

Thomaston-Upson School District Parent and Family Engagement Policy



2020-2021
Revised October 6, 2020
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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:

- (A) That parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning.
- (B) That parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education.
- (C) 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.
- (D) The carrying out of other activities, such as those described in Section 1116 of Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA).

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About the Parent and Family Engagement Policy

In support of strengthening student academic achievement, the Thomaston-Upson County Schools (TUCS) has developed this parent and family engagement policy that establishes the district's expectations and objectives for meaningful family engagement and guides the strategies and resources that strengthen school and parent partnerships in the district's Title I schools. This plan will describe TUCS'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. The priority focus is on Literacy at all grade levels.

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/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 TUCS will work with its Title I schools to ensure that the required parent and family engagement policies meet the requirements of federal law and each include, as a component, a school-parent compact.

Jointly Developed

All parents are invited to be part of the collaboration

In an online platform, **all** parents were invited to participate and provide suggestions and ideas to improve this district parent and family engagement policy and school-parent compacts for the 2020-2021 school year. An announcement was posted on all of the schools' FaceBook pages as well as the school district FaceBook page to inform parents about this meeting.

Upon final revision, the district parent and family engagement policy was incorporated into the Streamlined Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan (S-CLIP) which was submitted to the state. Parents are welcome to submit comments and feedback regarding the policy at any time on the school district website by clicking on Federal Programs and clicking the input section or by submitting written comments to your child's school. All feedback received by July 2020 was considered for revisions to this policy.

The district/school parent and family engagement policy along with the school-parent compacts will be posted on the district and school websites, distributed during the annual Title I school meetings in the fall, and made available in the Parent Resource Center. They will also be distributed to school councils and school Partners in Education in a language they can understand.

School-Parent Compacts

As part of this plan, each school along with its families will develop a school-parent compact, which is an agreement that parents, teachers and students will develop that explains how parents and teachers will work together to make sure all our students reach grade-level standards. The compacts will be reviewed and updated annually based on feedback from parents, students, and teachers during our advisory and input meetings. The school-parent compacts will be sent home with the first progress report and shared with parents during parent-teacher conferences. Each school will provide copies upon request.

Strengthening Our School

This year, the district Parent and Family Engagement Coordinator (FEC) will provide technical assistance and support to all Title I schools to ensure family engagement requirements are being satisfied and that family engagement strategies and activities are being implemented. Title I schools will receive notifications and resources from the district and the FEC to help them improve and strengthen family engagement. In addition to frequent communication and school visits, the district and the FEC will hold monthly meetings and trainings with its Title I schools' principals to review family engagement plans and activities.

Additionally, in March the principals and FEC will meet individually to review parent and family engagement requirements and plan opportunities for family engagement activities and meetings for the remainder of the school year.

Parent Resource Center

The Parent Resource Center is located at Upson-Lee Primary School. Come check out books, resources and activities to use at home with your child. Computers are available for parents to explore the Parent Portal and educational resources. Call for an appointment. Monday - Friday, 7:30 - 3:30. 706-646-9405.

Reservation of Funds

The TUCS will reserve 1% from the total amount of Title I funds it receives in 2020-2021 to carry out the parent and family engagement requirements listed in this policy and as described in Section 1118 of the ESEA federal law. Parents have the opportunity to give input into how this money is used through the annual surveys given and questionnaires answered and recorded at parent input meetings in the spring. At the annual Title I Meeting each school will share the budget and how it is used with the parents and families. Principals at each school have to sign off as to what the budget supports.

Opportunities for Meaningful Parent Consultation

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 meetings, fill out surveys, join school advisory councils, and other opportunities to share their ideas and suggestions to help the district, schools, and students to reach our student academic achievement goals.

