

# Lowndes County School District

## Family & Community Engagement

### Policy

2020-2021  
SY 2019-20 Version  
1592 Norman Drive  
Valdosta, GA 31601  
Lowndes.k12.ga.us  
(229) 245-2250



**LOWNDES**  
**COUNTY SCHOOLS**  
.....  
**One Mission. One Vision.**

## What is Family Engagement?

Family Engagement means the participation of parents and family members in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:

- That parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning.
- That parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education.
- That parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child.
- The carrying out of other activities, such as those described in Section 1116 of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

## About the Parent and Family Engagement Policy

In support of strengthening student academic Achievement, the Lowndes County School District (LCS) has developed this parent and family engagement policy that establishes the district's expectations for meaningful family engagement and guides the strategies and resources that strengthen school and parent/family partnerships in the district's Title I schools. This plan will describe LCS's commitment to engage families in the education of their children and to build the capacity in its Title I schools to implement family engagement strategies and activities designed to achieve the district and student academic Achievement goals.

When schools, families, and communities work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and enjoy school more. Title I, Part A provides for substantive family engagement at every level of the program, such as in the development and implementation of the district and school plan, and in carrying out the district and school improvement provisions. Section 1116 of ESSA contains the primary Title I, Part A requirements for schools and school systems to involve parents and family members in their children's education. The LCS will work with its Title I schools to ensure that the required school-level parent and family engagement policies meet the requirements of federal law and each include, as a component, a school-parent compact.

## Jointly Developed

LCS provides stakeholders e.g., parents, teachers, students, school officials, community agencies, and government representatives multiple opportunities to jointly develop, review, and revise Title I documents including the Parent and Family Engagement Policy. The Federal Programs Director and District Parent Engagement Coordinator will host a Shared Decision making (SDM) meeting annually. Stakeholders will be informed and invited to participate in the meetings via announcements posted on the district and school websites, media press release, social media, and flyers in Title I schools. Stakeholders attending the meeting will receive information and will be able to share in the discussion regarding Federal Programs, System Achievement Data, Federal Program Plans, Budgets, and Comprehensive LEA Improvement Plan (CLIP). Stakeholders are welcome to complete feedback cards during the SDM meetings and/or at any time on the district website.

Upon final revision, the district parent and family engagement policy was incorporated into the CLIP which was submitted to the state. Stakeholders are welcome to submit comments and feedback regarding the policy at any time on the school district website or by submitting written comments to your child's school. All feedback received by July 2019 was considered for revisions to this policy.

The district's plan to distribute this policy in the fall of each school year, the Title I District Family and Community Engagement Policy will be distributed to all parents: hard copies sent home with every student, by posting on the school and district website, copies available in the Parent/Family Information Resource Center (PIRC) of each Title I School and copies available at the Lowndes County Board of Education. Additionally, parents, families, and community stakeholders may request an electronic copy and in a format and language they can understand.

## Strengthening Our Schools

The District Family Engagement Coordinator (FEC) will provide professional learning/technical assistance to principals and school-level Family Engagement Liaisons on a regular basis through planned meetings, on-site visits, webinars, emails, and phone calls to ensure parental engagement requirements are being met. Assistance will be provided to Title I schools in the development and implementation of multiple capacity building, academically-focused parent events, as well as, activities that support a welcoming school environment. When practical, we will strive to provide services to eliminate family and community engagement barriers. Title I schools will also offer events that help build a welcoming climate and partnership between families, schools, and community.

## Reservation of Funds

The LCS will reserve 1 percent from the total amount of Title I funds it receives in 2019-2020 to carry out the parent and family engagement requirements listed in this policy and as described in federal law. Furthermore, the LCS will distribute approximately 90 percent of the amount reserved to Title I schools to support their school-level improvement goals and family engagement programs and activities. The district will provide clear guidance and communication to assist each Title I school in developing an adequate family engagement budget that addresses their needs assessment and parent recommendations.

A district-wide, annual parent survey is conducted in February, for all parents to provide suggestions on how these family engagement funds could be used in the upcoming year at the district and school-level. Comment cards and minutes from these meetings were reviewed by the district to determine areas of need for the upcoming school year and consider changes to the family engagement budget. If you have suggestions, please contact the Federal Programs Director in the district office.

*\*Due to school closures during the 2019-2020 school year, district plans/policies, school plan/policy and compacts will remain active for the 2020-2021 school year. As revisions and updates are made they will be distributed to families with our goal of having new and updated Family and Community Engagement compliance documents for the 2021-2022 school year.*

## Opportunities for Shared Decision Making

Input and suggestions from parents, family members, and community partners are an essential component of the district and school improvement plans that are developed each year. All parents of students eligible to receive Title I services are invited to attend stakeholder input opportunities described in this section to share their ideas and suggestions to help the district, schools, and students to reach our student academic Achievement goals.

### **Stakeholder Input Meeting ~ Spring 2021**

All parents are welcome to hear the latest updates from the Lowndes County School District as well as review and provide input into the district parent and family engagement policy and the Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Notices regarding this meeting will be advertised on the social media and news outlets in advance of the meeting. The district will also communicate information regarding this meeting on the school district website.

