

No Child Left Behind

# School-Parent Compact

Action Guide for Parent and Community Leaders



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A joint project of Public Education Network and the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education.

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Title I, Part A, Section 1118

Parental Involvement Title 1, Part A Non-Regulatory Guidance  
<http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/parentinguid.pdf>  
<http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/parentinguid.doc>  
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# Introduction

The school-parent compact is a written agreement between teachers and parents. It is a document that clarifies what families and schools can do to help children reach high academic standards. Every school receiving Title I funds must develop a compact. The compact serves as a clear reminder of everybody's responsibility to take action at school and at home so that children can learn what is required of them. 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 student learning.

The purpose of this agreement is to help parents and teachers come to a consensus on the responsibilities of the individuals influencing student's achievement. However, 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 the home.

To ensure that the compact is understood by all parties involved, many parents and teachers will need new skills to bridge language, cultural, economic, and social barriers and to build trust relationships between home and school. Parents and teachers need to communicate in a language they both understand in order that compacts reflect the needs and culture of the home as well as those of the student. In addition, meetings should be scheduled at times and places sensitive to work requirements.

If written effectively and 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. The process involved in the development of the compact is its real strength. When parents and school officials sit down and discuss issues related to student success, parents are given a sense of voice and time to think about their responsibilities, while schools are given a strong starting point at developing and sustaining momentum around communicating with families and developing relationships.

## Did You Know...

- ◆ The compact must outline how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement.
- ◆ All parents of Title I students are required to participate in the development and design of the compact.
- ◆ Compacts are developed to reflect the needs and culture of the home of the students.
- ◆ That the compact is part of the school's written parental involvement policy developed by the school and parents.
- ◆ The compact should/must be evaluated regularly for effectiveness.

# According to the Law

## The School-Parent Compact

### 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 agreement.
- ◆ Each school-parent agreement must outline how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student 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.

### What Must a School-Parent Compact Include?

- ◆ To describe the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment, that enables children to meet State academic achievement standards,
- ◆ To describe the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning. (For example, monitoring attendance, homework completion, television watching, volunteering in their child's classroom, and participating in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time.
- ◆ To address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on a continuous basis, including at least annually during parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, and through frequent reports home to parents on their children's process.
  - To provide a means to discuss an individual child's achievement
  - To foster reasonable access to staff and opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observe classroom activities.

# Tip Sheet

## Linking a School-Family Compact to Learning

Copyright: Anne T. Henderson, Institute for Education and Social Policy, 2004. For more information, see *NCLB: What's in it for Parents*, published by Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in Lexington, KY. To order or download, go to [www.prichardcommittee.org](http://www.prichardcommittee.org)

### What's a Compact?

In a compact, families and school staff agree how to work together. Every Title I school must develop a school-family compact, according to the No Child Left Behind law (Section 1118). Teachers and parents like compacts because they make it clear who should do what to encourage students. Students like being treated as a responsible person. The compact should describe:

- ◆ What parents, school staff, and students will do to improve student progress.
- ◆ How the school and families will build a partnership to help children learn.
- ◆ How the school and families will communicate regularly with each other.

### How is a Compact Linked to Learning?

Here are some suggestions:

- ◆ Check your school's test data. Look for areas where students' scores are low, and for gaps between different groups of students.
- ◆ Set two or three goals for improvement. If reading scores are low, adopt a goal of moving all students out of the bottom quartile ("below basic"), and moving more students into proficient.
- ◆ Ask parents, students, and school staff what THEY should do to meet the goals. Then ask each group to list what it wants the OTHERS to do.
- ◆ Focus on issues raised in the discussions, such as homework, communications, and rules of behavior. For each one, list what parents, teachers and students can do.
- ◆ Draw up a first draft, then ask for comments. Revise it based on how parents, teachers and students react.

## Revising Compacts

Compare the old-style compact at the left with a compact that focuses on improving students' reading and math skills.

