



Ira Schwartz, Assistant Commissioner  
Office of Accountability  
55 Hanson Place, Room 400  
Brooklyn, New York 11217  
Tel: (718) 722-2796 / Fax: (718) 722-4559

### **Field Guidance on Parent Engagement Requirements**

To: District Superintendents  
School Superintendents  
Administrators of Charter School

From: Ira Schwartz 

Subject: Allowable Uses of the Required One Percent Set-Aside to Support **Parent Engagement Requirements** by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and Charter Schools Designated as a Focus LEAs

On May 29, 2012, the United States Department of Education (USDE) approved New York's ESEA Flexibility Waiver Request. The waiver provides New York flexibility in the implementation of ESEA Title I, Part A requirements. Among the changes resulting from the Flexibility Waiver is the opportunity to significantly streamline the annual Consolidated Application and reduce the number of plans that LEAs are required to submit. The Department previously conducted several webinars that provided information about the implications of the waiver. This information included: how districts and schools were identified; the diagnostic reviews to be conducted; the district and school plans to be developed; the requirement to offer public school choice and the options available for Supplemental Educational Services (SES); and the new Title I, II and Title III set aside requirements for expenditure of funds on approved programs and services in Priority and Focus Schools. A key change in set aside requirements is that Focus Districts must expend an amount equal to an additional one percent of Title I, Part A funds to support parent engagement activities in Priority and Focus Schools.

This guidance is intended to assist Focus Districts in understanding the difference between the required one percent set-aside under Title I, Part A, which is to be used to support **Parent Involvement** activities, and the additional one percent set-aside that is now required for **Parent Engagement** and to provide guidance on allowable uses of the one percent Parent Engagement set aside.

#### **Parent Involvement versus Parent Engagement**

##### *Parent Involvement*

ESEA Section 1118 requires LEAs receiving Title I, Part A allocations of \$500,000 or greater to set aside a minimum of one percent of those funds to support parent involvement activities, and 95 percent of these funds must be sub-allocated to the school level. In addition, private schools are entitled to an equitable share of the total amount of Title I, Part A funds devoted to parent involvement. Section 1118 and its sub-parts detail the allowable parent involvement activities, which include:

- Involving parents in the development and review of program plans;
- Sharing program information related to parent programs, meetings, and other activities in a format and language that parents can understand;
- Maintaining and engaging parents in the development and review of the district and building parent involvement policies;
- Sharing progress reports through parent-teacher conferences, annual meetings, etc;
- Sharing information regarding curricula, school accountability data, etc;
- Providing information regarding complaint procedures.

### Parent Engagement

Focus Districts must set aside an additional one percent to be used in Priority or Focus Schools for **Parent Engagement** activities. In instances where an LEA has a designated school that is not Title I eligible, the LEA must identify the required equivalent of one percent from other sources. Also, Focus Districts receiving less than \$500,000 in Title I, Part A funds are not required to set aside the required one percent for **Parent Involvement** activities; however, these LEAs must still set aside an amount equal to the one percent of funds from Title I, Part A for the required **Parent Engagement** activities.

The primary objective of this additional set-aside is to enable greater and more meaningful parent participation in the education of their children. To this end, we have explored with the USDE the allowable uses of Title I, Part A funds and the extent to which these funds may be used to support family literacy initiatives.

Recognizing the positive effects that family literacy programs can have on breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty, USDE has posited that “Title I, Part A funds may be used to support family literacy activities for eligible Title I children, including early childhood education, interactive literacy activities between parents and their children, and training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children. Title I, Part A family literacy programs, however, should build on existing adult education and adult literacy services in providing the full range of family literacy services for participating families.” Consequently, within the constraints identified below, parent engagement set aside funds may be used to support family literacy programs.

It is important to remember that Title I, Part A is designed to help low-achieving children meet challenging academic achievement standards (see section 1112(b) of the Title I statute). Therefore, the focus of any family literacy activities carried out with Title I funds should be to support family literacy activities that help parents, as the first teachers of their children, to become more effective participants in their children's education. While the literacy skills acquired through such activities may also help parents in their efforts to become economically self-sufficient, literacy services to help parents reach economic self-sufficiency should not be the primary purpose of family literacy services funded with Title I funds.