### **School Level Input Meetings ~ March & May 2021**

Each Title I school will host a forum for parents and family members to participate in roundtable discussions to review the Schoolwide plan, the school's parent and family engagement policies as well as provide input on the family engagement budget and topics for school staff training. Each Title I school will send invitations home as well as post on social media and school marquee to notify them about the date and time of the forum. Information regarding the School Improvement Forum will also be made available on the school websites.

### **Family Engagement Team Meetings-On-going**

Each Title I school has a Family Engagement Team that meets five times a year. All families are invited and encouraged to participate.

### **Title I Annual Parent Survey-Spring 2021**

Parent input on the use of Title I funds to support family engagement programs will be provided through the annual district survey. The survey will contain questions related to the family engagement budget, welcoming climate, academic support and shared decision making.

## National Standards for Family-School Partnerships



# Building Capacity

The LCS will build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental engagement, in order to ensure effective engagement of parents and families to support a partnership among the Title I schools, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement through the following districtwide activities and programs..

***Of Parents*** - The LCS will provide families with information about the overall Title I program and its requirements. The district works with its Title I schools to help families understand academic expectations for student learning and progress. The district also offers assistance to parents in understanding use of its online student information system and other digital resources, including the harms of copyright piracy, through its technology specialists. Notifications about these opportunities will be posted on the district website and shared through school messaging systems, newsletters, and social media postings.

In addition, the district and school websites contain resources and materials such as parent guides, study guides, practice assessments materials for at-home learning. Hard copies of these materials are also available at all Title I schools, including copies in Spanish.

The LCS Parent Advisory Council, made up of parent representatives from each Title I school, advises the district and schools on all matters related to family engagement. Community leaders and business partners are also invited to serve on the council. The participation of all of our partners is encouraged through video conferencing and recording options to accommodate varying schedules.

The LCS will coordinate and integrate the district's family engagement programs under this part with parent and family engagement strategies, to the extent feasible and appropriate, with other relevant Federal, State, and local laws and programs such as, the local preschool program and other federal and state funded preschool programs in the district. The district will invite faculty and staff from those programs to attend planning meetings focused on family engagement activities. In the spring, schools will host Kindergarten Ready days, Middle and High School Transition Nights, and College and Career Fair so parents may receive information to help prepare them and their children for the next life stage.

***Of School Staff*** - The LCS will conduct four trainings during the school year for faculty and staff to learn and discuss strategies to increase family engagement, improve school-family communication, and build ties with parents and the community. To ensure that information related to district, school, parent programs, Family Engagement team meetings, and activities is available to all parents, each Title I school is required to send home and post online information for parents and family members in an understandable language and uniform format. At the beginning of the year, school staff will be trained on parent notifications and resources to be sent home in parents' preferred language, where applicable, and providing interpreters at parent events and Family Engagement Team meetings. Information posted on the district website will be translated to the extent practicable. The district will also utilize school phone call systems, district and school websites, local news media, and social media to post information for parents.

***\*\*Due to school closures during the 2019-2020 school year, district plans/policies, school plan/policy and compacts will remain active for the 2020-2021 school year. As revisions and updates are made they will be distributed to families with our goal of having new and updated Family and Community Engagement compliance documents for the 2021-2022 school year.***

# Family & Community Engagement Evaluation

Each year, the LCS will conduct an evaluation of the content and effectiveness of this parent and family engagement policy and the family engagement activities to improve the academic quality of the Title I schools through an annual parent survey and the School Improvement Forums.

Beginning in February, each Title I school will send home a survey and email a link to the survey for parents to provide valuable feedback regarding the parent and family engagement activities and programs. These surveys will also be posted on the district and school

websites for parents to complete. In addition to the annual survey, each Title I school will also use the School Improvement Forum to facilitate group discussions to discuss the needs parents of children eligible to receive Title I services to design strategies for more effective family engagement.

The LCS will use the findings from the school forums and the survey results to design strategies to improve effective family engagement, to remove possible barriers to parent participation, and to revise its parent and family engagement policies.

## Accessibility

In carrying out the parent and family engagement requirements established by Section 1116 of the ESSA, the district family engagement coordinator will communicate and collaborate with the Office for Student Support Services to ensure full opportunities for participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children including providing information and school reports in a language parents can understand.

## Mark Your Calendars

### *For Parents*

Annual Parent Survey  
February, 2021

School Input Meetings  
March & May 2021  
Local school site

Stakeholder Input Meeting  
May 2021 –  
County Board Office

### *For Schools*

Building Capacity of School Staff  
Ongoing  
Local school site

Family Engagement meetings  
Ongoing  
Local school site

## Approval

This districtwide parent and family engagement policy has been developed jointly and agreed upon with parents and family members of children participating in Title I, Part A programs as evidenced by the collaboration of parents, school, and district personnel at the annual State of the District meeting.

This policy was approved by the Lowndes County School District on June 14, 2019 due to school closures, this plan will continue for the 2020-2021 academic school year. The school district will distribute this policy in multiple ways to all parents of participating Title I, Part A children during the fall semester.