Annual Title I Meeting ~ August-October 2020

Each school invites all parents/guardians to an evening of learning and sharing about our Title I program, including our parent and family engagement policy, the schoolwide plan, the school-parent compacts, and parents' rights under Title I. This year the meeting will be held virtually by each principal. All parents will be notified of this meeting through ClassTag or Remind. It will be recorded and put on social media, ClassTag, Remind, and on the schools' websites.

District Parent Advisory Council ~ Fall

All parents are invited to be a part of the **District Parent Advisory Council** that meets twice a school year. They are welcome to hear the latest updates from the Thomaston-Upson School District as well as review and provide input into the district parent and family engagement policy, the Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan for the 2020-2021 school year, and the Parent Involvement budget. Notifications about these opportunities will be posted on the school and district websites and shared through school messaging systems, newsletters, and social media postings.

Unable to attend these meetings?

Please visit www.upson.k12.ga.us - choose Departments then Federal Programs to review the district policy and school compacts and leave your input.

Spring Parent Surveys

Each school and the district conduct annual parent surveys where parents have the opportunity to give input/feedback on the district and school parent engagement plans and the Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan. Schools also ask for parents/families to comment on the school compacts, district policy, and the use of the Title I funds used to support family engagement programs. The Parent Engagement Program is guided by these surveys. Parents can request a paper copy of each survey.

Input Meetings

Each school holds at least two input meetings, one in the spring and one in the fall. At these meetings, parents have the opportunity to make comments and suggestions on any of the schools' programs and policies. They can participate in discussions to review the schoolwide plan, the school's parent and family engagement policies as well as provide input on the family engagement budget. These meetings are held at different times to meet the needs of the parents/families. Each school will send multiple invitations home notifying families about the date and time of the meetings.

District Improvement Planning Retreat

Parents are invited to attend the District Leadership Retreat in June where they can give input and approval of the District Improvement Plan and the District Parent and Family Engagement Plan.

School Council

Parents are encouraged to run for school council. If they are not on the council, they are invited to attend any of the meetings. This council is presented the District Parent and Family Engagement Policy and the School-Parent Compact for input and review.

School Improvement Retreats

Beginning in the spring, all of the schools host a school improvement retreat where parents are invited to participate. During the retreat, the school will have roundtable discussions to review the school wide plan, the school improvement plan, and the school-parent compact.

Partners in Education

Community stakeholders and parents who represent businesses are part of this supportive group. The District Parent and Family Engagement Policy is presented to this group for review every year.

Building Capacity

The TUCS will build partnerships between its Title I Schools, families, and community with the goal of developing mutual support for student achievement. To develop capacity for this support, the TUCS will implement a variety of family and community engagement activities and programs:

Of Parents - The TUCS 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. Specific information related to the State's challenging academic standards, and local and state assessments—including alternative assessments, will also be provided. The district 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. The district also collaborates with the Thomaston Housing Authority to offer parent workshops on site and free tutoring for the children. The dates and locations for all the classes and meetings will be posted on the district website, on notices sent home with students, on school websites, in school newsletters, on parent call outs, in the newspaper, and shared on social media.

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

To ensure that information related to school, parent programs, meetings, and activities is available to all parents in an understandable language and format, the district will post a monthly schedule on the district website homepage and under Federal Programs. Each school website has a calendar of events. Parent notifications will be sent home in the native language if applicable. ELL has two parent meetings per year where an interpreter goes over school information and answers questions.

The TUCS has established a district wide Parent Advisory Council consisting of parent representatives from all the schools to provide advice on all matters related to family engagement in Title I, Part A programs. Community leaders and business partners are invited to serve on this council.

The TUCS will coordinate and integrate the district's family engagement programs with the local preschool program and other state funded preschool programs in the district and with Upson County Head Start. In the spring, the primary school hosts Pre-K visitation for the children during the day and a Kindergarten Readiness Workshop with a parent/family tour of the school in the evening to help the transition to kindergarten for both the children and the parents. The Middle and High Schools host Transition Nights and a College and Career Fair so parents may receive information to help prepare them and their children for the next life stage. Finally, the TUCS collaborates with community services and businesses to host a "Repack the Backpack" at the Civic Center where families can attend to gain information, ask questions, and receive school supplies.