Section 1118(e) (7) provides that LEAs “may” provide literacy training using Title I funds but only if the LEA “has exhausted all other reasonably available sources of such training.” Therefore, an LEA may not use Title I funds for adult literacy services unless it can document that it has exhausted all other reasonably available sources. Please note that section 1114(c) (1)(F) (Schoolwide Programs) and section 1115(c)(1)(G) (Targeted Assistance Programs) of ESEA (NCLB) mention family literacy

services as an example of parental involvement that may be provided and requires that those services be offered consistent with section 1118. Any Title I funds that are used for family literacy purposes must come after funds from other Adult Education sources (e.g., Employment Preparation Education state aid (state); Workforce Investment Act Title 2 (federal); Adult Literacy Education (state); and Welfare Education Program (state)) have been exhausted

Further, if a school operating a schoolwide program elects to provide family literacy services, the needs assessment must indicate a need for such services and the services must be part of the schoolwide plan.

### **Allowable Activities for Use of Required One Percent Parent Engagement Set-Aside**

To support and enhance parent engagement, the New York State Education Department has successfully implemented 35 Literacy Zones that are designed to help close the achievement gap in urban and rural communities with concentrated poverty and high concentrations of families and individuals with limited literacy or English language proficiency. Literacy Zones are intended to provide a systemic focus on meeting the literacy needs of communities, from birth through adulthood. See Attachment B for additional details on the pathways provided by Literacy Zones.

Information on Literacy Zones can also be found on the State Education Department website at: [http://www.acces.nysed.gov/aepp/literacy\\_zones.html](http://www.acces.nysed.gov/aepp/literacy_zones.html).

Subject to the above restriction on exhaustion of other available resources, the one percent set-aside funds for Parent Engagement activities in Focus Districts with Priority Schools may be used to support parental awareness of the work of the family welcome centers in Literacy Zones. Further, if a Literacy Zone family center is located in the area of a Focus District with Priority or Focus Schools, the one percent set-aside may also be used to enhance or expand the services of the Literacy Zone family welcome center for eligible families in the Focus District and Priority or Focus Schools. This could include support for family literacy programs, case management services, access to comprehensive services and information.

NYSED has consulted with the New York Comprehensive Technical Assistance Center and reviewed the recently published National PTA Standards for effective Parent Engagement that describes a set of allowable activities that may be supported with the additional one percent set-aside requirement for use in Priority and Focus Schools. Based on these consultations, NYSED has created a menu of allowable activities aligned to these National Standards that may be funded using the one percent parent engagement set aside (see Attachment A). In addition, other activities noted in Attachment A that are allowable under the set aside include professional development for school leaders and teachers related to working with and building effective parent partnerships, training for parents on working effectively with teachers to enhance student performance, and training for parents on building supports for their children, including health and nutrition services.

Please note: Section 1118 contains several references to the requirement that LEAs engage in meaningful consultation with parents regarding the proposed expenditure of these reserved funds and that parents be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of these programs. When implementing Parent Engagement activities, LEAs will be required to adhere to the requirements contained in Section 1118.

If you have questions regarding the two percent parent engagement set aside and allowable use of funds, please contact the Office of Accountability – Title I Team at (518) 473-0295.

We look forward to supporting your efforts in promoting parental engagement that leads to an increase in student achievement.

Cc: Ken Slentz  
Kevin Smith  
Sally Bachofer  
Roberto Reyes

## ATTACHMENT A

### Allowable Activities for Use of Required One Percent Parent Engagement Set-Aside

The following are activities that may be supported using the required one percent Parent Engagement Set-Aside:

1. Implementation of six National PTA Standards which include:

- Welcoming all families into the school community—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Possible activities that could be funded for parents of Title I students include:

- Provide new families to the school with important information and a support system.
- Provide and publicize the hours for when the principal, teachers, and staff are available for parent visits or phone calls.
- Recruit bilingual parents to greet and interpret for families whose first language isn't English.
- Hold meetings in a variety of community locations to make them accessible to all.
- Conduct meet-and-greet walks in the neighborhoods where students live.

