

Gadsden County Public Schools (GCPS) receive Title I, Part A funds only if it conducts outreach to all parents and family members and implement programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents and family members. The programs, activities, and procedures shall be planned and implemented with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children.

Annually, the district and parents develop and agree to a written Parent and Family Engagement Plan. It will be distributed to parents and family members of participating children.

The plan shall establish the district's expectations and objectives for meaningful parent and family engagement, and describe how the agency will:

- (A) involve parents and family members in jointly developing the plan and development of support and improvement plans;
- (B) provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist and build the capacity of all participating schools within GCPS in planning and implementing effective parent and family involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance, which will include meaningful consultation with employers, business leaders, and faith-based organizations;
- (C) coordinate and integrate parent and family engagement strategies to the extent feasible and appropriate, with other relevant Federal, State, and local laws and programs;
- (D) conduct, with the meaningful involvement of parents and family members, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parent and family engagement plan in improving the academic quality of all schools served by Title I and will address:
 - 1. barriers to greater participation by parents in activities with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background;
 - 2. needs of parents and family members to assist with the learning of their children, including engaging with school personnel and teachers; and
 - 3. strategies to support successful school and family interactions;
- (E) use the findings of annual PFEP and parent services evaluations and surveys to design evidence-based strategies for more effective parental involvement, and to revise, if necessary, the PFEP; and
- (F) involve parents in the activities of the schools, which includes a school parent advisory board representative of parents or family members served by the district to adequately represent the needs of Gadsden County.

GCPS shall reserve at least 1 percent of its allocation under Title I, Part A to assist schools to carry out parent activities. Parents and family members of children receiving Title I services shall be involved in the decisions regarding how of the 1% are allotted for parental involvement activities. 90 percent of the funds shall be distributed to GCPS Title I schools with priority given to high need schools. Funds shall be used to carry out activities and strategies consistent with GCPS's PFEP to support professional development for teachers, principals, school leaders, and parents with programs that reach parents and family members at home; will disseminate information focused on parent and family engagement, and through collaboration will engage in other activities and strategies that are appropriate and consistent with GCPS's PFEP.

Each GCPS Title I school shall:

- (1) jointly develop with, and distribute to, parents and family members of participating children a written parent and family engagement policy, agreed on by such parents, that shall describe how the school will provide services for parents with the Title I set-aside for parent involvement;
- (2) Parents shall be notified of the availability of the PFEP in an understandable format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand;
- (3) The PFEP shall be made available to the local community through a variety of media and other dissemination methods and updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school;
- (4) If parent input of the Title I PFEP dictates the district should amend it, it will amend the plan to the extent feasible within the constraints of federal law and monitoring requirements to the satisfaction of the parents of participating children.

Each GCPS Title I school shall:

- (1) convene an annual meeting, at a convenient time, to which all parents of participating children shall be invited and encouraged to attend, to inform parents of their school's participation in Title I and to explain the requirements of Title I, and the right of the parents to be involved;
- (2) offer a flexible number of meetings, such as meetings in the morning or evening, and may provide, child care, or services that relate to parental involvement;
- (3) involve parents, in an organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning, review, and improvement of school plans, including the planning, review, and improvement of the school PFEP and the joint development of the school-wide Title I program;
- (4) provide parents of participating children timely information about programs; a description and explanation of the curriculum in use at the school, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, and the achievement levels of the challenging State academic standards; provide opportunities for regular meetings

to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children, and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES FOR HIGH STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT- As a component of the school-level PFEP, each GCPS Title I school shall jointly develop with parents for all children served under this part a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards.

Such school-parent compact shall:

- (1) describe the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children to meet the challenging State academic standards, and the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning, volunteering in their child's classroom; and participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time; and
- (2) address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through, at a minimum:
 - a. parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as the compact relates to the individual child's achievement;
 - b. frequent reports to parents on their children's progress;
 - c. reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities; and
 - d. ensuring regular two-way, meaningful communication between family members and school staff, and, to the extent practicable, in a language that family members can understand.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INVOLVEMENT- To ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership between the school, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement, each Title I school and the district shall:

- (1) provide assistance to parents of children served as appropriate, in understanding the challenging State academic standards, State and local academic assessments, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children, this could include training and use of the Skyward Parent Portal;

- (2) provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology (including education about the harms of copyright piracy), as appropriate, to foster more meaningful parental involvement;
- (3) educate teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, principals, school leaders, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contributions of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implementing and coordinating parent programs, and building ties between parents and the school;
- (4) to the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate parent involvement programs and activities with other Federal, State, and local programs, including public preschool programs, and conduct other activities that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children;
- (5) ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the parents of participating children in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand;
- (6) involve parents in the development of training, as practicable and necessary for better parent involvement;
- (7) pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with local parental involvement activities, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions;
- (8) train parents to enhance the involvement of other parents;
- (9) arrange school meetings at a variety of times, or conduct in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, with parents who are unable to attend such conferences at school, in order to maximize parental involvement and participation;
- (10) adopt and implement model approaches to improving parental involvement;
- (11) establish a districtwide parent advisory council to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement in programs supported under this section;
- (12) develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities; and
- (13) provide such other reasonable support for parental involvement activities as parents may request.

