

Parental Engagement

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SEF Position

SEF supports parent and community engagement that results in shared accountability to improve school systems.

Background

In 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law, formally updating the authorization of the main federal law governing the nation's public school system. ESSA requires every school and school district that receives Title I funding to develop a written family and parent engagement policy, in consultation with parents, to improve family participation in school activities and influence school level operational policies. To help school districts meet their parent engagement goals, they are required to set aside one percent of their federal funds to support activities such as disseminating information on best practices on family engagement to parents, conducting family outreach at home, or providing subgrants to schools to partner with community organizations with a record of success in family engagement.

Additionally, ESSA requires each Title I school to write a parent engagement plan in a language families can understand. The schools must also convene an annual meeting which all parents will be encouraged to attend so that they may be informed of their right to be involved in the school activities. SEF also invests its own internal resources to organize and inform parents on school improvement and parental engagement requirements mandated in federal law.





Benefits of Parental Engagement Schools

- Strong parent engagement programs have proven effective in increasing school attendance, test scores, and overall parent involvement.
- Effective family engagement can decrease student suspensions and expulsion rates.
- Research suggests that strengthening ties between schools and communities is a critical component of an effective school turnaround.¹

SEF Recommendations

- Ensure that the state, all districts, and all schools report student outcomes that are meaningful to families, students, educators, and other stakeholders and that these reports are shared publicly in an understandable and user-friendly way.
- Encourage and provide professional development opportunities for district and school leaders to establish, discuss, and respond to racial equity policies.
- Support schools in conducting student and family school climate surveys, in disaggregating and understanding the survey results to identify areas for improvement, and in using that feedback effectively to improve school climate for families and students.

End Notes

1. Democratic School Turnarounds: Pursuing Equity and Learning from Evidence. Boulder, CO: Annenberg Institute, 2012. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1046370.pdf>.