### Old Style Compact:

"This compact will promote effective working relationships to improve student achievement."

#### Parents Pledge: I will

- ◆ Send my child to school every day
- ◆ Keep in contact with school once a month
- ◆ Support the school dress and discipline codes
- ◆ Be an active participant in my child's learning process
- ◆ Limit TV watching time

#### Students Pledge: I will

- ◆ Complete my classwork
- ◆ Come to school prepared to learn
- ◆ Respect adults, myself and other students
- ◆ Obey school rules
- ◆ Complete my homework

#### Teachers Pledge: We will

- ◆ Have high expectations for all students
- ◆ Develop a classroom climate that is comfortable for all students
- ◆ Develop proficient learners
- ◆ Enforce rules fairly and consistently
- ◆ Provide the books and necessary supplies for education

### Compact Linked to Learning:

"This compact pledges our school community to increase student reading and math skills so that all students will be proficient by the end of third grade."

#### Parents Pledge: I will

- ◆ Let the teacher know if my child has any problems with learning.
- ◆ Use reading and math materials the school sends home each week to help my child.
- ◆ Read to my child 20 minutes a day.
- ◆ Keep a list of new words, and link letters to sounds.
- ◆ Play numbers games with my child every week
- ◆ Help my child see how to use reading and math to pursue his/her interests and goals.

#### Students Pledge: I will

- ◆ Let my teacher and family know if I need help
- ◆ Read on my own and with my family every day
- ◆ Work on my math and reading skills at home, using the materials my teacher sends home
- ◆ Write down assignments, do my homework every day, and turn it in when it's due
- ◆ Write a report each week about a TV program I watch

#### Teachers Pledge: We will

- ◆ Create a partnership with every family in my class
- ◆ Monitor student progress in reading and math and update parents monthly
- ◆ Make sure all students get help as soon as it's needed
- ◆ Send home learning materials in math and reading
- ◆ Explain my approach to teaching, expectations, and grading system to students and their families
- ◆ Continually work on my teaching strategies so that I can successfully teach *all* children.
- ◆ Assign work that is relevant and interesting
- ◆ Make sure students understand the assignment and what they'll learn from it, and grade it promptly.

## **Hazards Ahead**

Here are some things to watch out for:

- ◆ 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.

## **Other Pointers**

- ◆ Include information that will help parents and students know how to do what's expected. Or follow up with some tip 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. 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.

## Action Opportunities for Community Leaders

Although this provision of the act has no specific references to the community, there are, by implication, roles that community leaders and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) can play to support school/parent compacts:



- ◆ Hold a meeting of CBOs and other organizations to determine how services might be consolidated to support parents and schools in implementing compact agreements.
- ◆ Offer to assist schools and parents with compact agreements. This assistance might include supplemental instructional services, parent training, volunteer coordination, advocacy work, and health, nutrition, or language development.
- ◆ Work with parents and LEAs to determine ways CBOs could be written into compacts as service providers for training in parenting skills; tutoring, volunteer, and before- and after-school programs; literacy, English, and math learning opportunities for parents and students; and other learning activities for parents and students.
- ◆ Because Title I requires that parents be involved in developing the school plan, but does not require that parents approve the school plan, it is extremely important that the school-parent compact be a strong tool for parental involvement in the school's Title I program. Find out how to get involved in drafting the school-parent compact. Make sure that the school and parents of students at the school know how important this process is and that as many as possible different parents are involved in the process. Every parent should have an opportunity to participate in the drafting of the compact.
- ◆ Make sure that the compact outlines exactly how the school must provide a "supportive and effective" environment for all students. This is key to ensuring that schools have high quality teachers, resources, and the facilities needed.
- ◆ Make sure that the compact is specific. For example, it could define how often the school must report to parents on children's progress; and "reasonable access" to staff and classrooms to observe activities.
- ◆ Make sure that the compacts will provide all parents a guarantee from the school that they will receive all of the information they need in order to make decisions about their children's education. This includes public documents like, plans, budgets, evaluations, etc. Ensure that they are available to your parent group.