ACCESSIBILITY.—In carrying out the PFEP, Gadsden and its public schools, to the extent practicable, shall provide opportunities for the informed participation of parents and family members (including parents and family members who have limited English proficiency, parents and family members with disabilities, and parents and family members of migratory children), including providing information and school reports in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language such parents understand.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS GCPS shall inform parents and organizations of the existence of the PFEP.

Needs Assessment

The 2018 school year was disrupted by the turmoil presented by Hurricane Michael. The Covid - 19 Pandemic created unprecedented scenarios of school interruptions. These two events drastically impacted the district's ability to effectively engage parents. Therefore different approaches are being used to engage parents.

1. Communication and Outreach

- A. Gadsden County parents are younger than in past years, and the methods by which they communicate have changed. GCPS has initiated a social media effort at the district and school level. The district is using Facebook and other social media outlets to connect with parents, and during the coming year, each school will create and maintain its own social media presence. The district also has a districtwide automated notification system (Skylert) that provides alerts and attendance notifications via phone call, email and/or text message. This system allows individual schools to distribute messages that are unique to their targeted parents. During the upcoming school year, some schools will also use "Remind" which is an email or text driven system to broaden our connections with parents. One of the major benefits of using Remind is it does not require Internet access. Gadsden County is a rural community with large pockets scattered throughout the county that are without broadband capabilities. This system removes the responsibility of relying on students to deliver and return necessary forms needing parent feedback by including attachments that can be delivered and returned in a text message. Parents, with the capabilities of receiving text messages, are then able to complete forms on their phone and forward back to the school. Each of these systems has a built-in tracking system which provides an automatic analysis of messages delivered and responses received. The district will maximize its use of Google Classroom and/or Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) to increase parental involvement. These tools are designed to promote communication and allow parents to closely monitor their child's progress by posting grades, attendance, and other records. As cited by Brent Mundy of Blackboard Learn, "millennial parents are a rapidly growing population in K-12 school districts, that's why it's important for K-12 professionals to understand how to most effectively communicate school information with them. In fact, 43% of current parents in schools are millennials, as are [90% of new parents now](#)".

*Source: Mundy, Brent. "Sharing Coronavirus Contingency Planning Best Practices." Blackboard Blog, Blackboard Learn, 3 Mar. 2020, blog.blackboard.com/sharing-coronavirus-contingency-planning-best-practices. **ESSA Tier 2***

B. Parent engagement is an issue at most Title I schools throughout the country and Gadsden County is no exception. The fact that the county is designated as a Title I district signifies the magnitude of concerns related to parental and family engagement. Addressing Title I communities requires an understanding or premise that most parents are disengaged because of experiences during their school days. Overcoming the distrust and skepticism of disconnected parents requires a different approach. Other school-based activities targeted at parent outreach involve events that encourage non-threatening on-campus visits such as Breakfast with Dads, grandparent's day, classroom activities and other school sponsored events that include the students. These events are intended to use the child as the central focus of both school and parent. As in the past, the district has instituted a parent/teacher engagement opportunity at the end of each nine-week reporting period. These events, titled Parent Expos, are designed to provide school staff an opportunity to establish a professional and also personal relationship with parents and the ability to communicate with parents in a non-threatening environment. Larry Ferlazzo of Education Week states that schools need to "accept disengaged parents for where they are. There's often a direct connection between the child's lack of engagement and the parent's negative school experience." The use of his research will continue to help our district create a parental culture where parents feel safe and engage.

*Source: Ferlazzo, Larry. "Response: Several Ways To 'Motivate' the Unmotivated To Learn." Classroom Q&A With Larry Ferlazzo, Education Week, 25 Aug. 2011, blogs.edweek.org/teachers/classroom_qa_with_larry_ferlazzo/2011/08/several_ways_to_motivate_the_unmotivated_to_learn.html. **ESSA Tier 2***

C. To ensure that non-English speaking parents are not neglected, all correspondences are translated in Spanish. During meetings and other activities, translators are provided. Activities and programs will continue to be implemented that are culturally sensitive and that reflect the social and environmental aspects of the county.

*Source: Education Development Center. Strategies for Engaging Refugee and Immigrant Families. Newton, MA: Education Development Center; 2011: Available at http://sshs.promoteprevent.org/webfm_send/2254. **ESSA Tier 2***

D. Parent/teacher/school meetings are conducted at times more conducive to the schedules of parents rather than teachers and/or school administrators. Meetings via Facetime, Zoom and other social media outlets as well as moving meetings off campus to community venues will be implemented to increase the possibilities of increasing parental/family engagement.

