



National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement
Statement on Reauthorization of the
Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

Engaging families is essential for turning around low-performing schools and eliminating the achievement gap. Abundant research documents this conclusion, but too often family engagement has been denigrated or ignored by school reformers. That so little investment has been made in supporting low-income families' efforts to foster their children's learning speaks volumes about the education reform community's attitudes toward those families.

This is more than an education issue; for many families it is a civil rights issue. It is time to dramatically increase our investment in family engagement. There is no better place to start than Title I of the Elementary and Secondary School Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), the largest federal education program.

Integrating high-impact family engagement practices, especially in early childhood and elementary school, can significantly accelerate and sustain Title I student' gains (Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Westat and Policy Studies Associates, 2001). Further, an acclaimed study on school improvement found that forming close ties with families and community members is an "essential ingredient" for turning around low-performing schools (Byrk et al., 2010).

ESEA has a long history of requiring that schools engage low-income parents in their children's learning (Title I, Section 1118). Since the law was last reauthorized, a growing body of research and the new Dual Capacity-Building Framework adopted by the U.S. Department of Education emphasize the need for a deeper commitment. In addition, more resources should be directed to high quality early childhood programs, using the new Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework adopted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As Congress considers the reauthorization of the ESEA, the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) offers the following recommendations to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of family engagement in Title I:

- Integrate family engagement into all aspects of school improvement;
- Link all efforts to engage families to improving student learning, such as aligning school-parent compacts with achievement data and school improvement goals;
- Create incentives and build capacity of State and Local Education Agencies to identify and adopt evidence-based, high-impact family, school, and community engagement programs and practices;
- Increase the Title I, Section 1118 set-aside for family engagement from one to two percent; and
- Include the knowledge and skills to engage families in Title I, Section 1119 on teacher qualifications.

NAFSCE supports the proposals that National PTA has offered to strengthen the role of State Education Agencies (SEAs). SEAs must ensure that local schools and districts adopt high-impact

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policies and practices of family engagement by providing capacity-building and technical assistance. In addition, SEAs should create an infrastructure of support for high-need school districts.

High-impact family engagement is a shared responsibility. Schools and other community organizations are committed to working with families in meaningful and culturally respectful ways, and families are committed to supporting their children's learning and development. Family engagement is continuous across a child's life, from Early Head Start to college, and carried out everywhere that children learn – at home, in early childhood programs, in school, in after-school settings, in faith-based institutions, and in community programs.

The quality and effectiveness of America's public education system has always rested on a foundation of strong, engaged families and communities. We must never lose sight of that vision.

The National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) was launched in September 2014 to advance high impact policy and practice to promote child development and student achievement. For more information and to register for the listserv, go to www.NAFSCE.org

Issued March 2, 2015