress to make critical improvements to the family engagement provisions in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), such as:

- Increasing the authorizing level for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers grant program to \$20 million to enable more states to serve their families with this important program.
- Increasing the minimum percent of funding that school districts must reserve for family engagement under Title I of ESEA from 1% to 5% to provide for meaningful engagement efforts with families.
- Defining “meaningful consultation” with families to provide much-needed clarity to LEAs around what is required of them, at minimum, under ESEA.
- Clarifying that LEAs must distribute their written family engagement policy to families at the beginning of every school year and that any communication to families about the policy must be provided in an understandable and accessible format and in a language the families can understand.
- Mandating that SEAs and LEAs use a percentage of Title III funds to support engagement of families of English-language learners and immigrant students and develop extensive guidance, best practices and technical assistance directly to SEAs and LEAs on communicating with these families.
- Requiring school districts to notify families of any opportunities to provide input on their ESEA plan or their written family engagement policy and making all evaluations of those policies and plans publicly available on their website.
- Clarifying that school districts should pay particular attention to families who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background when evaluating, revising and designing strategies for family engagement.
- Requiring LEAs use a portion of their ESEA funding to provide high-quality, personalized professional development for teachers and other school personnel in effectively engaging families, allowing state ESEA funds to be used to provide evidence-based training focused on family engagement, and encourage family engagement be prioritized in existing programs, like the Supporting Effective Educator Development grant program.
- Requiring a state department of education to publish on its website the ESEA plans it receives from school districts, as well as publish on its website an annual review of whether schools within the state are meeting the family engagement requirements under ESEA.
- Directing the U.S. Department of Education to establish a Parents and Families Advisory Committee consistent with the Teachers and Parents At the Table Act (H.R.5667) to monitor the effects and implementation of ESEA on children and families and creating a permanent Office of Family Engagement under the Department to provide support and guidance for state and local family engagement efforts.

Questions? Email National PTA Director of Government Affairs Kate Clabaugh (kclabaugh@PTA.org).

i. Henderson, A.T. & Mapp, K.L. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family and community connections on student achievement. Austin: SEDL. Hill, N. & Tyson, D. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(3): pgs. 730-763. Fan, X. & Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13: 1: pgs. 1-22. Jeynes, W. (2012). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental involvement programs for urban students. *Urban Education*, 47, 706-742. M. Castro, et al., (2015) Parental involvement on student academic achievement: A meta-analysis," *Educational Research Review* 14, pp. 33-46;

ii. Bryk, et al. (2010). *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

iii. See 20 U.S. Code §6318 and 20 U.S. Code §6312.

iv. See National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. National PTA. <https://www.pta.org/home/run-your-pta/family-school-partnerships>.