*Source: Garcia-Dominic O, Wray LA, Treviño RP, Hernandez AE, Yin Z, Ulbrecht JS. Identifying barriers that hinder onsite parental involvement in a school-based health promotion program. Health Promotion Practice 2010;11(5):703–713. **ESSA Tier 2***

2. Partnerships

A. Collaborative efforts will be expounded upon to convince parents, community leaders, non-profit organizations and businesses to become actively involved with students and schools. Each school will maintain a functioning School Advisory Council (SAC) which consist of, and led by, parents or other community members. This is to ensure that parents and the

community are given an active role in setting meeting agenda, a voice in the development and evaluation of school improvement plan and input in how the school's Title I budget will be utilized. Each school-based SAC will select a parent/community member to represent and voice their interest at the district level SAC. Epstein et al found in their study that when schools encourage parents to be a part of the decision-making process, they have by-in and they participate more.

Sources: *Epstein JL. School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools Second Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press; 2011. Michael S, Dittus P, Epstein J. Family and community involvement in schools: results from the School Health Policies and Programs Study 2006. Journal of School Health 2007;77:567–579. **ESSA Tier 1***

- B.** The district will expand its “Faith In Gadsden Students” (FIGS) initiative that focuses on the faith-based community. Local churches will be encouraged to adopt a school and provide student mentoring, school volunteers and in some instances serve as a liaison between school and parents. Church fellowship halls will be used as community meeting locations for schools which to alleviate transportation issues for those parents that find it difficult to meet on school campus. The district will also reach out to community-based organizations and businesses and create collaborative agreements on how they can provide various social service activities to students and families. This initiative will expand the county's resource guide of community services that will be made accessible for parents. As noted by Caspe et al., “community engagement efforts should emphasize partnership.” **Source:** *Caspe, M. et al. “Family Involvement in Elementary School Children's Education.” Op. cit., p. 7. - “Making the Case for Parent Involvement and Engagement.” Harvard Family Research Project, May 11, 2005. **ESSA Tier 2***
- C.** Parent liaisons facilitate involvement through a variety of avenues. Parent liaisons foster the school-family bond, respond to family demand for educational and skill-building programming, and facilitate communication with parents. They are responsible at the school level for: organizing regular educational workshops for parents, raising parent awareness of academic standards and standardized testing, arranging family intervention assistance, and facilitating volunteering opportunities to parents and community members. **Source:** *Adapted from: “Parent Liaisons.” Creighton School District. **ESSA Level 1***

3. Technical Assistance

- A.** The lack of parental engagement is not always the fault of parents. School administrators and teachers often have a preconceived perception of Title I parents that sometimes taint their ability or willingness to encourage parental involvement. A district-level infrastructure has been created to develop, implement and coordinate family engagement efforts. This framework legitimizes the district's ability to assess the efficacy of parental engagement activities while identifying best practices within the district that can be communicated and distributed between schools. Staff development activities/workshops are provided for district and school level staff that emphasize the relevance of and process for effective parental engagement.

Source: Westmoreland, H. et al. "Seeing is Believing: Promising Practices for How School Districts Promote Family Engagement." Harvard Family Research Project, July 2009. p. 2. <http://www.hfrp.org/familyinvolvement/publications-resources/seeing-is-believing-promising-practices-for-how-school-districts-promote-family-engagement> ESSA Level 2

- B. Johnston et al., in their 2003 study, found that if parents are provided with seminars, workshops, parent leadership qualities, and information on topics that relate directly to their needs and understanding, schools will see a rise in student success. Our county will build on this research by planning a parent engagement conference during the first semester of the school year or prior to the beginning of the new school year. The conference will be structured to provide information for parents and school staff on the tools for effective parental engagement. Staff development activities will be provided for teachers that could award in-service points towards certificate renewal. Skill building and leadership skills workshops will be provided for parents and other presentations that will target topics that parents believe most important to them will be presented.

Source: Johnston R, Cross D, Costa C, Giles-Corti B, Cordin T, Milne E, et al. Sun safety education intervention for school and home. Health Education Research 2003;103(6):342–351. ESSA Level 1

4. Monitoring

- A. Family engagement is more likely to be sustained when it is outcome-oriented and tied to the instructional goals for a student, with specific benchmarks across the school year. When parents are alerted to their child's academic progress and equipped with effective tools to address challenges, they can positively impact student learning.

Source: Weiss, H., M Lopez, and D. Stark. "Breaking New Ground: Data Systems Transform Family Engagement in Education." Harvard Family Research Project, January 2011, p. 1-16. ESSA Level 4

- B. Led by the staff of the District Family and Community Engagement Center, along with input from parents, school staff and community stakeholders, will revise the parent satisfaction survey to ensure that the data elements of the "Parent Satisfaction Survey" not only garner information most important to the district but also are representative to the concerns of parents.

- C. Using the database "Parent Engagement and Family Involvement – Quantified" (PEFI-Q), the district will identify ten expectations for every school to assess parent engagement and require that each school identify an additional ten expectations for assessing parent engagement that is unique to that school's parent engagement plan. An analysis of the outcome garnered from this tool will help quantify the extent to which parents are involved and identify focus areas for which a continuous improvement plan should begin. PEFI-Q could also show the correlation between student outcomes and parental involvement. A widely cited 2005 Harvard Family Research Project meta-analysis offered strong evidence for the importance of parental involvement to academic achievement. *ESSA Level 4*