

Developing a School-Parent Compact

Public Law 107-110, Sec. 1118



Foreword

The USDE released a document, [A Compact for Learning: An Action Handbook for Family-School-Community Partnerships](#). [A Compact for Learning](#) describes a compact and the action handbook in this way:

A compact is (1) a commitment to sharing responsibility for student learning and (2) an action plan for a family-school-community partnership to help children in your school get a high-quality education. This user-friendly handbook is designed to walk your family-school compact team through the steps of building a compact. It provides information, strategies, examples, and checklists to help parents, educators, and community members develop effective, workable compacts that can improve your school and increase student achievement. The handbook includes activity sheets to assist your partners in the creation and use of a compact.

Much of what is printed in this current booklet draws upon [A Compact for Learning](#). In developing this document, numerous web sites and documents were reviewed, and nearly all had a common origin, [A Compact for Learning](#).

This booklet, [Developing a School-Parent Compact](#), is intended to...

- Present the statute that defines a School-Parent Compact
- Describe the requirements for a School-Parent Compact
- Identify the contents of a School-Parent Compact
- Propose a process for writing and reviewing a School-Parent Compact
- Provide some tips to strengthen a School-Parent Compact

Introduction

The school-parent compact is a written agreement between teachers and parents and provides an opportunity to create new partnerships in your school community. It is a document that explains what families and schools can do to help children reach high academic standards of excellence. Each campus receiving Title I funds is required to develop a compact. The compact serves as a clear reminder of all stakeholders' responsibility to take action at school and at home so that children can attain the state's academic achievement standards. It is a written commitment indicating how all members of a school community – parents, teachers, principals, students, and concerned community members – agree to share responsibility for improved student achievement.

The underlying assumption is that a student's academic success will improve when the home and school work together. Overall, if the compact is taken seriously and implemented effectively, it will assure that there will be support for the academic success of the student by enhancing effective communications between school and home. When developed with the input of all concerned parties, the compact can serve as a valuable tool to effectively and meaningfully engage the school and the home in supporting the academic development and needs of the students.

Use the development of a compact as a way to involve parents and others who have not been closely connected to the school. Bringing together a team to talk about your school's needs and the shared responsibilities of your school community can be as important as the task of developing a compact. As you build your team, reach out, think big, and be creative.

NCLB/ESEA Statute

Public Law 107-110, Section 1118

(d) SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES FOR HIGH STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT- As a component of the school-level parental involvement policy developed under subsection (b), each school served under this part 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 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 served under this part to meet the State's student academic achievement standards, and the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching; 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; and

(C) reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities.

According to the NCLB/ESEA Law (Section 1118)

What are the Requirements for a School-Parent Compact?

- Each school served under Title I shall jointly develop with parents for all children served under this part a school-parent compact, and the compact reflects the needs that are unique to each school.
- Each school-parent compact must outline how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved academic achievement.
- Each compact must outline the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards.

In a compact, families and school staff agree how to work together. Teachers and parents like compacts because they clarify how student progress is monitored and encouraged. Students like being treated as a responsible person.



The School-Parent Compact

What Must a School-Parent Compact Include?

- Describe the school's responsibilities to provide high quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive, effective environment. [P.L. 107-110, Section 1118, (d)(1)]
- Include ways parents can support their child's learning. Some examples of this are: school attendance, making sure homework gets done, volunteering in their children's classroom, and participating in decisions about the education of their children and positive use of after-school time. [P.L. 107-110, Section 1118, (d)(1)]
- Address the importance of on-going communication including:
 1. Annual parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools. [P.L. 107-110, Section 1118, (d)(2)(A)]
 2. Frequent reports to parents on their child's progress. [P.L. 107-110, Section 1118, (d)(2)(B)]
 3. Reasonable access to school staff, including opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observe child's classroom activities. [P.L. 107-110, Section 1118 (d)(2)(C)]
- Discuss compact as it relates to student achievement at parent-teacher conferences at least one time per year. [P.L. 107-110, Section 1118, (d)(2)(A)]
- Written and communicated in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand. [P.L. 107-110, Section 1118, (b)(1)]
- Must be evaluated annually for effectiveness in improving the academic quality of the school and to meet the changing needs of parents and the school. [P.L. 107-110, Section 1118 (a)(2)(E) and (b)(1)]

