

PARENT/SCHOOL COMPACTS

Every Title I school, in collaboration with parents of Title I children, must develop compacts describing school and parent responsibilities for student learning. The compacts must include the following information:

- ▶ How the school will meet its responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive, effective learning environment that enables the student to meet state standards
- ▶ Areas of parental responsibility, such as monitoring attendance, overseeing homework completion, monitoring television watching, volunteering in the classroom, and participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of the child and positive use of extracurricular time
- ▶ Opportunities for communication, such as annual parent/teacher conferences, at which time the compact will be discussed relative to the child's achievement; frequent progress reports; reasonable access to staff; and opportunities to volunteer and participate in the classroom and observe classroom activities

A parent/school compact is a written agreement between teacher and parent based on the assumption that a student's academic success will improve when the home and the school work together on behalf of the student.

All parents of Title I students are required to sign compacts, which are designed to help teachers and parents determine how each can best support the academic success of the student and enhance effective communication between the school and the home.

The compacts are most effective when teachers are able to explain to parents, in a language they can understand, the academic expectations of their child, the strategies used to achieve those academic goals, their child's learning assets and needs, how they can support the school and help their child meet academic expectations, and the support available to help them assume responsibility for their part of the compact.

Developing meaningful compacts is not easy. Many parents and teachers will need new skills to bridge language, cultural, economic, and social barriers and to build trusting home/school relationships. Parents and teachers need to communicate in a language both understand, develop compacts that reflect the needs and culture of the home as well as those of the student, schedule meetings at times and places sensitive to work requirements, and take advantage of community services that support parents.

Action Opportunities for Community Leaders

Although this provision of the act has no specific references to the community, there are, by implication, roles that CBOs and leaders 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.

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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.