

IT'S THE LAW. NOW WHAT?

HOW TO MAKE PARENT INVOLVEMENT UNDER ESEA-NCLB WORK FOR YOU

“Each school and LEA (school district) receiving assistance under Title I, Part A must ensure effective involvement of parents and support a partnership among the school, the parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement through training, information, and coordination of activities.” [Section 1118(e), ESEA-NCLB.]

One of National PTA's advocacy victories was ensuring that parent engagement requirements were included in The Elementary and Secondary Education/No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (ESEA/NCLB). In January 2002, it became the law of the land to hold Title 1 schools and parents jointly accountable for high student achievement. To help these schools and school districts engage parents and families, section 1118 of the law required districts receiving more than \$500,000 from the federal government to set aside at least 1 percent of those monies for parent involvement programs.

It is a great achievement to have a law passed, but it is even more important to see that the law is actually put into action. Unfortunately, even as National PTA is advocating for passage of the Family Engagement in Education Act of 2011, which contains increased funds and help for districts in developing family engagement programs, it has become apparent that many districts have not been fulfilling section 1118 requirements.

Parents have the right to work with schools and districts to ensure that this money is being put to good use. The best way to do that is for parents to learn what the law says and how it affects them and their school. Following is a guide to section 1118 requirements.

Does section 1118 apply to Title 1 school districts that receive \$500,000 or less in federal funding?

Yes. All Title 1 districts must have parent involvement activities, but those receiving less federal money are not required to use any of that money to develop and run these programs.

What input do parents have in how a school district allots section 1118 funds to schools?

ESEA/NCLB requires Title 1 school districts to involve parents in deciding how section 1118 funds are allotted and used. Many districts that have them use their parent advisory council to seek advice on this and other matters.

On what topics must schools and school districts provide parents with assistance and training?

Schools and districts must help parents understand topics that will help them become equal partners with educators. Such topics include the following:



By Jacque Chevalier

- The state's academic content and student achievement standards
- State and local academic assessments, including alternative assessments
- The parent involvement requirements of section 1118
- How to monitor their child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their child

What types of assistance should schools and school districts provide to help parents work with their children using section 1118 funds?

Schools and districts must provide materials and training to parents to help them improve their children's academic achievement. Examples of such activities include the following:

- Literacy programs that bond families around reading and using the public library
- Instruction in teaching methods used by educators to help parents extend class work into the home
- Internet-use training

What staff training must schools and districts provide related to parent involvement? Can section 1118 funding be used for this purpose?

Schools and school districts must educate their staff on the value of parent involvement and how to work with parents as equal partners. Section 1118 funding can be used for this purpose. Schools and districts may involve parents in developing this training.

How else are schools and districts able to use section 1118 funds to encourage parent involvement?

Schools may use these funds for reasonable and necessary expenses, such as transportation and childcare costs, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions. For parents who cannot attend conferences at school, schools may conduct in-home parent-teacher conferences. Schools also may provide training to parents in how to enhance the involvement of other parents. PTAs may be helpful in an advisory role.

How can I ensure that my Title I school is using funds effectively?

Your PTA should ask school leadership the following:

- How much money does the school receive under section 1118 of Title I, Part A?
- How is the money being used?

Your school principal should be able and willing to give you that information. If he or she doesn't know or won't share that information, go to the school district. Each school district has staff dedicated to Title I implementation and monitoring, and should be able to provide your PTA with a detailed account of section 1118 expenditures.

If you are concerned that spending is not in line with the intent of the law, it is your right and responsibility to advocate before school and district leadership to ensure effective use of funds. Remember: when dealing with issues of reporting and fund expenditure, it is always best to submit inquiries—and get answers—in writing! **OC**

For additional information, please contact Jacque Chevalier, National PTA senior education policy analyst, at jchevalier@pta.org.

What All PTAs Can—and Should—Do After a Law Is Passed

It is the responsibility and the right of every PTA, from local unit to state congress, to work with legislators and administrators to ensure that laws affecting all children are implemented fairly and effectively. It is a good idea for all PTAs to have a member or committee assigned to monitor all legislative activities at the local level that will affect your school and families. This member or committee also should be in touch with your state PTA concerning legislative and regulatory activity at the state and federal levels.

Any law enacted at any level—federal, state, county, district, municipal—is accompanied by regulatory guidance. Affected individuals or organizations may be required to follow this guidance, or they may view some or all of it as recommended, but not mandatory. Many times, the agency or government office assigned to implement the law will invite the public to comment before issuing this guidance. If a law is enacted about which your PTA feels strongly, you should offer public comment either as a group or individually. Lawmakers revise guidance based on the feedback of individuals and organizations, especially those organizations that have a proven track record of working with the population or institutions that will be affected by the new law.

If there is no way to make a public comment before the administrative guidance is issued, it is important that your PTA maintain relationships with all municipal agencies and offices that will be implementing laws that affect your schools and families. Position your PTA as a “go to” source for insight and expertise on education, family engagement, and child welfare with your school, district, and state so that you can have a real influence on laws that may affect children and families for years to come.

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