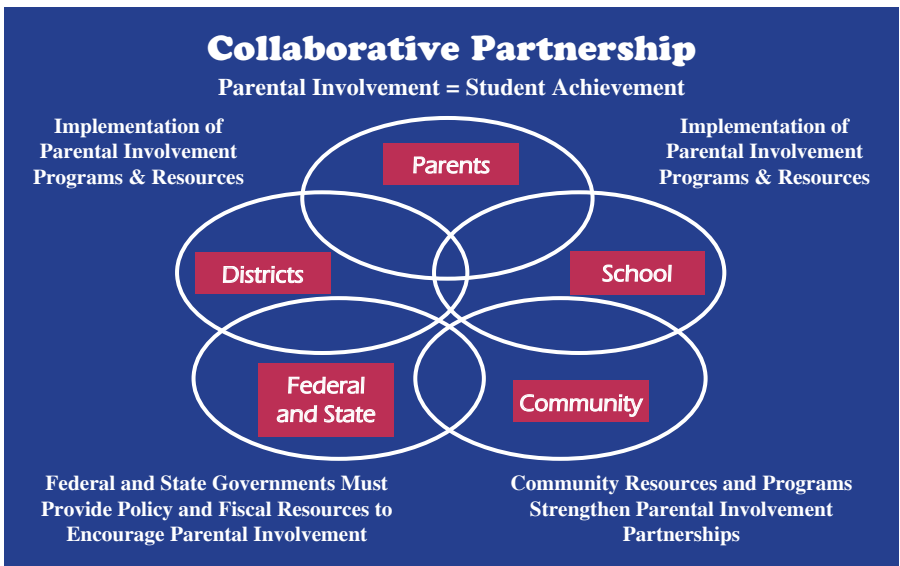
Key Stakeholders in a Successful Parent Involvement Program

- ✓ Strong school administrative leaders
- ✓ Teachers
- ✓ Parents and family members
- ✓ Community members

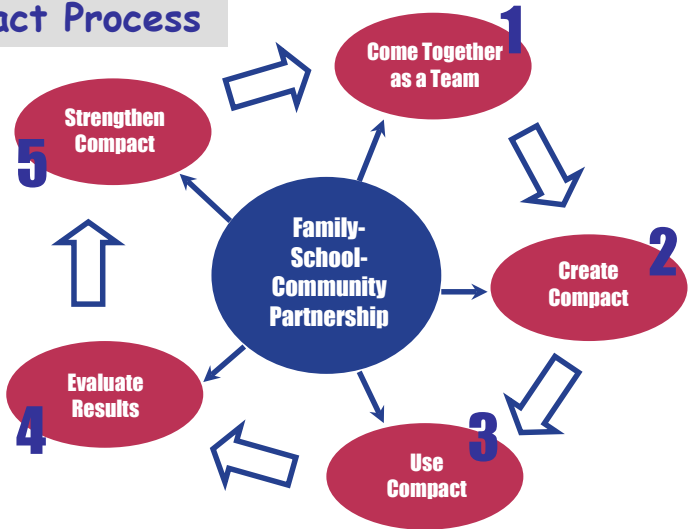
An effective parental involvement program requires a partnership among the key stakeholders. A healthy partnership exists when key stakeholders support one another in the achievement or attainment of a common goal. Successful partnerships are structured through the following elements:

- Philosophy (beliefs and values)
- Vision (foresight and future)
- Mission (purpose, goals, and objectives)
- Culture (style, climate, and expression)

Collaborative partnerships are required by the statute, but more importantly research shows that successful partnerships increase student achievement. It is crucial that the school establish a team composed with these key stakeholders prior to developing a school-parent compact. A school-parent compact expresses the desire of the entire school community to encourage and assist students as they strive to attain the state standards.