- Communicating effectively—Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Possible activities that could be funded for parents of Title I students include:

- Provide communications in languages representative of your school community.
- Use social media to communicate with parents.
- Establish an easy system for teachers to regularly report student achievements.
- Distribute calendars so parents can record and are notified of upcoming events, assignments, and dates to check with teachers on their children's progress.
- Provide training for school personnel on meaningful communication and collaboration with families.

- Supporting student success—Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students' learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Possible activities that could be funded for parents of Title I students include:

- Offer homework and mentoring sessions for families to interact with students.

- Select and distribute publications directly to parents on improving the home curriculum.
  - Keep parents informed of their child’s academic progress and development beyond parent – teacher conferences and report cards.
  - Explain the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards.
  - Inform parents of the learning standards to be covered in class with questions they can use to ask their children about what they are learning.
  - Conduct workshops on interpreting standardized test data.
  - Offer workshops for parents to learn about and discuss their role in their child’s education.
- Speaking up for every child—Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Possible activities that could be funded for parents of Title I students include:

- Develop effective parent advocates by educating parents on the right questions to ask school leaders and teachers about education.
  - Help build parent skills so they become confident in their own abilities and as a result are better able to pay attention to their child’s academic development.
  - Develop and engage parent leaders.
  - Plan workshops on parent-teacher conferences and how to ask the right questions about children’s progress and placement.
- Sharing power—Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Possible activities that may be funded for parents of Title I students include:

- Train parents to participate on school improvement teams.
  - Involve parents in action research: allow them to observe classes to provide first-hand feedback on a new curriculum initiative, examine various textbooks that are up for adoption, or allow them to visit a school in another district to learn about new programs for implementation.
  - Provide workshops on the school’s AYP standing, new ESEA requirements, and scores on state tests.
- Collaborating with community—Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Possible activities that may be funded for parents of Title I students include:

- Identify local community organizations that can assist parents in supplemental and after-school activities
- Host school and community resource fairs that connect families to all types of free resources and services.
- Connect with a library and credentialed librarian that can conduct professional development opportunities for parents and school staff.
- Extend the hours of the school media center, computer lab, or gym to allow families and community members' access to these resources and facilities.
- Invite local businesses to sponsor community resource workshops for teachers during the summer to help them learn about the educational, cultural, and business resources in the community.
- Recruit parent leaders from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds
- Build linkages with other early childhood and parent service providers in the community.

2. Coordination with parent and family literacy services through designated Literacy Zone Centers.

3. Professional development for school leaders and teachers related to working with and building effective parent partnerships.

4. Training for parents on working effectively with teachers to enhance student performance.

5. Training for parents on building supports for their children, including health and nutrition services.

## ATTACHMENT B

### **Family Engagement Set Aside to Support Family Literacy**

Literacy Zones are intended to provide a systemic focus on meeting the literacy needs of communities, from birth through adulthood. Each Literacy Zone and its satellite partners are designed to provide pathways out of poverty for individuals and families, in the following ways:

- A continuum of literacy services from early childhood through adult, including strong support for parent involvement in their child's literacy development at home and engagement with the school system.
- Assistance and support for at-risk youth to enable them to complete high school and succeed in post-secondary education or advanced training;
- Post-secondary transition that enables out-of-school youth and adults to attain a high school equivalency diploma and succeed in post-secondary education.
- Programs that enable out-of-school youth and adults who are receiving public assistance, food stamps, or families with family incomes less than 200% of poverty to obtain and retain employment.
- Incarcerated transition for youth and adults returning to the community from imprisonment.
- Pathways to citizenship and English language proficiency for limited English language adults.
- Workforce development programs, including apprenticeship, career and technical education, and career pathways.
- Support for mature workers and senior citizens to enable them to stay out of poverty.
- Support for individuals with disabilities and their families.
- Transition support for returning veterans and their veterans, including disabled veterans.

Literacy Zones can be direct resources for parent engagement activities because they work comprehensively to connect under-educated parents seeking literacy and English language instruction and their families with adult education programs, a full range of information and help obtaining federal and state benefits, health literacy, and connections to other services and pathways out of poverty.