## Action Opportunities for Parent Leaders

- ◆ Provide training and in-service assistance to help parents understand the following components:
  - School culture and structure
  - Parental rights and responsibilities under NCLB
  - NCLB and its complex testing, assessment, standards, and accountability framework
  - How to analyze school report card data and how those data relate to student achievement
  - How to conduct a meaningful compact meeting with the teacher (identify the purpose of the meeting, decide what questions to ask, find out what parental assistance is available)
- ◆ Identify model compacts that can serve as guides for teachers and parents. Develop videos and other tools that demonstrate what meaningful compact relationships and meetings entail.
- ◆ Work with parents to evaluate compact commitments and determine how successful each party has been in holding up its end of the agreement. Hold periodic meetings to evaluate the compact process, answer questions and provide assistance, and identify schools and parents in need of additional help.
- ◆ Work with the district to develop LEA and SEA complaint procedures if the compact process does not proceed as designed, or if parents are not getting the assistance they need to fulfill their responsibilities.
- ◆ Work with CBOs to get a list of services included in the compact that assist both home and school in meeting the compact's objectives.
- ◆ Work with parents to develop an understanding of how the compact can be used as an advocacy tool to hold the district accountable for its compact commitments.
- ◆ Parents and parent leaders need to know more than whether or not a compact is in place. They must know more than whether or not it is working. They must know what is and is not working. Ask everyone involved in the development of the compact questions like, "Has the fulfillment of compact commitments helped to improve student learning? Why or why not?"
- ◆ Ensure that the compact is linked to learning and addresses testing scores and academic proficiency.
- ◆ Think about how you can support your child's education, as the compact also outlines the role of parents. However, parents and families have certain privacy rights with respect to their home life which should not be violated. The compact should specifically state that families' rights of privacy will not be violated. Moreover, schools and parents must work to ensure that this privacy is honored.
- ◆ Encourage parents in your community to volunteer in their children's schools in order that they may obtain access to school staff and have the ability/chance/option to observe classroom activities.
- ◆ Ensure that the compact is distributed in the community. Encourage schools to include the compact in the school newsletter, send it home with students, ask them to Create a Web site with the school compact, send out a mailing to the community. Find out how you can get the compact printed in the local newspaper



## Resources

**Center for Law and Education: Title I as a Tool for Parent Involvement**

<http://www.cleweb.org/issues/title1/tool.htm>

**Institute for Responsive Education: Tips and Resources: School-Parent Compacts**

<http://www.responsiveeducation.org/tipSchoolParentCompact.html>

**U. S. Department of Education: Parent Involvement: Title I Part A - Non Regulatory Guidance**

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/parentinguid.pdf>

**Region VII Comprehensive Center: Content and Format of Parent/School Compacts**

<http://www.helpforschools.com/sikb/policies/ParentSchoolCompacts.shtml>

## School-Parent Compact Checklist

A compact is a written commitment that indicates how all 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 parent and community leaders assess their school's commitment and compliance with the law as it relates to compacts.

- | Yes                      | No                       |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does your school have a parent-school compact?  |
|                          |                          | Does your schools' parent-school compact:   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Describe the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Describe the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning,  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on a continuous basis through,   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Involve parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually,  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Frequent reports to parents on their children's progress; and   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Access to staff   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class,  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the compact easy to understand and provided in various languages so that parents and teachers can read and understand it?                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Were parents involved in the development of the parent- school compact?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are parents and teachers involved in the development of the programs and activities implemented for students being served under a compact?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are parents aware of the process used to develop and evaluate the parent-school compact?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does your school district have a written plan that defines the parent-school compact?   |

### **Our Vision**

Every day, in every community, *every* child  
in America benefits from a quality public education.

### **Our Mission**

To build public demand and mobilize resources for  
quality public education for *all* children through a national  
constituency of local education funds and individuals.



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