Five Step Compact Process



1 - GETTING STARTED

To be successful in the workplace and in life, students must develop the ability to learn new skills and to adapt to new situations. Academic standards reflect these new demands. Standards are written statements that say what a child is supposed to do and learn at each grade level and how the child should demonstrate that learning.

High Academic Standards and High Expectations

The Title I ESEA legislation introduces substantial changes to strengthen learning in a school-wide program. A central focus of the law is its emphasis on teaching and learning to high standards set by states, districts and local schools. The standards are a guideline for teaching and learning.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Every year schools need to evaluate and review their progress toward attaining the state standards. A comprehensive needs assessment is a systematic effort to acquire an accurate, thorough picture of the strengths of a school that can be used in response to the identified academic needs of students. A comprehensive needs assessment is central to the planning process and provides the database from which the planning team develops its vision for the school and the parental involvement program.

Gathering the findings provided by a comprehensive needs assessment is not a one-time occurrence. The comprehensive needs assessment:

- Is an ongoing process.
- Begins with a thorough examination of multiple, relevant data sources.
- Identifies areas of success and areas for improvement.
- Provides vital information when defining priorities and setting goals and objectives.
- Identifies possible strategies or solutions to make improvements.
- Is reviewed and revised annually.

Developing a comprehensive needs assessment is a necessary and critical starting point when writing the school-parent compact. The data and information generated through the comprehensive needs assessment will guide the planning team as they review and compose a campus-specific, relevant school-parent compact.

Note: a Comprehensive Needs Assessment is required by statute, see... Texas Education Code Section 11.252 (a)(1) and (2)
NCLB/ESEA, Public Law 107-110 Section 1114 (b)(1)(A)

**Remember... “Not everything
that can be counted counts,
and not everything that
counts can be counted.”**

Albert Einstein

2 - WRITE THE COMPACT

Parents, teachers, schools, and communities want to help students succeed in school and in life. Research confirms what many parents and educational experts identify as critical for improving schools and student success:

- Shared responsibility for student learning and high achievement.
- Shared responsibility for effective, frequent communication between school and home.
- Shared responsibility for building capacity for the school-parent-community partnership through volunteering and training.

An effective partnership recognizes that a team can accomplish together what each partner could not accomplish alone. That's why it is important for a school-parent compact to connect learning at school and learning at home. In addition, it is just as important that schools and families recognize and actively work to eliminate the obstacles that prevent or disrupt learning. An effective partnership for learning works to:

- Set high standards and high expectations.
- Provide and support sound instruction.
- Make schools and communities safe and drug free.
- Apply modern technology.
- Use research-based materials.

A Quality School District:

- **Knows Where It Is**
- **Knows Where It Is Going**
- **Has a Plan for Getting There**
- **Has Support Structures in Place**
- **Empowers People to Act**



3 - USE YOUR SCHOOL'S COMPACT

Using the compact is the critical step that moves the compact from planning to action, from paper to partnership. First, people need to know about the compact – what it is and how they can get involved. Launching the compact is a great opportunity to create new partnerships and to reach out to families and community members who have not been involved at the school before.

One big challenge will be keeping people's attention on the compact once it is launched. When spreading the word about the compact and encouraging people to support it, be patient and be persistent, reminding people many times. Identify and seek out those in the school community who need to endorse the compact to make it work: teachers, school staff, parents, students, professionals and business people, the superintendent, the school board, and others. Keep track of the frequency and format of information that is disseminated about the compact, then pinpoint the most successful means of communicating the message of shared responsibility. Remind your partners that the compact is more than a piece of paper; it is an action plan to enhance schools and to promote student success.

Publicize Your Compact

- Include the compact in the school newsletter.
- Send home copies with students.
- Attach it to the weekly lunch menu.
- Create a web site where people can share what they are doing to support a partnership for learning.
- Send email messages to parents.
- Start a parent listserv.
- Print the compact in the local newspaper.
- Make the compact the focus of your back-to-school night.
- Include the compact in the student handbook.