Of School Staff - To ensure that information related to district, school, parent programs, 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. Each year, school staff will be trained in the value and utility of contributions of parents; in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners; to implement and coordinate parent programs and build ties between parents and the school; and to provide parent notifications and information in parents' preferred language, where applicable. 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.

The Thomaston-Upson School System will conduct four trainings during the school year for teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, principals, other school leaders, and other staff to learn and discuss strategies to increase family engagement, to improve school-family communication, and to build ties with parents and the community. The Parent and Family Engagement Coordinator will visit the schools to review and discuss parent involvement requirements and initiatives and give other needed technical assistance. A training for appropriate school staff and faculty that will focus on creating welcoming environments will be given at the beginning of school.

Parent and Family Engagement Evaluation

Each year, the TUCS 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. This will be done through parent surveys, at school improvement meetings, and at multiple input meetings. Parents will also fill out input sheets in the fall and in the spring at meetings and evening school events. A one question budget survey on the 1% with a checklist is distributed at parent workshops and evening school events. Parents are sent many notices in different forms about the surveys and meetings.

Surveys will go out in March and in April and will be posted on the district and school websites. Parents are encouraged to complete a survey when visiting the schools, and paper copies are given out or mailed to those who may not have access to computers. In addition to the surveys, parents are invited to the district meeting at the end of March and the school input opportunities in March and April to facilitate group discussion on the needs of parents of children eligible to receive Title I services to design strategies for more effective family engagement.

The TUCS will use the findings from the school meetings 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 ELL teacher, the Federal Programs Director, and student 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. TUCS is committed to helping our parents and families attend the family activities listed in this policy. Please contact Michele Daniel, Family Engagement Coordinator if you have transportation or childcare needs. mdaniel@upson.k12.ga.us or 706-646-9405

Let's Get Together!

TUCS will host the following events to build the capacity for strong family engagement to support a partnership among the school, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement. Meetings for parents and family members will be held through Zoom, put on Facebook Live or YouTube. Due to COVID-19 or any other Pandemic, meetings may be held virtually, or dates and times will be determined at a later date.

Annual Title I Meeting – Fall 2020

We invite you to an evening of learning and sharing about our Title I program, including our parent and family engagement policy, the schoolwide plan, the school-parent compacts, and parents' requirements. This meeting will be held virtually then posted on social media. We will also send out the video through ClassTag and Remind to all parents.

Open House – Fall 2020

Meet your child's teacher and our friendly and helpful school staff for the year. All schools will host a virtual Open House this year with the exception of Upson-Lee Primary and Pre-Kindergarten.

Parent-Teacher Conferences – twice yearly
Scheduled updates on your child's progress.

Curriculum Nights: STEM, Reading, Math, Social Studies, Fine Arts

Boost science, technology, engineering, math, reading, and social studies by learning how to make subjects fun at home.

School Input Meeting – Spring 2021

A meeting for parents and family members to participate in roundtable discussions with the principal and staff regarding the schoolwide plan, parent and family engagement policy, school-parent compacts, and the family engagement budget.

Mark

Your

Calendars

**Please check with your child's school for specific dates and times.*

Annual Title I Meeting

August - October 2020

Open House at each School

August 2020

School Parent-Teacher

Conferences

Twice yearly (dates to come)

Family Nights/Workshops

Dates and Times to come

Annual Parent Survey

March/April 2021

School Improvement Forum

March – May 2021

Local school site

District Stakeholder Meeting

March - May 2021

Adoption

This district-wide 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 District Stakeholder Annual Meeting and school input meetings.

This policy was adopted by the Thomaston-Upson School District on October 6, 2020 and will be in effect 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 on or before November 1, 2020.

Excellence in Education...Every Individual, Every Day