The compact can be far reaching. Whatever the focus, link the compact to action so that families, school staff, and the community see how the compact can work to make things happen in your school.

The compact is an evolving plan. It is important to decide each year how to support it. One way to ensure that the compact is used is to make it part of the school's annual plan.

Making the Compact a Living Document

It is important that the compact become a vital, living part of the school program, not just another shelf document. The most important and most effective way to get the word out about the compact is to use it in all parts of the school program. Make the compact an integral point of reference for all that the school does. In this way, all partners will understand how their commitments and their actions contribute to improved student learning and high achievement for all students. Here are some ways to make the compact count:

- Discuss student progress during parent-teacher conferences.
- Explain the school's high academic standards and high expectations for all students.
- Help launch programs for family involvement.
- Support training for teachers and other staff to work effectively with families.
- Help partners discuss their responsibilities in meeting the goals of the school.



4 - EVALUATE THE RESULTS OF THE COMPACT

After the compact is up and running, the next questions is: “How do you know whether or not your compact is working?” That’s why evaluation is so important. Evaluation can show important continuous improvement. Evaluation also sends a signal that the school is serious about making its school-parent compact work. The key players need to know more than whether a compact is in place. They need to know more than whether it’s working. They need to know what’s working. Evaluation will help pinpoint progress.

Indicators of Success

A person doesn’t have to be a statistician to use and understand data.

- Improvement requires having a baseline and comparing information over time.
- Continuous improvement marks the progress of doing better than before. (Although schools start at different levels of achievement, all can set a goal of improvement.)
- Absolute Performance – indicates whether the school is doing as well or better than your school’s desired level of performance.
- Comparative Performance – Shows whether the school is doing as well as or better than other schools.

How to Gather Data

- Collect baseline information on how the school is doing now. This information provides a starting point from which to measure progress. No one source discloses all the information needed. Use the following:
 - School Profiles
 - Administrative Records
 - Surveys
 - Focus Groups / Small Group Discussions

Lessons for Using Data

- Use the process of collecting data to bring people together.
- Use data to focus on real, not assumed problems.
- Beware of picture painted in single stroke. No single piece of data can provide enough information to know how to change schools.
- Beware of data that masks achievement gaps. Double check data... then check data again. (Data-driven change can be misdirected and reform efforts can collapse if the data is inaccurate.)
- Keep data simple but exciting.
- Always disaggregate your data, then use the information to make effective change.

**Disaggregation is not a
problem-solving
strategy.**

**It is a problem-finding
strategy.**

V. Bernhardt



5 - STRENGTHEN YOUR COMPACT

Parents, teachers, school staff, educators, students, community members need to work together every day to reach the identified goals for the children. The compact is about striving to improve student achievement. A continuous assessment of how well all partners are doing in this effort will allow you to improve and strengthen the compact. At least once a year, the school team must review and if needed, revise the compact. Don't wait for formal revisions. The school team can meet several times a year in order to use the information available to identify opportunities for improvement and to focus your efforts.

Build on Your Success

Within each compact area, some aspects will be working better than others. For those parts of the compact that seem to be working, what are the reasons? What can be learned from your effective practices that may help improve other areas?

Think about how to highlight student success to gain greater support for the school, for family involvement, and for the compact itself. Publicize the achievements as a fulfillment of the compact.

Develop Solutions

- Brainstorm as a team.
- Talk to other schools to see what's working for them.
- Conduct a focus group with members of your school community.
- Use research-based approaches.
- Search the web for information and resources.
- Contact professional organizations for guidance in particular areas of concern.

CONCLUSION

The compact process is not just five steps; it is a cycle of continuous improvement. Each step requires thinking, collaborating, action, and reflection. Continuous improvement means that the school is constantly reviewing where it has been and looking ahead to determine where to go next.

Making the compact work will be a challenge, but it will be a rewarding challenge as more and more students achieve the state's high academic standards. The compact will help the school become a true learning community with standards of excellence for all partners.

POINTERS FYI

- Keep the pledges about equal in length for each group. Don't list 15 obligations for parents and only five for teachers.
- Make the lists short – no more than ten items for each group.
- Don't patronize parents. A typical pitfall: "I will make sure my child is clean and rested." (Parents might react, "Why would they even think I wouldn't do that?")
- Offer clear guidelines. Rather than "limit TV time," try, "limit TV to one program a day." Then teachers could ask students to interview their parents about the program.
- Include information that will help parents and students know how to do what's expected or follow up with some tips sheets. Instead of, "I will talk to my child about school daily," try, "When I talk to my child each day about school, I'll ask questions that can't be answered just with yes or no." or "Through the week, I'll try to cover what they're learning, what they like about school, and any problems they're having."
- Use the compact at parent-teacher conferences and other meetings. Discuss how each side is doing in sticking to the pledges. Ask if other measures are needed.

Revisit the compact every year. Review its effectiveness with families, students, teachers and other school staff. Ask each group how they think it could be better. Update it using the most recent data.

SCHOOL-PARENT COMPACT CHECKLIST

A compact is a written commitment that indicates how members of a school, parents, students, and even the community will agree to share in the responsibility of learning for an individual child. This checklist was created to help parents and community leaders assess their school's commitment and compliance with the law as it relates to compacts.

Yes No

Does the school have a school-parent compact?

Does the school's school-parent compact:

Describe the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment?

Describe the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning?

Address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on a continuous basis?

Involve parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools at least annually?

Stress frequent reports to parents on their child's progress?

Commit to provide access to staff?

Identify opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class?

Additionally:

Is the compact easy to understand and provided in various languages so that parents and teachers can read and understand it?

Were parents involved in the development of the school-parent compact?

Yes No

- Are parents and teachers involved in the development of the programs and activities implemented for students being served under a compact?
- Are parents and teachers involved in the review and evaluation of the school-parent compact?
- Are parents aware of the process used to develop and evaluate the school-parent compact?
- Does the district have a written parental involvement policy?
- Does the campus have a written parental involvement policy that addresses the school-parent compact?



SIX TIPS ON COMPACTS

As you move through this process in launching the Compact, keep these six ideas in mind:

1. *Compacts are both a requirement and an opportunity.*

Compacts are a requirement for schools serving Title I children, but a good idea for all schools. They keep the focus on high standards and academic success for every child. They provide a way for school policies, parent beliefs, and national goals to work together.

2. *Compacts define responsibilities.*

Compacts make sure that everyone “owns” the responsibility of helping children achieve high academic standards. Compacts specify roles that schools and families play in helping children learn. Compacts also set expectations for others throughout the community who have a stake in children’s academic success.

3. *Compacts share a vision for teaching and learning.*

A meaningful compact links responsibilities to a consistent philosophy of what children need to learn and how they spend their learning time at school and at home.

4. *A compact depends on many people believing in it.*

A compact represents the ideas of the whole school community. Compacts can become powerful documents when many individuals and stakeholders agree on educational goals and fulfill their personal commitment to children’s learning.

5. *A compact is more than a piece of paper.*

The piece of paper that lists responsibilities needs ongoing school-family-community interactions. The compact isn’t the end goal. The compact is a practical tool for better communication and productive relationships between schools and families.

6. *A compact needs to be used.*

A compact is a “tool” that can be used to clarify expectations, solve problems, keep the focus on teaching and learning, and help clarify choices about how teachers, parents, and students spend their time. The compact’s important function is to continually broaden the circle of people who become invested in education. Ultimately, the compact’s and school’s success depends on broad-based commitment to children’s learning.

RESOURCES

Center for Law and Education: Title I as a Tool for Parent Involvement
www.cleweb.org/issues/title1/tool.htm

Institute for Response Education: Tips and Resources: School-Parent Compacts
www.responsiveeducation.org/tipSchoolParentCompact.html

U. S. Department of Education: Parent involvement: Title I, Part A – Non-Regulatory Guidance
www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/parentinvguid.pdf

Region VII Comprehensive Center: Content and Format of Parent/School Compacts
www.helpforschools.com/sikb/policies/ParentSchoolCompacts.shtml

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